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knew for a long time. So as we sit by the Seder, we should think about the state of the world and how we really need Moshiach.

Arveh Freilech

Dear Editor,

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg has changed felonies to misdemeanors and increased crime in NYC. By indicting former President Trump, he has turned a misdemeanor into a felony. Our nation is broken, and the vultures will start to circle around us. China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea are licking their lips in anticipation of further chaos.

Sincerely,

Wendy Penner

Great Neck, NY

Dear Editor,

This week, I read a letter written by one of your readers and had to write in after reading it.

She wrote about seeing a high school girl in a clothing store and how the girl was saying that she was off from school for two weeks and was so bored and was just shopping all day because there was nothing to do at home.

I can't say I was shocked to read the letter. In fact, when you walk down Cen-

tral Avenue these days, you are bombarded by packs of girls who are either shopping or eating in coffee shops or restaurants. These girls really don't have anything to do. Their cleaning girls are doing all the cleaning in their homes; their mothers may or may not be cooking, but many of them are heading out of town for Pesach and their only focus is getting the right clothes.

Yes, this is a generalization. There are many families that stay home and many wonderful young girls who help their mothers. But I cannot agree more with the person who wrote in that something has to be changed in the school calendar. No one needs their kids home for two weeks before yom tov. Even if these kids work "so hard" during the school year, they don't need two weeks off before a 10-day yom tov. These kids are out of school for almost a month!

The way I see it, we are giving our kids a very strong message: school is not a priority; shopping is. We are telling them very clearly that they should be spending their time spending money and buying clothes. After all, we live in the Five Towns. Do we expect them, on their very long off time, to just be going to the library all day?

My concern is for the future genera-

tions. As schools are (partly) responsible for our children's chinuch, are we raising young women whose values are in line with wholesome Yiddishkeit? Or are these young women going to be mothers who shop all day, concerned with making sure that every headband and sock is matching their three-year-old's t-shirt?

As parents, we can try our hardest to impart the right values, but if schools aren't helping us with this issue by giving these girls too much time to do "nothing," then we are fighting a losing battle. And the ones who really end up losing out will, chas v'shalom, be the future generations.

Sincerely,

A Reader

Dear Editor,

The only way to help diminish the flames of vitriol and hate is to throw the waters of love and understanding on them.

I applaud the workings of Be A Mensch. By going into communities and showing them that charedim are not pariahs; we are not horrible people; we have emotions, struggles, challenges, joys, hobbies just like them, we can help to bring Jews of all affiliations to come closer.

We are frightened by those we don't know. But we can love those who we know.

We can all do this work on our own in our own way. If you see someone who may not be affiliated with Yiddishkeit at the grocery or library, say hello. Wish them a good day. Give them a smile. Show them that frum people are nice and warm and loving.

May the work on this wonderful organization help to bring Jews closer together, and may our nation see the good within each other.

Avi Rosenberg

Dear Editor,

This is in response to the reader who laments the amount of time off our high school girls have before Pesach.

I am the mother of a high school girl, and I can tell you with 100% certainty that this time off is a much needed break. Since you don't yet have a daughter this age you are not privy to the abundant amount of work that these girls are assigned. Every night, there is another major exam to study for and this does not include all other obligations such as chessed, extra-curriculars, and the occasional babysitting job.

The problem is not the school calendar but rather the idea that girls this age need to be constantly occupied. Growing

up, I did not always have to be entertained. If I was bored, I kept it to myself and found something to do. I am fortunate to have daughters who understand this concept and have learned to cherish their downtime. I work locally and have seen the streets of Cedarhurst fill up with teenage girls doing their pre-Yom Tov "shopping," so I do acknowledge that there is a problem here. But again, this time off is, in fact, necessary and healthy, and it is certainly something the girls can and should look forward to.

A Five Towns Mom of a High School Girl

Dear Editor,

Rabbi Yaakov Harari and Harvard-educated David Sacks each point out an idea that frames what to extrapolate from the Seder.

Sacks, in the name of Rav Shlomo Carlebach, relays that the greatest son at the Seder is the *She'eino Yodea Lishol*. How can that be? It's because the one who is in such awe of G-d for enabling him to breathe, walk and even succeed and on top of that for miraculously being freed from slavery is unable to talk. The pure miracle of what is, of nature, is breathtaking and strips the ability to try to say anything, as the wonderment is above words.



Rabbi Harari focuses on the stanza, "*Mitchila ovdei avodah zara*," emphasizing that in the beginning we were slaves to certain practices, and ultimately in the end, G-d brought us close to Him. This area of the *haggadah* focuses on the unbelievable hardship that we had to go through in order to rid ourselves of our lackings.

As Chazal say, *Mitzrayim* was a *kur habarzel*, a fiery furnace that purified us. Life is about work. Work brings growth and purification. When we work on ourselves to the limit, G-d pulls us close to Him. Understandably, the *Rasha* asks why we are so infatuated with work. The clear answer is that the one who fails in life is the one who doesn't put in his full effort.

These two tracks are really the ways to come close to G-d. As Avraham, one must look at nature and see the Creator, whereby the Creator will pull the person even closer. Nature delivers awe, astonishment, and speechlessness.

The second is through working in Torah and on oneself. Burning out one's impurities with the furnace of Torah and fierce introspection will pave the path to closeness to G-d. And as with the lover of nature, in this case, too, G-d will pull the person closer.

Steven Genack

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