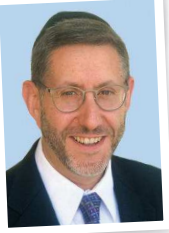


FROM THE EDITORWWW.JEWISHLIFE.CO.ZA

We're recently back from a family trip to the USA in which, besides for our usual visits with close family and friends, we had the unusual good fortune to visit Lakewood, New Jersey, home to the second largest yeshiva in the world, Beth Medrash Govoha, as well as to visit The Living Torah Museum in Boro Park (see page 60 to learn all about this remarkable place).

It was an incredibly inspirational trip and I couldn't help but reflect on how differently my children have grown up from the way that I did.

We talk about the Torah in terms of it being an inheritance, but many Jews, without giving it much thought, bequeath to their children a "dead" Judaism, rather than a "living" one; a Judaism in which children are more familiar with the names of cities that housed concentration and labour camps than of the cities that housed Yeshivos. They know Auschwitz, Birkenau, and Treblinka, but do they know Slabodka, Telshe, and Ponevezh? They know all about events like the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, but do they know about the Mir Yeshiva's miraculous route of salvation through Kobe and Shanghai? They know the names of survivors and have heard their stories of the camps, but do they know the stories of the people who went on to rebuild Torah Judaism and keep the flame of Torah burning? How many of the children who have visited and toured concentration camps have ever set foot inside a Beis Medrash (a yeshiva study hall)?

Sadly, many children grow up with a Judaism focused on suffering and surviving, rather than on sacrificing, thriving, and building; with a Judaism lost in, obsessed with, and completely focused on the past instead of one aimed at the future. Consider, for example, how often references to the Holocaust appear on social media. There's no mitzvah to speak of Jewish suffering every day. Tisha B'Av is one day a year. We should keep it that way. I remember a colleague of mine who would always respond to people speaking of bad news and dark times by saying, "Don't make Tisha B'Av!" In other words, don't be a pessimist; don't focus on the negative! There are clear halachic limits to the amount that we mourn any loss.

And I thought about how important it has been to me – to someone who grew up with the Holocaust, what is more correctly called Churban Europa, as a pillar of his Jewish education, with a constant emphasis on Jewish suffering – to teach my children that Judaism and Torah are alive, that they are relevant, inspirational, and meaningful still today and will continue to be so tomorrow and forever.

We need to ask ourselves: What do we want to show our children about Jewish life? What does it mean to us? How do we tell our story (and not just on Pesach, but every day)? What people, storylines, and plot points do we choose to emphasise? Why do we put the focus on such things? What's the goal of telling our story to our children and why is it so important that they know it? What do we hope to inspire in them?

The Chanukah menorah on the cover is the oldest one known to exist. It dates back roughly to seventy years after the events of Chanukah and is part of the collection at the Living Torah Museum. It has nine holes in a straight line because, as Rabbi Shaul Shimon Deutsch explained to us, it was made before our Sages decreed that the shamash had to be recognisably different from the other eight lights! I held it in my hands. At the time it was found, it was one of the oldest, if not the oldest Jewish artefact ever discovered. Since then, much more has been discovered, including things that are much older – like, for example, the clay seals (bullae), dating back to more than 300 years before the events of Chanukah, of which my Israeli tour guide at Ir Dovid (the City of David) spoke and which belonged to two of the men who plotted to kill Yirmiyahu HaNavi, the prophet Jeremiah!

Seeing such things, literally touching history, is a reminder that these aren't just stories in our holy books. These events happened. They're real. The people in the pages of our holy books really existed. Our mesorah (the tradition handed down from teacher to student tracing all the way back to Moshe Rabbeinu) is true.

We owe it to our children to give them a living Judaism, to share with them a vibrant, exciting, and relevant Torah – to let them touch our history and to be profoundly and irrevocably touched by it; to share with them stories of our triumphs and how we have, with G-d's endless kindnesses and supervision, always risen from the ashes, rebuilding and rejuvenating, continuing forward. Every day is a chance to share our incredible and inspiring story with our children – even when we're on holiday.

From everyone at *JL*, freilichen Chanukah!

ROBERT SUSSMAN,
EDITOR

CREDITS**PUBLISHER & MANAGING DIRECTOR**

Martyn Samuels
martyn@jewishlife.co.za

EDITOR

Robert Sussman
robert@jewishlife.co.za

ART DIRECTOR

Rizelle Hartmeier
studio26@telkomsa.net

FEATURES WRITER

Chandrea Serebro

COPY EDITOR/PROOFREADER

Dovid Samuels

DIGITAL MANAGER

David Blumenau
david@jewishlife.co.za

CONTRIBUTORS

Emuna Braverman, Rabbi Dr David Fox, Dean Furman,
Bev Goldman, Rabbi Yossy Goldman, Wendy Kahn,
Serenne Kaplan, Ilan Preskovsky, Dovid Samuels,
Liz Samuels, Chandrea Serebro, Orit Taback,
Michelle Vinokur, Aron Ziegler

Printers Paarlmedia kzn

Distribution

Merle Jacobson
Marc Levitt

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**ON THE COVER:**

Terra cotta oil lamp with nine oil fonts and an additional opening for the insertion of oil, measuring 12,4cm long by 7,5cm wide, intended for use as a Chanukah menorah, dating back to the period of the Second Temple. In the words of Dr Meir Ben Dov, Archeologist and Field Director, Temple Mount Excavations, "...it is an object of extraordinary significance." (From a document dated 6 December 1988). Cover photo of menorah by Robert Sussman.