

## **RABBI'S MESSAGE**

### **LIFE LONG LEARNING**

Recently, I was visiting an elderly patient in the hospital. As we had never met before, we began with some innocent conversation. I asked, "Have you lived in Texas all your life?" His response caught me off-guard.

Defiantly, he said, "Not yet!"

We all have mileposts that mark particular events along life's journeys. Our goals take on many forms. Some are educational, reaching a certain level or degree that endorses a level of study. Some goals have to do with family, like a marriage, anniversary or development of children and grandchildren. Some are professional, getting that next job or promotion or accomplishing a specific project work project. Others are health-related, finding the right nutrition, exercise and (if needed) medical treatment that will help us maintain healthy living. Whatever our goals, most seem to have one thing in common; when we reach the goal, we're not really done. There is always something new for us on the horizon, so we can continue to strive and to stretch, to learn and to grow. Our personal relationships, our professional development, our health all need continuous nurturing.

Nothing emphasizes that better than learning. No matter how many college degrees or certificates we pile up, there is always more to learn. Jewish learning is not just about information. It is about concepts, values and actions that lead to making the world a better place. In a Talmudic discussion, rabbis were asked, "Which is greater, study or action?" According to the Talmud, "Rabbi Tarfun answered, saying: Action is greater. Rabbi Akiva answered, saying: Study is greater. All the rest agreed with Akiva that study is greater when it leads to action."

Learning does not end with a degree any more than our need for water ends by taking a drink. In fact, the sages compared Torah learning to water, as we continue to thirst for knowledge.

Fortunately, both the Temple Beth Torah and the Jewish community of Houston offer multiple opportunities. Our Sunday adult groups, with the Torah Outreach Resource Center of Houston (TORCH) and our Cup of Wisdom discussion groups help stimulate the adult mind. We have just doubled the Lunch and Learn opportunities, as those who regularly study with me have requested, we go to twice a month. Other opportunities come up often, one of the best is Houston's Yom Limmud, which will be held at Beth Yeshurun on February 17. Yom Limmud is celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and it is clearly not close to being finished! It includes dozens of classes from local and guest scholars, as well as entertaining concerts of Jewish music. As learning leads to action, it is no coincidence that the theme of Yom Limmud this year is "Making the world a better place: If not now, when?" (a quote from Hillel in Pirke Avot). As our children begin their foundation of learning in Sunday classes, adults set the example by taking advantage of the many learning opportunities.

Have we learned enough? NOT YET!

L'shalom,  
*Rabbi Dan Gordon*