

An Open Letter to the Pittsburgh Community...

Torah learning has long been the keystone of Jewish existence. The study of Torah at every age level has kept the Jewish mind and intellect razor honed as Jews in every generation pursue the study of Chumash, the Prophets, Ethics and the deeper concepts of the Talmud. It has long been felt by many in the Pittsburgh community, that Pittsburgh too, should have an active center for advanced Torah study on an adult level, to enable men in the professions and in business to systematically and conscientiously set aside specific times for Torah learning. The Jewish dictum, "And you shall set a time for Torah study" has a high priority in Jewish living. It is an authentic Jewish view that every person should continue his Jewish studies according to his level, within the limitation of his own time, as long as G-d grants him life on earth.

It is therefore with pride and justifiable excitement that we welcome the establishment of the Pittsburgh Kollel, an Institute for Advanced Jewish Learning, to be known as Beth Yitzchak. Named in honor of Irwin Weiss, whose children have made a magnificent charitable grant toward the establishment of the Pittsburgh Kollel, this institution becomes the first Institute for Higher Jewish Study and Research in Pennsylvania.

As Rabbis of Synagogues in the Pittsburgh Community and as leaders in Jewish education institutions here, we extend a warm handclasp of welcome and friendship to Rabbi Nachum Lansky of Ner Israel Yeshiva of Baltimore and Rabbi Meir Hertz of Beth Medrash Govoha, Lakewood, who will jointly head this center for Jewish learning in our community. We are gratified to know that a great number of Jewish men and women in this community have pledged and will see to fruition the active establishment of this oasis of Torah learning in this renaissance city. True, each of us conducts classes and seminars in our own Congregations, but there can be no substitute for the fulness of the Torah learning program as evidenced in the Kollel concept in authentic Jewish living. In practical terms this means that ten young men who have already distinguished themselves as Torah scholars, and their families have been invited to take up residence in Pittsburgh as the primary step in this Torah learning orientation in our community.

We applaud this forward stride and earnestly look to an era of meaningful accomplishment in an atmosphere of mutual respect and concern on the part of the entire Jewish community. It is our prayerful hope that we will cut across denominational lines to fashion a viable program of in-depth Jewish learning, to which everyone will be able to relate, according to his level of Jewish knowledge and observance.

May the coming years bring happiness and contentment, good fortune and success to the entire Pittsburgh community.

To the concerned hub of this valuable project, we offer an appreciative bow and the prayerful hope that they be granted good health and good fortune to continue their energetic involvement in the success of this "keystone for Jewish survival".

We deem it a special Mitzvah that we merit to have the Kollel established here in Pittsburgh during this period of our tenure as guides to an ever growing community of positive-thinking Jews. Mazal tov to all of us.

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RABBI MORRIS LANDES,
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