

“JUL TAKEAWAY”

I am still on a high from this past Sunday. Not from the wine or the great food but from the whole JUL experience.

This past Sunday, we celebrated the profound impact that the Kollel is having on our community. We were joined by three very special guests: Rabbi Aaron Kotler, Mr. Mark Bane and Mr. Howard Tzvi Friedman who shared with us their experiences from the halls of Washington to the halls of Jewish day schools.

As most of you heard, these unique leaders sit at the top of Jewish communal life and frequent the halls and offices of the most powerful and influential people in America. They coalesce, unite and reach over the aisle and make things happen. This takes strategy, resolve and resilience. Years of planning, relationship development and trust building.

Upon reflection, the common thread that keeps these men going is their love for every Jew. As we heard them all say, “We don't look at affiliation. We don't judge people by the level of their observance. We don't even talk negatively about other Jews. We want to ensure a vibrant Klal Yisroel unified by Torah learning. We want every child to have the opportunity to get a Jewish education. We want to ensure that every Jewish community has the essentials for Jewish life to thrive.” (And yes, even a Kosher restaurant.)

How appropriate and timely it is for us to hear this message. Chazal share with us that three out of the four main mitzvot on Purim are intended to bring us together. Haman said to Achasvarosh, 'There is a nation spread out amongst us'. This was his sign that the Jews are now in a vulnerable position. When they are not together, they lose their protection. Esther told Mordechai 'go gather the Jews'. She was saying that I will only have some level of a chance at my meeting to bring down Haman if you bring the Jews together.

We celebrate Purim by sending Mishloach manos, giving gifts to the poor and eating a festive meal together. That is how we overpower the forces who are out to get us. As our board President Mayer Klein said. 'Kollel means inclusive!' We look to bring our brothers and sisters together. To grow together. To appreciate each other and to perpetuate Jewish unity. As Mr. Bane said, 'Not Jewish uniformity but Jewish unity.'

May we take the coming week in preparation for Purim to look for ways to bring ourselves closer to each other, and may this bring the ultimate redemption speedily in our days. (*Rabbi Shaya Mintz*)