

The Rebbe on
“**MOMENT OF SILENCE**”
– Sichos & Letters –

Memento from the Wedding of
Mendel & Sarah Banon

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INTRODUCTION

This memento is dedicated to the vision of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson. The Rebbe reshaped the Jewish world, inspired millions of people across the globe, and offered a path forward for all of humanity. His campaign for a daily Moment of Silence was one of his most urgent calls. Inspired by this vision, the groom, Rabbi Mendel Banon, founded **Meaningful Moment**, an initiative working with parents, schools, and governments to bring the Rebbe’s call for a Moment of Silence into reality.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, is recognized as the most influential Jewish leader of modern times. Born in Ukraine in 1902, he lived through the darkest chapters of the 20th century: the First World War, the rise of Communism, and the Holocaust. Arriving in America in 1941, he carried not despair but an unshakable vision: that the world could be healed, and that every individual has a role to play in that mission.

As a leader, the Rebbe displayed not only tremendous scholarship and broad vision, but a sensitive interest in every human being. An exemplary instance of such care can be seen from the story of Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman elected to Congress. In 1968, she was placed on the House Agriculture Committee, a move widely seen as an insult because her Brooklyn district had no farms. At a loss, she visited the Rebbe for advice. His response surprised her: “What a blessing G-d has given you. Use this opportunity. There are so many hungry people in America, and so many farmers with surplus. Find a way to connect them.” Inspired, Chisholm went on to develop

programs that brought surplus food to millions of poor families across America. Years later, she said, “If poor babies have milk and poor children have food, it’s because this rabbi in Crown Heights had vision.”

For the Rebbe, every encounter was an opportunity to uplift a human being. His quiet meeting with David Dinkins, who would become New York’s first Black mayor, left Dinkins describing the Rebbe as “a man of extraordinary wisdom, who cared deeply about people.”

When the Rebbe accepted leadership in 1951, the Jewish people were shattered. Survivors of the Holocaust carried deep pain and loss. Refugees from the Soviet Union lived under fear and repression. The mood was one of survival, not growth.

In his very first talk as Rebbe, the Rebbe gave them a vision that seemed almost impossible at the time. He declared that the mission was to transform the world into a “beautiful garden — G-d’s garden”. Speaking to people who had lost parents, children, siblings, and entire communities, his words were defiant. He urged them not to live in the shadow of pain but to build, to believe again in humanity, and to create a brighter future.

And they did. Under his leadership, Chabad grew from a small group of followers in Brooklyn into a worldwide movement. Today there are Chabad centers in all 50 states and over 100 countries. These centers are not just synagogues, but communities, schools, and homes where Jewish life flourishes. The Rebbe created a generation of proud Jews, unafraid to live their identity in public, unashamed to bring light into the world. The Jewish story shifted from tragedy to revival.

But the Rebbe preached that our responsibility lies beyond the Jewish community as well. He taught that humanity as a

whole has a shared mission: to refine the world and reveal its inner goodness. He insisted that belief in G-d and universal values are the foundation of a healthy society.

This vision gained recognition on the highest levels. In 1978, President Jimmy Carter signed a proclamation marking the Rebbe’s Hebrew birthday as “Education and Sharing Day, USA.” The honor was not for political achievements, but for the Rebbe’s lifelong dedication to education that builds character and values. Every president since has continued this tradition, each recognizing the Rebbe as a moral voice for America and beyond. President Reagan wrote of him: “He has provided hope, guidance, and inspiration for countless people.” In 1995, following the Rebbe’s passing, President Bill Clinton wrote: “Throughout his long and rich life, he believed that the education of our young people would only be successful if it sought to build character as well as intellect, if it taught the lessons of honesty, tolerance, and good citizenship, as well as language, math, and science”.

The Rebbe believed deeply that society needed to be anchored in moral clarity. The responsibility to instill that clarity, he said, rests on education. Education must be more than the transfer of knowledge; it must teach values, responsibility, and purpose.

Out of this vision grew one of the Rebbe’s most passionate campaigns: a daily moment of silence in schools. The idea was simple, but revolutionary. Each morning, before the noise of the day begins, children pause for sixty seconds of quiet reflection. In that silence, they can think about purpose, values, and faith. Not what a teacher tells them, but what they learn at home from their parents and families.

The Rebbe insisted that this was not a religious act, but a human one. It was not about teaching dogma, but about giving every child the gift of reflection. He called on parents to use this opportunity to speak to their children about what matters most in life — kindness, responsibility, G-d and faith — so that the child would carry those lessons into the school day.

The Rebbe saw this as a way to safeguard the future of society itself. If children grow up grounded in values, they will grow into adults who build a better world. A minute might seem short, but its power is enormous.

Decades later, his call for a Moment of Silence is more relevant than ever. In a world of noise, distraction, and confusion, the need for quiet reflection and meaning has only grown. What began as the Rebbe's urgent appeal has become a movement, one that continues to spread across America and the world.

We would like to thank Rabbi **Shmuly Avtzon** and the SIE team for the Sichos included, and the **Rebbe Responsa** team for the English letters.

This wedding memento is not only a tribute to the Rebbe's vision, but a reminder that his call continues today. Meaningful Moment was founded to actualize the Rebbe's vision for a daily Moment of Silence across America. By empowering parents to speak with their children about values, and by working with schools to create a minute of reflection at the start of each day, Meaningful Moment seeks to give the next generation the tools to live with meaning, purpose, and hope. To learn more about their work visit Ameaningfulmoment.org or reach out to info@ameaningfulmoment.org

SOCIETY’S GREAT HOPE: “A MOMENT OF SILENCE”

Is there an antidote for the problems that plague society today?

How do we ensure that the children of this generation will grow up to be responsible citizens of the world?

How do we balance the self-centered attitude of the “Me” generation?

Is there a means of assuring that civilization will continue to follow the norms of justice and the socially acceptable rules that have become the pillars of a just social order?

The answer to these and other troubling and heartbreaking questions facing the world today may be found by first recognizing and accepting certain objective truths about ourselves and our universe.

At the heart of the response and at the base of the solution lies the need for the universal acceptance of, and firm faith in, the Creator and Ruler of the world. This bedrock of belief will provide the immutable foundation upon which may be built the assurance of future civilized conduct, in accordance with socially acceptable norms, laws of justice and propriety, and sensible rules of human rights and privileges.

The Nature of Man

Scripture describes for us the primitive nature of the uneducated and untrained human being:

The inclination of man's heart is evil from his youth. ([*Bereishis 8:21*](#))

To this Rashi adds:

From the moment the fetus bestirs itself to have an independent existence the evil inclination is given to it. (*loc. cit.*)

This being the case, will the average child have any impulse or motivation to refrain from fulfilling his desires or lusts — even when it means taking something which belongs to a friend or to a teacher? This problem is especially prevalent among American children who have been given the notion that they are the “chosen creations” — certainly *everything is theirs* for the grabbing.

While the child may be aware of the existence of the police or some other restrictive force — he is not stymied, because he considers himself smart enough to outwit the policeman.'

The Only Solution

The only solution to guarantee that this child will follow the laws of justice and morality is to inculcate in him the recognition of, and belief in, the Creator and Ruler of the world.

The child must be given to understand that the world is not a jungle, for there is a Creator and Master who sees and evaluates all his actions, there is the “Eye that sees and the ear that hears.” For *this* reason he must conduct himself in a civilized and just manner.

What About Secular Education?

We should add, that in our generation it is redundant to cite proofs, to *refute* the claim that we can rely on the study of the physical science or social sciences in order to refine or moderate a child’s conduct.

This generation has witnessed the awesome destruction wrought by the nation which boasted the greatest advancement in science and philosophy — they *studied* *morality* and *produced* the *greatest murderers*, whose bestiality was unmatched in the annals of human history. Why, they even used their advanced scientific and technological expertise to expedite their murderous designs with alacrity, efficiency and bestial inhumanity.

Scientific knowledge and worldly wisdom are *tools*, which may be utilized for *good* or *bad* – all depending on the character of the person using them. A person of fine character and good attributes – will use his scientific and secular knowledge to improve the state of the world. While in the opposite dimension, the one who follows the will and wile of his evil impulse is capable of utilizing science and knowledge in a negative manner, to increase evil and suffering, in an immeasurable way. *We are witnesses to this fact!* (Affliction shall not rise up a second time. [Nachum 1:9](#))

These phenomena have clearly proved that civilized behavior cannot be based solely on human intellect or social teachings – only on faith in the Creator and Master of the world.

The Role of The School

It therefore follows, that this faith must be imbued in our children while they are in school – for is it not the role and goal of the school to educate and mold the child to be worthy of the name *human being*?!

In past generations the role of the school was only geared to imparting knowledge, because moral values were imbued at home, by parents. In our generation, however, and especially in recent times, parents are

bogged down with the problems of making a living and communal activities, and consequently, they do not nurture or train their children in moral values, but rely on the schools to fill the vacuum. It therefore becomes the responsibility of the schools and the professional educators to assume that role and to impart the moral education in addition to the three R’s.

We see this fact so crystally clear in this country, where over the past so years the spiritual and moral standards of our youth have deteriorated astonishingly, from one extreme to the other. In outlook and in action, we see a tremendous increase in anti-social (almost sub-human) behavior among the youth.

The *sole reason*? – a lack of belief in the Creator and Ruler of the world. In the earlier generations, when each person believed in G-d, he educated his child likewise, but today we have a generation of parents whose parents left that moral responsibility to the schools, no wonder that their children are in such a sorry state!

The Backlash of Laxity

In the end, the parents will suffer the backlash of their laxity, for just as the child steals from others, he will also steal from his own parents, especially since he knows them to be merciful; so he fears no punishment. It is concerning such mercy that Scripture states:

Hands of compassionate women have boiled their own children. ([Eichah 4:10](#))

And the wisest of men proclaimed:

He that spares his rod hates his son. ([Mishlei 14:24](#))

How can the moral condition of our children be corrected. By placing attention and emphasis on inculcating the faith in the Creator. And this must be done *in every school* which is concerned with the education and training of children and their initiation into the socially acceptable norms of society.

What About the Principle of Religion and State?

Enter those who 'care' for the "basic principles" of our republic. They argue that to teach belief in the Creator is against the statute and principle of separation of religion and state.

This argument has no basis in fact!

Any principle or rule in a democratic society exists *only* for the *good* of the *people*. When the good of the people demands a change (or modified interpretation) of the rule — then the rule *must* be *adapted* or *changed* to match the need.

A society which lays down the principle of the separation of religion and state really means that it

wants to provide a framework for *freedom of religion* – without the interference of government. That was the true intention of this hallowed statute – not the opposite – to restrict or prohibit the opportunity for expression of religious practice and belief!

Yet, there are still those who stubbornly want to protect the ‘letter’ of the law *against* the good of the *people* – and in total disregard for the *spirit* of the law – *religious freedom!*

The Answer: A “Moment of Silence”

It was in response to this opposition that the suggestion for a “Moment of Silence” was propounded. When a “Moment of Silence” is instituted at the start of the school day there is no compromising of the neutrality of the state, for this is *not prayer*, but *silence!*

Knowing that school time is devoted to education, the child realizes that the moment of silence must be dedicated to the most important things in this life: his outlook on life, and his belief in the Creator and Ruler of the world: as per the instructions which *his parents will* give him.

I want to stress that this must be at the *start* of the *day* to emphasize the magnitude of the subject. At any other time of the day it would not have the proper

impact — the child would contemplate on this last lesson.

Since the substance of this reflection time would depend on the free will of each individual, without teacher, supervisor or government intervention, it does not represent an incursion of the state into the free exercise of religion by the individual.

What to Meditate On?

Even those parents who do not have the time to train their children, will still find the time to suggest some momentous subject to their children to think about, not “lollipops” or “football,” or the “prowess” of attacking other children. Rather they will instruct their children to meditate about such matter what will make them worthy of the name *human being* — not wild beasts of the jungle — in a proper, civilized manner. The children will remember that they heard their parents tell them of the “Eye that sees and the ear that hears.”

At some point in this crusade there were well-meaning representatives in government who . tried to introduce a “Moment of *Prayer*” — this was doomed to fail, for “If you grab a lot you cannot hold it.” (*Rosh Hashanah* 4b) In fact, that bill has recently been rejected. Good that it was — for a “Moment of Prayer” might create a scenario where a teacher or supervisor could

impose his particular form of prayer, or his religion’s version of prayer on the students — something which would be wholly unacceptable.

Now that the first bill has been defeated the time is propitious to work for a “Moment of Silence.”

Act — Arouse Public Opinion

Therefore:

Public opinion is very important — everyone in government is sensitive to a wave of public interest, the people at the top, the Senators, Congressmen etc. It is therefore very important, that this time, the circles of government in Washington should see a swell of public opinion to institute a “Moment of Silence” at the beginning of the school day.

Preferably this momentum should come from the children themselves. They should send individual letters or sign petitions wherein they will express their desire for a “Moment of Silence.” And, since they are not the ones who make the decisions, although it pertains to them, and since we are a democratic nation — they should therefore turn to their representatives *to act on their behalf* and institute a “Moment of Silence.” Certainly this will have a strong impact on all who receive these petitions.

If the effort will be explained in this manner there are good chances for success. There is the added factor in that the President and those who are influenced by him, look favorably on this proposal and they too want a bill that will provide this opportunity. It is only necessary to make the small move of showing them that public opinion is on their side.

Action — Letters and Petitions

There is much to say, but the deed is of the essence. Letters and petitions must be sent to the Members of the Senate and House of Representatives (after first consulting with those who worked on this before, and know from experience what to do).

And may this involvement bring the hoped-for success in a great measure, so that it will happen naturally and without any problems; and quickly — “An hour earlier is always better.”

May it be the Will of [G-d](#) that there will be no need to speak of this matter in the future, as it will be rectified very soon, and through this act we will merit speedily the complete and true redemption for the whole world. It will usher in an era of no famine and no war, no jealousy and no hate for all the good things will be plentiful and we will devote our time to knowing the L-rd. The Jewish people will have the free time to be

involved in the study of Torah and its wisdom. This will come about because of our work on behalf of mankind.

(There are also Jews who need the Moment of Silence, because so many Jewish children still attend public schools. We must encourage them and strengthen their faith — but in broader terms this subject is important for Jews and non-Jews.)

And may we merit the blessings of the Holy One blessed be He — “and I will pour out for you blessings immeasurable.” ([Malachi 3:10](#))

In this essay based on the talk of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, delivered on Simchas Torah 5746, we follow the Rebbe’s urgent plea to American society for this *last great hope*. It is clear that this is our only chance to make the future generations socially adapted human beings.

You may want to review other Sichos of the Rebbe on this same topic. May we refer you to the 19th of Kislev 5745, the 12th of Tammuz 5744 (Sichos In English vol. 21, pgs. 290-300), and the 10th of Shvat 5741 (Sichos In English vol. 8, pgs. 198-202).

EDUCATION AND KNOWLEDGE

Gratitude, the acknowledgement of good, the Torah tells us, is an important obligation, whether to G-d or man. My heartfelt thanks and appreciation are extended to all those who have sent their best wishes on this occasion. Special recognition must be paid to the President of the United States of America, who, notwithstanding his present state of health, has written to convey his congratulations and best wishes. The elected leader of a country is the instrument wherewith the Divine works to do good. As such, the President deserves, and has, my deep gratitude for his kind thoughts and sentiments, and my blessings for a full and speedy recovery.

The President has a mission and task, entrusted to him by G-d, to work for the good of America and of all Americans. Rest assured that the responsibilities given to the holder of this office, and indeed of any office, are matched by the capabilities given by G-d to the holder; he need only have the determination to use those capabilities. This "trust in G-d," a trust strong and full (which must also reach the recipients of the President's efforts), will undoubtedly lead to his full recovery, and help him achieve the immense tasks and goals that lie ahead.

Let us reflect upon the assassination attempt which, thank G-d, failed; an analysis of the cause of what, by all decent people, must be regarded as a shocking and incomprehensible act. It is fashionable to espouse the theory that the root cause of most, if not all crimes, is poverty, and its resultant feelings of bitterness, deprivation, and thirst for revenge. The validity of this theory is somewhat — dubious, for poverty is often the impetus to rise higher, the desire to overcome deprivation leading to greater strength and positive action. But in this case, this theory is clearly not true, for the assailant came from a wealthy family and lacked nothing. Clearly, poverty was not the cause; the explanation must be sought elsewhere.

We need not look too far. Unfortunately, the source of the trouble is not confined to only this particular individual, but to all too many people. The blame can be laid squarely on the education he, and many other children have received, and continue to receive. An education which imparts only knowledge, and gives no direction as to how that knowledge is to be applied usefully and constructively, is not worthy of the name education. Technical skills are essential instruments for later life; but when unaccompanied by education in ethics and morality to form character, to learn right from wrong, they are dangerous tools. Although they may be used for good, they can also destroy. The failure to instill in children an awareness of G-d, an omnipresent real G-

d Who sees and judges, has inevitably produced the selfish, egocentric lifestyles so prevalent today – the “Me” generation.

The desistance of parents and schools from “intrusion” into a child’s life, replaced by blanket permission to run free of any moral restraints or limits, has seen its tragic results. It has created an entire generation of unbridled passions, the inevitable offspring of an amoral, value-free education. Rather than inculcating children with the knowledge that the foundation and aim of their learning is to equip them to be decent and productive citizens, schools propagate the pathetically inadequate warning to refrain from crime solely to avoid punishment. The inevitable result is the belief that one need not necessarily refrain from wrongdoing, but only be “smart” enough to avoid being caught and punished.

Status is measured not in terms of achievement, but in the amount of daring and brazenness one can bring to any illicit adventure. The greater the crime – and hence the greater the emphasis on personal “fulfillment” as opposed to social obligations – the greater the egoistical thrill derived. Indeed, the premise that only the individual matters leads such people to express their ego, their “individuality,” in precisely those actions that will damage and hurt others, specifically to assert that all others mean less than nothing. For after all, is he not the only one who counts?

The assumption of parents, whether rooted in sheer ignorance or criminal indifference, that a child be permitted to give free rein to his or her natural appetites, has resulted in children who have grown up wild and unrestrained, bereft of any cognizance that the world was not created solely for their exclusive benefit. The tragicomedy of “liberalism” gone wild, of the indifference or even fear of attempting to shape children’s characters, has aroused the spectra of a generation so remote from all accepted values as to make such acts as the assassination attempt foreseeably commonplace. A grim picture indeed, but to remain silent would be a sin far greater. The seeds so blithely planted have sprouted, and their crop is bitter indeed. Young people are not fools – the pupils were apt, and the unspoken word sunk in. And the not so unspoken. Whether told outright or given tacit consent, this generation has been allowed to assume that they can do and have whatever they desire.

Should children receive some smattering of knowledge about G-d (and we can imagine just how sincerely this was taught), haste is made to point out that in the United States there is the concept of separation of religion and state; education – the knowledge which will assure them success in life – is separate from belief in G-d. Separation? A bitter farce! Separation implies, at the very least, that there are two subjects which are taught separately – e.g. separate hours for religion and

secular instruction. But instead, no time at all is allocated for prayer in schools, and no finances are given for religious instruction. So entrenched is this bias that tax rebates are refused to parents whose children attend religious schools, and even support for non-religious components of schooling — e.g. travel, health, secular subjects etc., is withheld from religious schools.

To add insult to injury, the above is wrapped in an aura of sanctity, holding high the banner of tradition. What a twisted, perverted mockery of history! The founding fathers of this country were refugees from religious persecution, and fled to and founded this country precisely so that they might practice their religion, seeking to ensure freedom of religious belief for all. And after fleeing such persecution, they certainly had no intention of preventing the mention of G-d in classrooms. A tragic irony indeed that their intentions of separation of religion and state in education would come to be perverted to mean exclusion of religion from education.

The results are clearly evident: the lawlessness, the chaos, the non-productive, useless lives. But instead of attending to the causes, only the symptoms are being treated. Why wait for the patient to become critically ill to treat him — when one can act to prevent the sickness in the first place?! And make no mistake, this is a disease which infects all, rich as well as poor — indeed the rich are even more susceptible. As was evidenced by the

assassination attempt — the assailant had no financial problems in acquiring weapons, and his spoiled indulged childhood had left him free of inhibitions in seeking to gratify his unrestrained desires.

But if his education had been based upon a belief in an omnipresent, omniscient G-d, he would never have contemplated such an attempt, just as surely as if he knew that the Secret Service was scrutinizing his every move.

The implementation of such a program of education is too vital and urgent to be left to the usual snarl of legislative red tape of committees, votes, and referendums. It demands immediate action. The resolution and decision to do so was made thousands of years ago. In the Bible it states that G-d is the Creator of all, and that He has commanded respect for parents, and enjoined us against robbery, murder, and even covetousness. An education grounded on these principles will ensure a life lived fully and productively, benefitting both the individual and society.

It is this very point which the President stresses in his letter of greeting, praising the intense efforts made on behalf of education — an education aimed at making children into decent and productive citizens. The importance of a proper education cannot be too highly emphasized; and indeed, a special Education Day has been enacted to stress this. An education which

provides not only knowledge, but also the moral training to make possible the proper use of that knowledge.

EDUCATION: A MORAL IMPERATIVE

Man, the creature created in G-d's image, differs from other creations, above all in his soul. Man, like all other species, has a body which by its very finite corporeal essence drags him down to the level of animal; his bodily functions paralleling those of an animal. It is through the soul, and the mind which is a reflection of the soul, that man soars above the corporeal and reaches the loftiest heights. This is the destiny of man, the battle that has been fought since man first set foot on this earth, using his intellect to master the animal and to show that he is indeed . . . man.

This struggle is not an easy one, for the corporeality of the body and the world is very tangible, and encountered at every turn. The matters of the soul, on the other hand, are more obscure; and a greater effort is demanded in order to discern the presence of the Maker in all things. The supreme instrument of man's ability to rise higher than the physical, the intellect, is the key to winning this struggle.

Undoubtedly, recent times have shown tremendous progress in man's mastery of nature. We have witnessed an explosion of knowledge that has dwarfed the achievements of previous generations, bringing with it marvels of modern technology.

Unfortunately however, knowledge is not synonymous with understanding; and moral development has not kept pace with technical progress. The knowledge that could have been put to so many constructive uses has instead been channeled into, at best, wasteful, useless activities, and at worst, destructive acts of violence. A possible blessing has been perverted into a curse. Those bent on acts of destruction, whether from sheer greed, malice, or insanity, can now, thanks to modern day technology, easily wreak their havoc not only on their immediate surroundings, but exert influence on the entire community of mankind.

The failure to control this growing lawlessness is not limited to a few individuals. In the last few decades, and especially in the past few years, international tension and frictions have accelerated at frightening proportions. The soaring crime rate among individuals has evolved into a trend of national and international banditry, with wars raging across the face of the world. Hardly a nation has been left untouched by the horrors of violence, both on an individual and national scale, and the world seems helpless to resist. A blanket of doom seems to have settled on the earth, and under its cover, outrageous acts are carried out with impunity. And with violence breeding more violence, the perpetrators of this terror have only one regret — that they neither did nor could inflict more damage. Their

appetite for money, territory, or just plain mayhem grows insatiable, and the prospects for control grow dimmer. Police forces are increased and armies strengthened, all in a desperate attempt to retain control of a rapidly declining situation.

And the cause for the spreading increase in crime? Innumerable commissions have been set up, countless study groups have examined this problem. And the result? Total obfuscation! As many “answers” have been offered as studies made, all sharing one common point. Each strove to find some hidden cause, some deep unnatural reason — while ignoring the most obvious and true of them all. In a single word: education. It is only through proper moral and ethical education that we can be assured of children growing up to be good, productive citizens. We turn our attention, then, to an analysis of the difference between past and present education. A change for the good in the education of a child will result in a better adult; and so with the reverse.

Only a few scant generations ago, most parents were G-d- fearing folk, believing with absolute faith in a G-d Who is the Master of the world. Not a strange belief, for it was upon this very principle that the U.S.A. was founded. The founding fathers possessed an absolute trust in G-d, a G-d Who was real and omnipresent, not a G-d Who politely resided in books and philosophical conjectures. So strong was their belief that trust in G-d brings success, that they uprooted themselves from their

homelands, forsook all ties with the past, and journeyed to find a place in which they could serve G-d with full religious freedom.

Such a faith did not need to be taught in school. It was inculcated in children from the moment of birth; they lived it as naturally as they breathed. The very conduct of their parents and grandparents conveyed the same message — the world has not been left untended, there is a Master Who rules. Any mention of religion in school was unnecessary and inconsequential next to this complete and total education.

As time passed, the emphasis on such trust weakened. But full belief was still there: to bless and praise G-d for the food eaten or to say one's prayers at night — these things were still taken for granted. It was only later that religious instruction in schools became necessary. And still, teachers were mainly G-d- fearing people, who, by their very demeanor and behavior, inculcated their students with a belief and trust in G-d.

It has only been in very recent years that religious instruction in schools has been forbidden. No mention of G-d, not even a simple nondenominational prayer is permitted. And the results of this attitude are painfully evident. Lack of awareness of a higher Deity, and the resultant void of moral and ethical training, has led to a generation of selfish, egoistical children, whose sole aim in life is the pursuit of pleasure. And if that pursuit

conflicts with responsibilities, such responsibilities are discarded. The inevitable result is a generation which disregards others, with a resultant callousness towards all the higher things in life. The indulgence of one's desires is the only object of importance, and all other considerations are swept aside. No wonder that theft, violence, even murder, have become so commonplace, accompanied by a complete breakdown in what was once an orderly, constructive way of life. It is but the bitter reaping of a harvest so blithely and carelessly sown.

The beginning of all this starts in the home, with the parents who so unwisely indulge every whim and fancy of their child. Led to believe that despite whatever he or she will do, each will still be regarded as a “good” boy or “good” girl, such children grow up wild and unrestrained, bereft of any cognizance that the world was not created for their sole benefit. And it is not entirely their fault! It is the parents who, abdicating their responsibility of rearing their young in the proper manner, have given spawn to a generation of unbridled passions. And to make matters worse, it is all cloaked in the pious guise of “Constitutional rights!” Any attempt to remonstrate with parents is met with cries of indignation against intrusion of privacy guaranteed by the Constitution. The child can run loose, growing up to be a potential menace to society — but their right to

educate their children in their own way, however harmful that may be, must remain inviolate.

The inevitable result has reached such a degree as to produce a situation that would be laughable if it were not so tragic. A recently released report states that the number of incidents of students attacking teachers has declined in some schools! The truth of this report is immaterial. [Parenthetically, it is probable that rather than a decrease in the actual number, the truth is that teachers are afraid to report such incidents.] The point is the utter unreality of the situation. Even ten years ago, it was inconceivable for a student to physically strike a teacher. And yet, statistics are now being released to show that the number of such incidents is . . . decreasing! Can a more damning indictment of our educational system be found?

Let us emphasize again that the cause is clear and defined. It is the craven attitude of parents and educators alike, who refuse to educate their children with the knowledge of a higher Being Who is omnipotent and omnipresent, and to Whom an account must eventually be rendered. They have prostituted themselves before an idol of their own making, sacrificing entire generations of children on the altar of "freedom." But it has quickly become obvious that their idol has feet of clay, and their obeisance to it an obscene rite of stubborn refusal to admit wrongdoing.

A further smoke-screen is thrown up with declarations of “human rights,” in which it is forbidden to educate a child in the proper manner because it might infringe on his or her “rights.” We do not refer to an education that actively teaches a child to steal or commit an offense — it is much more subtle. The very fact that a child is brought up to believe that he alone is the only person that matters, with a perfect right to all the desires of his heart, leads very quickly to actions that, in pursuit of this goal, can easily harm others.

The pity and shame of it all is that this is a country which has been blessed with a great deal of knowledge. This knowledge could have been used to better the world, but instead, has in many instances been perverted to further an individual’s own selfish interests, even at the cost of another. In matters of morals and ethics, there are no more standards, no absolutes by which to judge behavior. A strange thing indeed. In matters of physical health, no one would dream of consulting an ignorant layman, but would always go to a competent physician, with years of study and practice. Yet when it comes to morals and ethics, matters of the soul, everyone is an expert! Anyone may advance an opinion, regardless of whether his life has been lived according to ideals of justice and morality. And people are, incredibly enough, ready and willing to entrust in such hands the education of that most precious of possessions — their children.

Know then, that each and every parent and educator has been given strength by G-d to change all of this. Changes can be made in their children's education, and darkness can be turned into light, foolishness into wisdom. In turn, it is the duty, and privilege, of the leaders of this nation, whether on a national, state, or local level, to help parents in their task of properly educating their children. The first priority of this country must be given to ensuring that its children grow up to be healthy, both physically and spiritually. And the best way to carry this out is a nondenominational declaration, at the start of each day, stating that there is an omnipotent, omniscient G-d, who demands proper conduct from us all.

To return to where we started: Man has the ability to reach the loftiest heights, or to sink to the lowest depths. He can be an animal, or a man, created in the Divine image; a wild unrestrained beast who must devour everything he sees, or a man that lives a decent productive life, contributing fully to society. The choice is clear cut. And the only way to ensure that people will choose the right path is to educate them when they are still young, forming their character before it is too late. It is an awesome task to be sure. But the stakes are too high and the alternative too terrible to allow any faintness of heart. If we have but the courage and the will to make an honest effort, then we can be sure that

G-d will assist us in our endeavors, and this sacred mission will be crowned with success.

Moment of Silence Letters

Juvenile delinquency is partly caused by the lack of awareness of Divine Authority; using persuasion to implement a Moment of Silence; children have an inborn respect for authority¹

By the Grace of G-d
2nd of Tammuz, 5743
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Dr. . . .

New Haven, Conn.

Greeting and Blessing:

I received your letter with the enclosure, in connection with my efforts to promulgate the introduction of a moment of silence in the public schools.

I emphasize “moment of silence,” as distinguished from a non denominational prayer and the like, because in the former case, there is no interference by teachers or anyone.

As for the question of using persuasion, surely you know that much has been said and written on the subject and I do not know what more can be done in the line of

¹ **Published:** *The Letter and the Spirit*, Vol 4, pp. 141ff. **Note:** Letters printed in *The Letter and the Spirit* are from the Archives of Rabbi Nissan Mindel, the Rebbe’s personal secretary who was entrusted with transcribing the Rebbe’s orally dictated responses. The archive consists of secretarial copies that may not include final edits and corrections, as well as unsent letters.

persuasion. If anyone is not persuaded, it is not for lack of persuasion, but rather having closed one's mind to what is basically a matter of elementary justice and human right. The results of ignoring the need to be aware of a “Seeing Eye and a Hearing Ear” are all too evident in the statistics of juvenile delinquency and crime.

On the other hand, overdoing the amount of persuasion by using also debatable arguments could be counterproductive, inasmuch as the strength of a chain is limited to its weakest link and those who would like to find fault with the arguments in favor of a silent prayer, would grasp at the weakest arguments to becloud and confuse the issue.

Perhaps you have heard that during the well known Beilis Case, the defense brought in a letter and affidavit of a well known authority refuting the blood libel accusation. When the Chief Prosecutor was asked to respond, he replied, “What is there to say to one who should be charged with high treason for having stuck a stamp on the envelope with the emperor's likeness upside-down!”

As for the matter of persuasion insofar as children are concerned, it is well known that generally children have inborn awe and respect for authority and no sophisticated reasons have to be given to them about the existence of G-d and His watchfulness, etc. On the

contrary, they would only be confused if one would attempt to use any such persuasive arguments with them. It is also well known that some of our great luminaries wished and prayed that they would have the simple faith of a child in HaShem. Of course, when there is a deliberate and conscious effort to keep G-d out of the public school, it is bound to undermine this natural faith in children, the fear of G-d, which is the beginning of all wisdom and the first prerequisite of education of the young

With blessing,

P.S. What is written above is in no way a contradiction to continuing your efforts at persuasion with those whom you meet and who are not as yet convinced of the vital importance of silent prayer in the public school.

By the Grace of G-d
28th of Nissan, 5743
Brooklyn, N.Y.

The Hon. R. Boschwitz
U.S. Senator
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Greeting and Blessing:

I have always been impressed — since you have assumed your Senatorial duties — with the dedication and untiring efforts which you have demonstrated in carrying out your most responsible task in general, as well as with your consistent personal involvement in furthering the vital activities of Lubavitch in your State and elsewhere.

I was, therefore, all the more sorry to hear that you have not been up to par healthwise lately. However, you did not allow it to interfere in any way with your vigorous activities.

I hope and pray that this letter will find you in much improved health, as well as in a much improved business situation, both of which are getting better and better.

As we are coming from Pesach, the Season of Our Liberation, may it bring you and yours, in the midst of all our Jewish people, a full measure of liberation from

all anxieties and distractions, so as to be able to carry out your ultimate mission in life which, as our Sages express it, is “I was created to serve my Creator” — a service which calls for the utilization of one’s fullest capacities and opportunities; and may you do this in good health and with joy and gladness of heart.

As I have often emphasized, especially of late, the duty of a Jew in carrying out his mission in life (“I was created to serve my Creator”) includes not only service to our Jewish people, but also service to the society and world at large through the promotion of the eternal truths of morality, justice and common weal. It is for this reason that I have been a strong advocate of instituting a non-denominational prayer — in present situation a moment of silence — in the public schools, which I consider most essential in reminding the children every school day that there is a “Seeing Eye and a Hearing Ear,” a Supreme Being to Whom everyone is accountable for one’s actions and behavior. I have also been a strong advocate of granting some form of financial relief to parents who choose to send their children to religious schools, and of Federal aid to such schools, at least to their secular departments. In view of the fact that Pres. Reagan has unequivocally expressed himself in favor of this stand, it should be a further inducement to support it actively, especially as it is gaining a growing number of adherents in the U.S.A.

Looking forward to hearing good news from you in
all above, and

With esteem and blessing,

By the Grace of G-d
Erev Shovuos, 5743
Brooklyn, N.Y.

The Honorable R. Boschwitz, U.S.S.
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Greeting and Blessing:

I was pleased to receive your note at this auspicious time on the eve of the Festival of Shovuos, the Season (Anniversary) of the Giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai.

To begin with a blessing, I extend to you and your family prayerful wishes for a joyous and inspiring Yom-Tov of “receiving the Torah with joy and inwardness” — to use the traditional Chabad expression.

On the subject matter of your note, I wish to state at once that I appreciate your candor in expressing your views not only on points of our agreement, but also where we differ. Needless to say, in any discussion or debate, where one party sincerely desires to convince the other, complete candor is of the essence.

A further prerequisite is to find some common denominator, or background, if the debaters are to achieve a consensus on the issue. This presents no problem in the present case, since we both start from the same premise: what is best for the Nation.

Of course, Erev Yom Tov is hardly the time to enter into a lengthy discussion on so serious a subject. I will therefore address briefly one aspect of the issue.

By way of a foreword — everything in our imperfect world has both positive and negative aspects; hence it is essentially a question of proportion, whether the positive outweighs the negative, or vice versa, and to what extent.

Now, in regard to the reservations or objections pertaining to a moment of silent meditation in the public schools — and at issue, in my suggestion, is only just that and not a non-denominational prayer; and similarly in regard to aid to parochial schools towards such expenditures as transportation, lunches, and other **non-religious** items — any and all reservations pertain only to a small number of school children; whereas the benefit would accrue to the **vast** majority of the school children, not just a 51-49 majority. Millions of American children would be impacted by the opportunity to meditate every morning and remind themselves that an ever-watchful “Seeing Eye and Hearing Ear” scrutinizes their conduct.

I am purposely avoiding reference to the question of “constitutionality” for the simple reason — **entre nous** — that the Constitution of the United States was designed “by the people for the people,” namely, for the benefit of the people. Hence, if the majority of the people

decide that a moment of meditation is good for the people, particularly since it concerns the young generation, in whom the American people have a vital stake — then there are legitimate ways, provided by the Constitution itself — to amend the Constitution, if necessary.

Incidentally, I have inquired from several legal experts and have been informed that actually no constitutional amendment is needed, since State Legislatures have the power to upgrade the educational system in the State and to provide State aid to the secular department of parochial schools, and the like.

The reason I underscored “**entre nous**” above, is that there are, sad to say, people (not in insignificant numbers) who, when determined to fight an issue, are not very selective in their methods. When such people run out of rational arguments, they will grasp at any specious argument to gain converts, or to confuse the issue. Thus, if they hear that I said that the constitutional argument is irrelevant to the issue at hand, they will raise a hue and cry that here comes a person who is not a native American, only a naturalized alien, who seeks to undermine the Constitution of the U. S. A., etc.

As already mentioned, it is not the most convenient time for me to elaborate on this matter, but I don't think it necessary to do so in your case.

I will reiterate my prayerful wishes for a joyous and inspiring Festival, and may the joy and inspiration overflow into all the days ahead.

With esteem and blessing,

לזכות

החתן הרה"ת מנחם מענדל שי'

והכלה מרת שרה תי'

באנו

לרגל נישואיהם

בשעה טובה ומוצלחת

•

נדפס ע"י הוריהם

הרב שלמה ומרת מטי שיחיו באנו

הרב מאיר אליעזר ומרת לאה דבורה שיחיו שמוקלער