

B"H – Gala Address

Two men are waiting for a train. The younger man asks the older man for the time, but the older man ignores him. After a while, the younger man again asks for the time and again the older man ignores him. Frustrated, the younger man finally asks, "Why won't you answer me when I ask you for the time?"

The older man sighs and explains: "Look, if I tell you the time, we'll start to talk. Then when the train comes, you'll sit next to me. We'll talk and get to know each other. I'll invite you to my house for Shabbos dinner. You will meet my daughter. You will hit it off with each other, and why not? She is beautiful, smart and from a fine family. You'll probably get engaged! Now tell me, why would I want a son-in-law like you who can't even afford a watch?"

Tonight we celebrate community and Chabad's role in building, creating and maintaining it – without judgment.

There are many people I want to give a shout out to for being an integral part of the Chabad of the Main Line operations - Brian and Janice Bolton our maintenance staff, Chaviva Leif who handles our bookkeeping, Mrs. Bracha Bettoun for pioneering our Kindershil that provides meaningful children's programming during services at Chabad, and of course Phyllis Colman our office manager, who tirelessly dedicates herself to the cause, but especially these past few weeks leading up to the gala. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

We also want to recognize those that support Chabad through the State of Pennsylvania's Educational Improvement Tax Credits, otherwise known as the EITC program. This allows you to personally direct a substantial amount of your personal or corporate State Income tax towards Jewish education. If your income tax burden is over \$6,000 annually, please see me or Rabbi Mendy Cohen about this opportunity. It is truly a win-win.

During the coming year we will be launching our Chabad Tomorrow Legacy Project. Estate planning is crucial to ensure our loved ones are well taken care when we are no longer here to provide for them. Chabad wants to help you create your spiritual legacy. Just think of the enormous good a substantial bequest to Chabad of the Main Line can accomplish at some point in the future. As the saying goes, "Our lives are not measured in years, but are measured in the lives of people we touch around us."

My wife, Michal - whom by the way, without her boundless patience, never-ending tolerance and deep support none of this would be possible – and I want to especially recognize Mendy and Temma Cohen.

Through the Gan Chabad Montessori Preschool and Chabad's Family Community, hundreds of young Jewish families are being reached, giving them the tools to live a Jewish life filled with growth and meaning.

We have tremendous pride and nachas seeing your success. May your impact on others continue to multiply.

For the history buffs, especially Jewish history aficionados, we are commemorating an important event tomorrow.

On this date, the first day of the Hebrew month of Sivan, 3331 years ago, under the leadership of Charlton Hesston, I mean Moses, we arrived at foot of Mount Sinai. Aside from just arriving at their destination, the Torah hints to us a much more significant communal experience.

The Torah describes our ancestor's arrival at the mount with the words *vayichan sham neged hahar* – "Israel encamped there facing the mountain."

For those with a little knowledge of Hebrew grammar, the word "*vayichan*", means that "he", a singular individual, encamped facing the mountain. Yet this verse is referring to millions of Jewish men, women and children that left Egypt 6 weeks earlier and finally arrive at Mt. Sinai. It should have said "*vayachnu*" and they encamped, as opposed to "*vayichan*" – and he encamped.

This grammatical anomaly gives us insight into one of the greatest Jewish lessons of all times. Our Sages explain that this verse is not only telling us where they arrived, but more importantly HOW they arrived. And it has a uniquely Chabad-like ring to it.

The use of the singular verb, *vayichan*, in reference to the multitudes of Israel, teaches us that they were united like one person, with one heart: an essential unity.

They were **not** a collaborative unity that rallies around a particular cause, reason or common motive. No, this was an essential unity of self, which transcends beyond cause, reason or motive.

We are intrinsically bonded with each from the inside out. Beyond levels of observance, beyond the conventional labels, beyond whether you own a watch or not, we are one essential unity. Tomorrow is the anniversary of that experience. How special is it that we are reenacting that exact same convocation of unity, tonight 3,331 years later.

G-d's presence refuses to dwell amid discord and disharmony. Only when the Jews were unified in harmony with each other could they achieve the harmony with G-d necessary in order to receive His Torah.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe comments the Jews were able to unite at Mount Sinai because they were "facing the mountain" – i.e., focused on the Torah. Since we all possess different intellectual faculties, emotions, character traits, and viewpoints, there is no natural way that we can maintain our individuality and still function as one unified body. Only if we are focused on G-d do our differences suddenly cease to be obstacles to unity. Our differences still exist, for

they are all necessary in order to fulfill our collective Divine mission. But our shared devotion to G-d's will transforms these differences into stepping-stones toward our goal rather than barriers to it.

The Rebbe once asked an Israeli educator and activist, "Why is the heart of the human being on the left side? Everything good in Judaism is on the right side, the side which represents kindness. We put on tefillin with the right hand, we shake hands with the right hand, we hold the Torah scroll on our right side etc., so why is the heart on the left?"

Unable to answer the Rebbe proceed to explain. "Because when you face another Jew, your heart is opposite their right side and their right hand. For your heart beats not for you but for the other, for the fellow whom you must love as yourself."

This is the meaning of *vayichan* – like one person with one heart. Make your heart beat for others, make your life centered on the needs of others. When you do that, then your heart is on the right side.

This is the message Chabad brings to and actualizes in the community. It's our *modus operandi*. Its value is a function of how much the whole, values the individual. Community acquires its worth when it supports each individual's unique G-d given mission. Tonight is a time to notice the synchronization of collective muscle and personal empowerment.

Look around at the diversity of tonight's over 300 attendees. Different politics, shuls, temples, organizational affiliations, present levels of Mitzvah observance, socio economic groupings, social groups, generations, etc.

To capture the powerful Divine energy accessible to us on this day, with 3,331 years of momentum, simply say hello to someone you don't know. Don't stick just with who you know. Be adventurous. Ask someone you don't know, what time it is (whether you have a watch or not). Connect, make a new acquaintance. Please use tonight to experience that essential unity that our ancestors experienced three millennia ago tonight.

Our honorees embody that message of essential unity. The four of them represent how our shared devotion transforms differences into stepping-stones towards our goal rather than barriers to it. And our Jewish community is so much better for it!

Thank you again to Dan and Maita, Marty and Jen, for investing all that you do in our community and the leadership you provide. May you be blessed with abundant Yiddishe and Chassidishe nachas from your families.

Thanks also to all of you for coming this evening in support of our honorees and Chabad of the Main Line.

Please direct your attention to the screen for our final video.

Thank you again.