

KOL KADIMA

The Voice of the Memphis Jewish High School

Vol. 3 No. 16
Parsha: Yitro

19 Shevat, 5769
Candle Lighting 5:21 p.m.

February 13, 2009
Havdalah 6:19 p.m.

Schedule of Events

February 16 School Holiday for Freshmen and Sophomores

February 17 Enrollment Contracts due

February 23 Junior Class leaves for Poland

D'var Torah presented by Parker Mantell

By Rabbi Label Lam

The foundation of foundations and the pillar of all wisdom is to know that there is a prime source of reality...The knowing of this matter is a Positive Mitzvah as it says, "I am HASHEM your G-d...(Shemos 20:2) (Rambam Hilchos Yesode' HaTorah 1:1-6)

It is worth noting that the Rambam uses the term - "knowledge" as opposed to -"belief". We might ask how one achieves the certainty associated with "knowledge" on this most important subject. The Rambam gives a key. "I am HASHEM your G-d Who took you out of the land of Egypt. How is "knowledge" implied in that verse?

The Kuzari asks why The Almighty makes such a small claim!? "I am the HASHEM your G-d Who took you out of the land of Egypt from the house of bondage!" He could have said, "I created the heavens and the earth!" Why focus on Egypt?

Imagine if you will, I own the GM building in Mid Town Manhattan. I lock an employee in the 46th Floor wash room over a three day holiday weekend. Monday morning, I unlock the door and remind him that I am the one who let him out of that room. He looks at me and wonders aloud, "Why did you lock me in there in the first place? And, "Since you own the whole building, why do you need to claim control over one small water closet in the entire complex?" He's right! Why?

The Kuzari explains the intent of the verse. The knowledge of G-d is reinforced by the entire process of the exodus. It was something that we experienced unlike the inception of the world. Who was there,

then? In Egypt, we, as a people, witnessed the whole drama of Egypt's miraculous collapse and our emergence as a nation. It was an historical revelation not a hysterical revolution. Therefore, The Almighty commands us to know the reality of His existence and not just to believe abstractly or philosophically. Since that time, way back when, a year has never lapsed without Pesach or a week without Shabbos. "In memory of leaving Egypt..." or a day without Tefillin or Tzitzis, both being reminders of having left Egypt. The echo of that experience is captured forever in our continuous loyalty to those observances and many more for more than 3300 years. And so says the prophet about our people- "You are my witnesses, so says HASHEM and I am your G-d!" (Isaiah 43:12)

I was on a plane from St. Louis to Seattle and one seat away was a middle aged woman that worked up the courage to ask me about half way into the flight, "Are you Amish?" (Not Heimishe). I told her, "No, I am not! I don't think Amish people fly on planes." "I'm sorry!" she said showing great care and sensitivity. I told her that she need not apologize. I went back to my reading and she returned to her book until she got up the courage again, "What are you then?" she asked. I told her, "I'm a Jew!" There was an awkward silence.

After some moments she inquired again, "What do you people believe?" I told her, showing the Hebrew Text of the Tanach (The Bible) I held in my hands, "We are the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that stood by Mount Sinai with Moses and heard The Almighty declare, "I am The Lord your G-d that took you out of the Land of Egypt...That's who I am and that's who we are!" The conversation ended but I could tell she was overawed by the realization that this fellow who walked onto the plane is part of a living group that stepped right out of the Bible. I too was flying high on the grandness of that fact for the rest of the flight.

Our presence as a people is a living extension of and active testimony to that national experience when we all heard what we heard. The world might yet accept what we have known not because of what we say but rather because we were there!

Shabbat Shalom.

Gemilut Chasadim Award

Dr. McBride presented the Gemilut Chasadim award to Parker Mantell at the Town Hall Meeting today. Students are nominated weekly to receive the award for kindness and generosity.

Dr. Cowett Visits the Model UN

Dean of General Studies, Mark Cowett, visited Yeshiva University this week to observe the Model UN. Dr. Cowett was very impressed with the program and looks forward to our students participating next year.

Efforts to Fundraise for Poland/Israel Trip Continue

Our junior class is compiling a cookbook that has a place to display ads. If you are interested in purchasing an ad for the cookbook, please contact Logan Belz at lbelz@mjhschool.org or call him at 901.484.0493.

Carol DeForest Attends Workshop

Art teacher, Carol DeForest, attended a very informative workshop sponsored by PAIDEIA. It was hosted by the Memphis College of Art in partnership with the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art and the West Tennessee Art Education Association among others.

MJHS Student Hannah Chanin Wins Horse Show

Sophomore, Hannah Chanin, attended the Poplar Place Horse Trial last week and won first place in the beginner, novice category! Excellent job, Hannah!

Open Invitation Anytime!

The Memphis Jewish High School invites you to come for a tour of our school! We have been busy this past month giving tours of the school and hosting prospective students for a day of classes. Dr. Elizabeth Brock McBride, Head of School, remarked, "The students that have visited our school are very impressed with our program and our facility. I think they especially enjoy having a lap top computer for the day when they visit our classes!"

Call 901.767.4818 for a tour or a day of shadowing.

Toda Raba

To **Hannah Chanin, Binyamin Besser, and Emily Kahn** for helping set up a Tu'Bishvat party at the Cohen's home last weekend.

Mazal Tov

To **Hannah Chanin** for winning a horse show last weekend.