

To Learn and to Teach, to Keep and to Do

For those of you who have seen my office, you know that up until a few months ago my University of Michigan flag hung proudly as the centerpiece of artwork on my wall. In fact, I never consider myself fully settled in a new place until that flag has been put up. But, in April the flag was moved so that a beautiful piece of art by the artist Mordechai Rosenstein could grace my office.

The piece represents my philosophy of education taken from the prayer, *Ahavah Rabbah*, which comes before the *Shema*. It states:

לְלַמֵּד וּלְלַמֵּד, לְשָׂמֵר וּלְעָשׂוֹת

. . . which means, to learn and to teach, to keep and to do. I picked this piece of art - and more importantly this phrase - because I think it naturally and accurately teaches the fundamentals of Jewish education. In Hebrew, the word for “teach” and the word for “learn” come from the same root. That is to say that at our core we are all learners and teachers. We learn by watching and listening to one another. While we have teachers, rabbis and administrators whose job it is to actually and formally teach students, when we listen to one another, and when we share our ideas, we become teachers and others are the students. Every day we have the opportunity to be both teachers and students.

The second half of the quotation teaches that we are “to keep and to do.” It is our sacred obligation to guard, preserve and protect what is important to us, and at the same time take an active role in living our lives according to these customs and laws. In keeping or guarding, we maintain that teaching spreads the tradition from one generation to the next so that it will never die. The “doing” allows this to happen, and through practice, cements in us memories that carry us forward.

Judaism is a living religion; it is text based, but survived, maintained, taught and glorified through daily practice. Here at Ann and Nate Levine Academy, we not only teach Judaism, but we promote living in inspired practice of our sacred heritage. The education we provide here isn’t just from 8-4, but intended to fan the flames of the passion for learning that happens and is practiced in every aspect of life. The value of learning is a lifelong value in Judaism. Learning and teaching, keeping and doing are meant to kindle the spark within your soul. This year, Levine Academy will focus on kindling the spark, the spark of learning, of Judaism and Jewish living, not only in your children, but in you as well. We will be offering family engagement opportunities, along with parent learning across the grades.

In connect with this theme, my weekly D’var Torah will teach the Torah portion through the lens of action. The Torah is a moving story, one that tells of generations and how their actions have brought us to this moment today. Each week I will read and teach the *parshah* by way of teaching us how we can embrace living Jewishly. I hope you’ll join me on this journey!

Abraham Joshua Heschel said it best when he called on Jews to take a “leap of action,” to do more than we understand so that we come to understand more than we do. I invite you to join our community of

practice, a community that does more than we might understand in order to further our understanding of Judaism. Please walk with Levine Academy on your journey, and let me know how I can help you.

ללמוד **To Learn:** ללמד **To Teach:** In this section each week will be one resource for you to use to learn more about the action item of the week.

לשמור **To Keep:** לעשות **To Do:** In this section each week will be an action item, a way to engage with Judaism actively and touch upon Jewish living in your own home.