

Chag Hasmicha Remarks

President Richard Joel

March 19,2017

Today marks the fourth and final opportunity I have to address a Chag HaSmichah as Yeshiva's president. It has been a Sacred Privilege.

Today, we celebrate 130 young men of extraordinary quality and character who I have seen grow in learning and middos and professionalism.

And today, I know you join me in celebrating the extraordinary Roshei Yeshiva and Hanhala of Yeshivas Rabbeinu Yitzchak Elchanan whom I have had the privilege to partner with.

In today's celebrants, Yeshiva embraces the continuity of our profound mission of advancing Torah values, so as to guide, teach and lead our people and the world to a better

place. Almost 40 years ago, President. Norman Lamm stood at this podium and shared the following message:

“Scholarship and piety are necessary, but they are not sufficient. A spiritual person is one whose ideals and practice transcend his self-interest, whose deportment and, indeed, very presence symbolize the values of Torah.”

Years before that, at an earlier chag hasmicha, his predecessor, Dr. Samuel Belkin,zt'l, shared the message that, “There is one thing we must remember always. Just as we have faith in God, and just as we have faith in the Torah of Moses, so let us have faith in the Jewish people, in the continuous miracle of its rebirth. Let us have faith in the miracle of spiritual unity between G-d, His Torah and His people, which is summed up in the sayings of our sages, “Israel, the Torah and the Holy One Blessed Be He, are one.”

ישראל ואורייתא וקודשה ברוך הוא חד הוא

And almost 85 years ago, our first president, Dr. Bernard Revel, zt'l, stood at this podium and said the following, "Out of the portals of this sanctuary of the spirit shall come a Jewish leadership - lay and spiritual - conscious of its unique heritage, striving to develop in this land a Jewish life, culturally creative and spiritually satisfying, based upon the eternal foundations of the Torah, helping our communities to fuller self-expression, and richer contribution to the cultural and spiritual values of our society."

I stand here today on the shoulders of those who came before me, and I contemplate what I can add to this discussion – this continuing conversation.

To me, parashat Ki Tisa offers a precious perspective on how we, klei kodesh, and lay Kodesh, are to lead our lives, a message that has been a defining insight for my life.

Perek lamud gimmel, details an amazing discussion between Moshe and the Ribbono Shel Olam, culminating with Moshe beseeching God to let Moshe see G-d's face, His kavod. , Hareini na es kevodecha. G-d responds

וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא תוּכַל לִרְאוֹת אֶת פְּנֵי כִּי לֹא יִרְאֵנִי הָאָדָם וְחַי

And He said, "You will not be able to see My face, for man shall not see Me and live."

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' הִנֵּה מְקוֹם אֵתִי וְנִצַּבְתָּ עַל הַצּוּר

And the Lord said: "Behold, there is a place next to me, and you shall stand on the rock."

Such a dramatic moment-Moshe wants to see G-d;s face, and G-d says no. Then G-d says “stand beside me”.

Rav Sampson Raphael Hirsh explains. הִנֵּה מְקוֹם אֵתִי - there is a place next to Me. One and one only point-of-view exists as the highest goal to be attained by the highest human mind, even for Moses, only one point-of-view, and that is *not* to try and get a sight of God, but, elevated by God, and godliness, to look at men and human conditions from a height, next to God, near to God, from God’s point of view, to understand and appreciate all men and all conditions of human life.”

This master insight-the human being is not supposed to see G-d-it’s not his realm. Our goal is to stand beside God. Our

role is not to see G-d, but to see as G-d sees, and do as G-d does.

Beloved musmachim, , Hear the message from four presidents of this Yeshiva, and consider it:

Be a caring role model;

Believe in the Jewish People;

Dare to make a difference in the world;

Strive to see as G-d sees and do as G-d does.-Vehalachta B'drachav.

As musmachim of Yeshivas Rabbeinu Yitzchak Elchanan, you have been trained in leadership, you have been prepared to serve as our ambassadors of nobility, spreading the warmth of Torah by constantly fanning its flames. Your actions matter – your commitment to Torah inspires people and elevates the world.

Esther and I are entrusting our children and grandchildren to you. Partner with them and with all our children to advance the Torah and advance the world.

V'cheyn yehi ratzon.