



Date

Inside Address

Dear _____,

As Jews around the world prepare to celebrate Passover, I would like to take this opportunity to share some thoughts and important information with you.

As a Tucson boy, my education, both secular and Jewish, was easily available. I became a Bar Mitzvah, was confirmed, graduated from high school, and went to college -- a pathway that was, for me, a natural course of events.

I chose a career in the Jewish community to deepen my personal connection. And when I had children, the passage from Deuteronomy we recite so often in the *V'ahav'ta* prayer, "*V'shinan'tam l'vanekha*" "and you shall teach them diligently to your children", became a real, potent message, strengthening my commitment to Jewish learning.

Throughout my career, I have seen first-hand, the truth in the Talmud's teaching that the mitzvah of *talmud torah*, Jewish learning, is the greatest of all *mitzvot*, because it leads to all others. As we study, learning ancient and contemporary Jewish thought, ritual, and history, we have a dialogue with Jews of all Ages, connecting us to our past as well as to God. Through Jewish study, we open not only our minds, but our hearts and souls on our journey of self-exploration to discover how our own lives reflect our Jewish sages and teachers. What we learn is who we become. We recognize that all of us have an even greater potential to do *mitzvot* and incorporate Jewish values into our everyday lives, to ensure that Judaism lives on through us.

I have recently learned that the majority of Jews living in Israel do not have the opportunity for the kind of Jewish education so readily available here in America. Outside of the Orthodox communities, Jewish study beyond the *Bible* is virtually non-existent, creating a huge void in Jewish education and understanding of our heritage and its importance.

The non-profit Schechter Institutes provide Jewish education in Israel and Europe through four programs based in Jerusalem. Because of Schechter's presence, over 31,000 children can learn about their religion, culture and history. Russian immigrants, not just in Israel but in the Ukraine and Hungary, get to know the richness of Judaism by learning in a Schechter school. 500 teachers receive masters training to develop greater resources for Jewish education, and Conservative rabbis prepare to assume pulpits in Israel and throughout the world. I am proud to be affiliated with the Schechter Institute, a vital and important organization ensuring Jewish learning now, for our existence in the future.

So I ask you, as we recline comfortably at our Seder tables while recounting our exodus from Egypt and our freedom from slavery, to reflect on the great privileges we have as Jews in America and to consider helping to provide a deeper understanding and appreciation of Judaism, Jewish history, Jewish customs and Jewish thought for all Jews in Israel. I sincerely wish you and your family a "*hag sameach, Pesach*".

With warm regards,

Mike
Los Angeles Area Coordinator
The Schechter Institutes