

D'var Rav: Words from the Rabbi

MOVE IT OR LOSE IT!

As anybody who has ever set foot in a gym knows all too well, our bodies and muscles must be in a state of regular and vigorous motion if we are to achieve health and success. Whether we're hitting the weights, performing a cardio workout, or stretching, movement and exertion determine our results: increased strength or further atrophy.

The same dynamic is true in the realm of moral activism. I have been using individual and communal activism as our shul's theme for this season, and we all know that, sadly, there is no shortage of causes—and crises—roiling our country, and our world, that warrant our immediate attention and action.

We need to open our hearts before we can extend our hands. Empathy is necessary for action, and compassion for commitment. If we neglect to use our *hearts*—and we must not forget that the heart, too, is a muscle—then our capacity for compassion and our impulse to do just deeds will begin to atrophy. As a direct and terrible consequence of inner inaction, both our souls and the world around us will suffer.

We need to move it, or we'll lose it.

The Jewish sage Hillel asked famously, "If not now, when?" A few centuries before him, Aristotle argued that good habits were the key to moral behavior. In order to create the culture of action and activism that is so needed in our era, we must act justly, immediately, and with unwavering regularity.

Social transformation comes from diligence and consistency.

There are many entry points for action today. By the time you read this, for example, we will have announced our community's commitment to work with the American Jewish World Service to help combat the human catastrophe that is happening in Darfur, an especially dire situation that we as Jews have a special obligation not just to bear witness to, but to bear part of the burden for bringing to an *end*. This work must not stop until the genocide has stopped.

What is at stake? The lives of hundreds of thousands of innocent human beings, no doubt—but also our own *souls*, our credibility as a responsible and moral world community. And, as citizens of the most powerful and influential nation on earth, we members of The New Shul are in a unique position to do good—but only if we act, act now, and don't stop acting until that horror has been brought to a halt, once and for all.

Let us join together in this sacred task.

Let us exercise our hearts.

Let the idea of being a “Kingdom of Prophets” be more than a theological catchphrase—let it inspire our community to become the center of moral and spiritual activism that our tradition demands.

B’shalom, Niles