



Moment of Silence

As the nossi of the generation tasked with bringing Moshiach, the Rebbe educated us to focus not only on strengthening the global Jewish community, but empowered us to meaningfully engage every human being in the world.

We conclude the three daily tefillos with Aleinu—historically this often demanded great mesiras nefesh—in which we declare our mission to bring awareness of Hashem to every person, לתקן עולם במלכות ש-די. For generations this was impossible to achieve explicitly and overtly, but standing now on the threshold of geulah—moments before the dira betachtoinim is realized in its entirety—we are empowered to ensure that this crucial message inspires society at large.

Clearly the most effective way to elevate society is through the youth, and the tone set in the education system plays a major role in shaping the future. Throughout the Rebbe's nesius, the crucial need for elevating the standard of moral and ethical education for all people was an important theme, and the Rebbe's advocacy of how to accomplish this often coincided with the realities on the ground.

In the 5720s the Rebbe vigorously campaigned for school prayer. In the 5740s the Rebbe promoted the advantage of instituting a “moment of silence”—not prayer—at the start of each school day. This article explores the various sichos and igros about this crucial topic and their historical backdrop.

Rabbi Dovid Margolin assisted in the preparation of this article. זכות הרבים תלוי בו.

לזכות הילד ישראל שלום נ"י
לרגל יום ההולדת י"ז חשוון

יה"ר שיגדל לתורה לחופה ולמעשים טובים
מתוך בריאות נכונה ושפע בגו"ר
לנח"ר כ"ק אדמו"ר והוריו הי"ו

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School Prayer

School prayer was a common feature of the educational system in America dating back to colonial times. The pilgrims who initially settled in North America, the founding fathers of this country, and the vast majority of American citizens were religious and most schools included regular prayer and Bible study in their curriculums.

In 1955 the New York Board of Regents composed a voluntary prayer to be recited in public schools at the beginning of the school day after the Pledge of Allegiance:

“Almighty G-d, we acknowledge our dependence on Thee, and we beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers and our country.”

Notice this prayer is non-denominational and neutral, with no religious references whatsoever. In addition, the law allowed students to absent themselves from this activity if they found it objectionable.

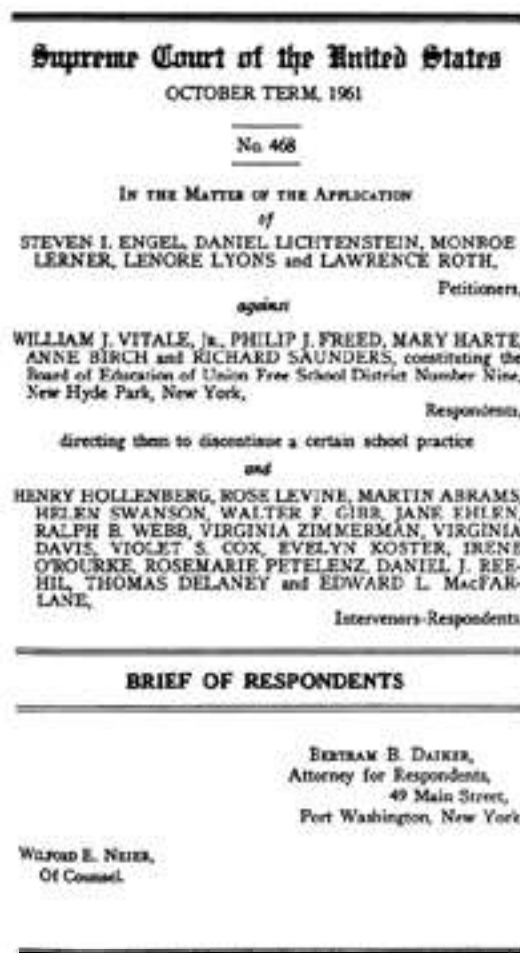
In 1962 a group of families of public school students (mostly Jews) in Long Island sued the school board president William J. Vitale, Jr. They claimed that the government-authored Regents Prayer violated their religious beliefs and they challenged the constitutionality of the prayer being recited in government-run public schools.

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution reads as follows: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” They argued that this text prohibits the government from directing and encouraging children to recite prayers in government schools.

The case, known as *Engel v. Vitale* went all the way up to the US Supreme Court and caused tremendous national controversy. Many government officials and educators argued against this misguided interpretation of the First Amendment, but unfortunately there were many, including prominent Jewish organizations, that supported the lawsuit and vigorously argued against the constitutionality of the prayer.



5722-1962



In a 6-1 landmark decision, the US Supreme Court ruled that official organization, sponsorship, or endorsement of school prayer in public schools is forbidden by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. Teachers and school officials may not lead classes in prayer, but prayer is permitted at voluntary religious clubs, and students are not prohibited from praying themselves.

The decision sent shockwaves throughout the nation and the debate raged in every corner of American society. Within the Orthodox Jewish world the Rebbe stood out as a lone voice encouraging rabbonim, leaders and activists to make this issue a top priority—from a halachic perspective as well as a moral obligation to advocate for the good of our country.

The Call of the Hour

During the farbrengen of 12 Tammuz 5722*, less than a month after the court decision was announced, the Rebbe explained how this was a travesty for the hundreds of

thousands of Jewish children as well as millions of non-Jewish children enrolled in public school that would be educated without daily prayer.

“Hundreds of thousands of Jewish children are not educated to daven every weekday and many of them do not go to shul even on Shabbos and Yom Tov. Hashem had mercy on them and the government composed a tefilla that has all the main components of a legitimate tefilla: requesting their needs from

Hashem. As a result they were all observing the mitzvah of davening daily.”

“The obligation to believe in Hashem applies to every human being as well and this tefilla brought this awareness to millions of non-Jewish children on a daily basis.”¹

The tragedy was compounded by the fact that the opponents to the Regents Prayer were Jews and it was crucial for every Jew with any measure of influence to do everything possible to overturn this terrible ruling.

How can you silence them?!

In a letter⁷ dated 24 Cheshvan 5723*, after a lengthy halachic explanation explaining his position on the Supreme Court's ban of prayer in schools, the Rebbe concluded:

I venture, however, to address myself also to the sentiments and imagination of everyone whose heart is alert to what is happening around him, and is especially sensitive to the problems of the growing generation, to view the problem as an image projected against the background of our critical time.

In our present day and age of rising tension and insecurity under the threat of a nuclear war; of the steadily growing might of communism making ever greater encroachments upon the free world, steadily extending its influence not only over newly captured territories, but also over the minds of people living in the free democracies; of mounting juvenile delinquency —

America has been blessed with hundreds of thousands of children, boys and girls, Jewish and gentile, throughout the width and breadth of these United States, who daily raise their youthful voices in prayer to G-d, acknowledging that He is the Master of the Universe, invoking His blessings upon their country and all who are dear to them, and expressing their confidence in His benevolence.

With this image in mind, can anyone raise his hand to silence this vast body of American youth, saying: “Stop praising G-d! Stop praying to Him! It is forbidden to do so in the American Public School!”

What would be the effect of such an order on all these youths? Can anything explain away to their young minds, far removed from Constitutional Law, the impact of such a prohibition in this country, where the free exercise of religion is one of its most cherished values?

Socialist Influence

Shalom Levin was an Israeli teacher and politician who served as a member of the Knesset as a member of the Mapai party. Earlier in his career he served as the secretary of the Teachers' Union in Israel and in the summer of 5723* was elected chairman of the International Federation of Free Teachers' Unions (IFFTU).

On 2 Elul 5723*⁸ the Rebbe wrote a long letter to Mr. Levin describing the deplorable reality of public education in most developed countries in the world, specifically in the area of morals and ethics. While children are growing in their knowledge and social skills, their ability to control their urges and desires is deteriorating rapidly.

After encouraging him to utilize his new position of leadership in an organization that deals with education on an international level to influence schools to include more religious education in their curriculums, the Rebbe deals with the irony of requesting this from someone who is not religious.

“Perhaps it may seem strange that I am sending this request to a member of a political party that is not religious; on the contrary, a socialist party etc. etc. However there is no need to elaborate on the fact that the current situation is very different than when socialism started. Especially in light of the fact that the premise that socialism is against religion is unjustified, especially now.”

In a follow up letter from Aseres Yemei Teshuva 5724*, the Rebbe suggested that Mr. Levin bravely call upon educators around the world to acknowledge that morals and ethics can only truly endure when based on faith in a living, ever watching G-d who commanded us to live by them. “Not only will this have the impact of an “atomic explosion,” it will have far reaching positive effects. Perhaps this was the reason you were appointed to this position.”⁹

In a letter² addressing the convention of Agudas Harabbonim in 5723*, the Rebbe declared that the “call of the hour” was to ensure that hundreds of thousands of Jewish children be afforded the opportunity to recite a legitimate *tefilla* every day.

In a letter to Rabbi Nissen Telushkin³ the Rebbe emphasized that there was no more important matter of concern for rabbonim at the present moment. The pain is compounded, the Rebbe said, by the fact that all the mainstream Jewish organizations remained silent on the issue. Aside from giving off the impression that they agree to the terrible *gzeira*, their silence allows for other organizations who have the *chutzpah* to present themselves as legitimate representatives of Yiddishkeit to set the tone of the Jewish perspective to the policy, causing a tremendous *chillul Hashem*.

As the social battle raged in America, the Rebbe explained that his position was not only out of concern for the Jewish children learning in public schools, but also out of concern that canceling the prayer would have a devastating impact on American society in general.

When children grow up unaware of a Supreme Being that sees and hears everything, and to whom they are ultimately accountable to, society will deteriorate rapidly.

In a letter⁴ dated 26 Nissan 5724* the Rebbe laid out the fundamental principles for how a society must educate their children in order to function properly.

“In my opinion, this acknowledgment is absolutely necessary in order to impress upon the minds of our growing-up generation that the world in which they live is not a jungle, where brute force, cunning and unbridled passion rule supreme, but that it has a Master Who is not an abstraction, but a personal G-d; that this Supreme Being takes a “personal interest” in the affairs of each and every individual, and to Him everyone is accountable for one’s daily conduct...”

“It will not suffice to tell the juvenile delinquent that crime does not pay, and that he will eventually land in jail (if he is not smart enough?). Nor will he be particularly impressed if he is admonished that law-breaking is an offense against society. It is necessary to engrave upon the child’s mind the idea that any wrongdoing is an offense against the Divine authority and order...”

“Children have to be ‘trained’ from their earliest youth to be constantly aware of ‘the Eye that seeth and the Ear that heareth.’⁵ We cannot leave it to the law-enforcing agencies to be the keepers of the ethics and morals of our young generation.”

Keeping the Message Clear

A similar case came before the US Supreme Court the following year. Pennsylvania state law required that “at least ten verses from the Holy Bible [be] read, without comment,



at the opening of each public school on each school day.” Four other states mandated the daily Bible readings while it was optional in 25 others.

Edward Schempp of Pennsylvania sued his school district, claiming that this practice violated his rights. In the landmark decision of *Abington School District v. Schempp*, the US Supreme Court disallowed Bible readings in public schools for similar reasons to their ban on school prayer.

Much of the country mistakenly lumped these two issues together, rationalizing that prayer and Bible study went hand in hand.

The Rebbe went to great lengths to clarify that this specific Supreme Court ruling was appropriate and had nothing to do with the ban on prayer.

“On the other hand, as I have emphasized on more than one occasion, only a strictly non-denominational prayer, and no other, should be introduced into the public schools. Any denominational prayer or religious exercise in the public schools must be resolutely opposed on various grounds, including also the fact that these would create divisiveness and ill-feeling. Likewise must Bible reading in the public schools be



FARBRENGEN YUD SHEVAT 5743.

YOSSI MELAMED VIA JEM 139933

resolutely opposed for various reasons, including the obvious reason that the reading of the Koran and the New Testament will arouse dissension and strife.”⁹⁶

A National Crisis

Over the ensuing decades American society, specifically the youth, deteriorated in many ways, and crime rates exploded. The Rebbe addressed the terrible reality on numerous occasions and encouraged political leaders, educators and activists to emphasize moral and ethical education to save American youth, instead of focusing on policing and punishment.

Yud Shevat 5741* marked a new era in the Rebbe’s public involvement with addressing the need for changes in public education. It was the first farbrengen broadcast live on cable television and the Rebbe emphasized the importance of reintroducing prayer into the public schools. It could be simply the words “In G-d We Trust” so that children verbalize this important message every day.¹⁰

Two weeks before Yud-Alef Nissan 5741*, a young man named John Hinckley Jr. shot and almost killed President Ronald Reagan in Washington. At the farbrengen the Rebbe pointed out that the would-be assassin was raised in relative wealth and privilege and the fact that he was able to attempt such a thing is an indictment on the education of the youth. The fact that G-d had been taken out of the schools was the cause for this horrible situation.¹¹

On 12 Tammuz 5741* the Rebbe recounted speaking to the attorney general of New York, referring to Louis J. Lefkowitz, the longest-serving attorney general of New York in history. Lefkowitz’s time in office stretched from the end of the School Prayer era through New York’s record-setting crime rates of the late 1970s.

“So I asked him: ‘You’ve been the attorney general for decades now. What is the explanation for the fact that when you began your career, the crime rate was far lower, there were far fewer incidents, but from year to year, under your leadership—after you did everything in your power to prevent crime, and you introduced harsher sentences as a deterrent—not only has crime not declined, it has increased, and it has increased dramatically and inexplicably?’ So he smiled at me and that’s where the subject ended. What do I mean, ‘the subject ended?’ That from then on—this happened several years ago—the situation continues to deteriorate. I said to him, ‘Why must we look for mysterious, strange causes? Let’s investigate: Perhaps there’s been a change in the children’s education?’”¹²

It’s Not A Compromise

When it became clear that the courts would not reverse the ban on school prayer, hundreds of attempts were made

to overturn these decisions by introducing amendments to the law in Congress. In 5742* President Ronald Reagan formally proposed a constitutional amendment permitting organized prayer in public schools. “Nothing in this Constitution shall be construed to prohibit individual or group prayer in public schools or other public institutions. No person shall be required by the United States or by any state to participate in prayer.”

In a message to Congress, Mr. Reagan said that the amendment would “restore the simple freedom of our citizens to offer prayer in public schools and institutions.” This marked a turning point in the national debate, since the president himself was enthusiastically promoting the idea.

However, due to the tremendous opposition to verbal prayer, the concept of introducing a “moment of silence” for children to spend a minute at the beginning of the school day in silent contemplation and silent voluntary prayer was gaining momentum.

In the winter of 5743* the State of New Jersey voted to require a daily “moment of silence” in public schools. The governor vetoed the bill and the legislature voted to override the veto. The concept of “moment of silence” was becoming as controversial as school prayer.

“This bill is a compromise,” one New Jersey senator said. “The courts won’t let us do what the people want, and this is a compromise we have reached. A moment of silence is certainly not prayer.”

Others argued that the “moment of silence” was a way to smuggle prayer back into the school system, and were therefore vehemently opposed.

During the farbrengen of Yud Shevat 5743*, a little over a month after the New Jersey debacle, the Rebbe mentioned the concept of “moment of silence” for the first time. But unlike most of its proponents, the Rebbe did not view the “moment of silence” as an unenthusiastic compromise. The Rebbe explained over the next several years in numerous televised farbrengens, and on many other occasions, that “silence” was better than “prayer” in the context of public education.

Here is why:

1. The best way to determine whether a course of action is correct is by analyzing its results. If it leads to polarization and conflict, then clearly it is wrong. Promoting verbal prayer in public schools in the current political and social climate is useless. Silence is benign and there is no rational argument against it - since the moment of silence is genuinely not intended to smuggle prayer back into the schools.¹³

2. Educators are human, with their own religious beliefs and convictions. Even if the non-denominational verbal

* 5743-1983, 5741-1981, 5742-1982, 5743-1983



prayer is composed by the government and educators are trained to not express their own beliefs in the context of the prayer, this places them in a tremendous test. People cannot be expected to keep their religious convictions in check all the time. Hence, a “moment of silence” is the safest way for children to think about Hashem without fear of their teacher imposing foreign beliefs on them.¹⁴

3. The purpose of daily prayer is to impress upon the child to focus on a higher purpose. Private contemplation at times has a greater impact on a child than parroting the same words together with everyone else.¹⁵

4. The child can contemplate freely without being intimidated by anyone else around him¹⁶.

5. It retains the value of a prayer, since Hashem hears thoughts just like the spoken word¹⁷.

6. Since the teacher will not instruct the children what to think about during that minute, the children will need direction from their parents. Just as their parents pack them lunch to take to school, they should pack them “spiritual” or “meaningful” food for thought by instructing them what to think about during the “moment of silence.” This will cause the parents to start focusing on a higher purpose themselves, and these conversations will bring parents (who are increasingly absent from their children’s lives because they are so busy) closer to their children. It will also remind them that educating their children to be proper human beings is their primary mission in life¹⁸.

It’s important for the “moment of silence” to happen at the beginning of the school day when the child’s mind is fresh and not preoccupied with the previous lessons or other thoughts. This will have a much greater impact on the child and inform how he or she utilizes the knowledge acquired in school. Before learning the subjects that will help them achieve success with a career and the like, he or she must remember that they cannot steal or hurt others because of their accountability to a Higher Power.¹⁹ Starting the school day with the “moment of silence” also emphasizes to the children how important it is.²⁰

Despite the neutrality of the “moment of silence” the anti-prayer activists vigorously opposed it on various grounds and the Rebbe publicly responded to these arguments in detail when addressing the topic on a number of occasions.

1. It violates the Constitution:

a. Interpreting the First Amendment to mean that children are not allowed a moment of quiet contemplation at the beginning of their school day because they might think about G-d in public school is preposterous. The First Amendment was meant to protect religion from the government—not to give the government an opportunity to ban religion from children’s minds during the time that they are in a public institution!²¹

b. Even if one can somehow deduce this misguided interpretation from the literal words of the law, it is certainly not consistent with the spirit of the law, which was authored by the founding fathers of this country who were known believers. They would be shocked to hear such a convoluted interpretation of their words.²²

c. In the far-fetched possibility that the law does indeed prohibit a “moment of silence”—the Constitution is neither divine nor dogma. It was written “by the people, for the people.” The authors of the Constitution knew that circumstances would inevitably change and framed the Constitution in a way that it could be changed by amendment. In earlier times every child in America was exposed to the concept of a Higher Power or Super Being they are accountable to. Before eating breakfast their parents taught them to say a prayer, a practice which has decreased dramatically in the last several decades for various reasons. Today there are millions of American children who are never exposed to the concept of a Higher Power throughout their youth. Having a “moment of silence” in schools today is necessary to save America from spiraling out of control, so the law must be changed to allow it and even mandate it.²³

2. Children may be exposed to opposing religious ideas:

How can silence go wrong? Only the parents instruct their children on what to think about then, and they certainly have the right to educate their children with their religious beliefs.

3. **This will open the door for school prayer and Bible study:** The proposed law for mandating a “moment of silence” should be authored in a way that would clearly prohibit verbal prayer and Bible study. And even if there is a slight possibility that this may happen, how can such a concern deprive millions of children from the opportunity to begin their day with a meaningful moment of silence which will allow them to grow up as proper human beings

Senator Rudy Boschwitz, a proud and warm hearted Yid from S. Paul, Minnesota served as US Senator for 12 years. Long before entering politics, he developed a close relationship with the Rebbe's shliach Rabbi Moshe Feller and was a staunch supporter of Chabad activities in the state. Following are the carbon copies of two letters the Rebbe addressed to Senator Boschwitz regarding the importance of legislating a federal law mandating a "moment of silence" in all American public schools.

Notice that in the fifth paragraph of the first letter the Rebbe noted with an asterisk at the words “non-denominational prayer” in his holy handwriting “in present situation a moment of silence.”

[illegible]

Figure 1. The effect of the concentration of the H_2O_2 solution on the amount of the released H_2O from the H_2O_2 solution.

1. The first step in the process of the investigation is the identification of the problem. This is done by the investigator who is responsible for the investigation. The investigator must identify the problem and the scope of the investigation.

2. The second step is the collection of data. This is done by the investigator who is responsible for the investigation. The investigator must collect data from the sources available to him.

3. The third step is the analysis of the data. This is done by the investigator who is responsible for the investigation. The investigator must analyze the data and draw conclusions from it.

4. The fourth step is the presentation of the results. This is done by the investigator who is responsible for the investigation. The investigator must present the results of the investigation in a clear and concise manner.

5. The fifth step is the evaluation of the results. This is done by the investigator who is responsible for the investigation. The investigator must evaluate the results of the investigation and determine if they are satisfactory.

6. The sixth step is the conclusion. This is done by the investigator who is responsible for the investigation. The investigator must draw a conclusion from the results of the investigation.

7. The seventh step is the recommendation. This is done by the investigator who is responsible for the investigation. The investigator must recommend a course of action based on the results of the investigation.

8. The eighth step is the implementation of the recommendation. This is done by the investigator who is responsible for the investigation. The investigator must implement the recommendation and monitor the results.

9. The ninth step is the evaluation of the implementation. This is done by the investigator who is responsible for the investigation. The investigator must evaluate the implementation of the recommendation and determine if it is satisfactory.

10. The tenth step is the conclusion. This is done by the investigator who is responsible for the investigation. The investigator must draw a conclusion from the results of the investigation.

[illegible]

Rabbi Yaakov Yehuda Hecht took a leadership role in the “moment of silence” petition writing campaign. Following are several questions he presented to the Rebbe immediately after Acharon Shel Pesach and the Rebbe’s responses.

כ”ק אדמו”ר שליט”א

בקשר לה”פעטישאנס” ה’ לנו אסיפה עריו”ט, וה’ לנו שאלות אחדות אבל כמעט כולם נתיישוב לנו בהתוועדות היום. אבל עדיין נשאר שאלות אחדות:

(א) איפו יהי’ הכתובת למי יפנו אלו שיש להם שאלות, צריכים חיזוק, עצות וכו’. ז”א האם יהי’ מרכז CENTRAL, שיארגן א”ז או כ”א יעבוד לעצמו?

(ב) האם ישלחו כל המקומות החתימות ישר לבית הלבן, או אפשר יתאספו כולם למקום אחד ואח”כ להביא “הר גדול” של חתימות לבית הלבן וכו’.

(ג) באיזו אופן להתקשר עם בתי ספר ממשלתיים עד”ז? ובאיזו אופן להתקשר עם הגויים? ז”א אם לילך ע”י הדייאסיס וכו’?

(ד) האם יש בודזשעט ע”ז. ואם לאו מהיכן ירק זה חי? האם צריכים לעשות מגבית ע”ז?

(ה) עד כמה ללכת עם MEDIA, ז”א רדיא, T.V. העיתונים, ובכלל הפרסומות?

יעקב יהודה בן שרה העכט

כ”ק אדמו”ר שליט”א

On Erev Yom Tov we had a meeting in connection with the “petitions” and several questions arose, but almost all of them were answered in today’s farbrengen. There are some remaining questions:

1. To which address should people turn to with questions, encouragement or advice etc. Meaning, will there be a central [organization working on this project] or should everyone work individually?

2. Should the petitions be sent to the White House by every respective organization or should they be gathered together so that “a large mountain” of signatures will be delivered to the White House?

3. How should we connect with public schools and in general with the non-Jewish population? Should we work with the diocese etc.?

4. Is there a budget for [this project]? If not, from “where will this vegetable live?” Should an appeal be made?

5. How much should we engage the media? Radio, TV, newspapers, and in general advertisements.

Yaakov Yehudah Ben Sara Hecht

מענת כ”ק אדמו”ר:

Central:

= יברר מי עוד עוסק בזה ויתדברו ביניהם עדכ”ז (בחילוקי דעות יבקשו ב”ד רבני אנש שיח’ שיתווך ביניהם)

אני לא אמנה ראשים כי אז תיכף ומיד יהפכו הענין שזה בנשיאותי וכל שאינו רוצה בזה לא ישתתף וכו’ (היפך מהדגשת בזה)...

Budget:

יאמרו “אהא” מקבצין הון תועפות.

Media:

עיקר ההשפעה ע”י קשרים אשים ידודתיים, וכו’, עם מנהלי ארגוני החינוך וכו’... כנ’ נוטה שאני מנהל בכל דבר הכי פשוט וכו’, ולהרבות בצעטלין זהו היפך כל ענין כלל וכלל..

The Rebbe’s response:

CENTRAL: Find out who else is working on this [project] and talk it over between each other. (In a case of disagreement, request a Beis Din of Rabbonei Anash to mediate.)

I will not appoint leaders [to the project] because then it will immediately become something under my leadership and those who do not want this, will not participate etc. (contrary to my emphasis about all this).

BUDGET: People will say “aha” they are collecting a fortune.

MEDIA: The main influence must be through personal friendly connections etc. with directors of educational organizations etc.

Apparently it is common for me to organize even simple matters etc... Sending many notes [of questions to me] is completely the opposite of this whole project...

imbued with the awareness of “an eye that sees and ear that hears?”

4. **There are families who are not religious or who do not believe in G-d:** “It is a moment of silence: When it comes to your child, instruct them to think about justice and honesty. Your little boy or girl will ask you what to think for those sixty seconds, tell them to think about ‘Do not steal’ and ‘Do not lie,’ to be peaceful, considerate, and

so on. He must learn that he can’t take what belongs to another child, nor cheat another child, not because he’s afraid of punishment, but because he began his day on that note.”²⁴

Sending In The Troops

In matters of American law the Rebbe would typically call upon leaders and activists to lobby Congress to take action. But the urgency of getting “moment of silence” done

was such that at the Kinus Tzivos Hashem of Chol Hamoed Pesach 5743* the Rebbe gave this mission to the soldiers in Tzivos Hashem.

The Rebbe instructed the children to send petitions to the president and to their respective representatives in Congress, addressing two important policy issues:

1. Every child in America should begin their day with a moment of silence.
2. There should be more government funding to private schools so that their parents should not be punished by paying taxes as well as private school tuition.

The petitions were to be identical but signed by as many children as possible. When the leaders of this country sense the popularity of the issue as well as the uniqueness of the campaign that is dominated by children, it will certainly move them to action. Since Chol Hamoed is not a time for writing, this campaign would begin immediately after Yom Tov.

“And if the *yetzer hara* will discourage you by saying ‘What can you accomplish as a little child?’ you should respond that firstly children can accomplish many great things. In addition, the Torah states *מפי עוללים ויונקים יסדת עוז להשבית אויב ומתנקם*—when it comes to education in accordance with Torah the children have the power to neutralize all opposition!”²⁵

At the conclusion of the *kinus*, the Rebbe also called upon rabbonim to speak in the shuls about the importance of “moment of silence” during their Yizkor speeches on Acharon Shel Pesach.

During the farbrengen of *Seudas Moshiach* the Rebbe spoke a lengthy and powerful *sicha* about the importance of the children’s petition campaign and demanded major action.²⁶

The next Shabbos the Rebbe spoke during the farbrengen that after Yom Tov he received a flurry of questions about the campaign, some on the practical end of things and others from a halachic perspective. The Rebbe patiently addressed all the halachic questions and concluded that people had a hard time with this campaign and were able to propose such silly questions because they are worried that Lubavitch is taking an unpopular public stand on a controversial issue. In simple terms the Rebbe explained that the topic does not need to be framed as controversial and if the basic facts are presented in a coherent fashion, there is nothing to worry about.²⁷

During the Shavuot farbrengen the Rebbe instructed that all the halachic questions that were raised in connection with the “moment of silence” should be collected and presented at the *kinus Torah* traditionally held after Yom Tov together with the Rebbe’s answers from the recent farbrengens.²⁸ This was subsequently edited by the

Rebbe and published the following year in the weekly *likkut* of Likkutei Sichos for Parshas Yisro.²⁹

The Alabama Case

In 1978 the State of Alabama passed a law that created a minute of silence for meditation in public schools. A second law in 1981 added the option of voluntary prayer and a third law in 1982 authorized teachers to recite a prayer with “willing students.”

A parent in Alabama sued, and in *Wallace v. Jaffree* the US Supreme Court ruled that the laws from 1981 and 1982 violated the US Constitution, but upheld the law from 1978 that enabled a minute of silence for meditation in Alabama public schools.

On Simchas Torah 5746* the Rebbe referred to the Supreme Court ruling stating that it was good that this particular law was overturned - and it is in fact cause for rejoicing - for it “might create a scenario where a teacher or supervisor could impose his particular form of prayer, or his religion’s version of prayer on the students—something which would be wholly unacceptable.”³⁰

In a powerful *sicha* on Yud-Tes Kislev 5747 the Rebbe explained that the national holiday of Thanksgiving is another expression of the unique character of America as a nation founded on the principles of faith in Hashem. However these ideas cannot be limited to the theories of America’s foundation but must be incorporated in the daily lives of its citizens and especially in the education of the youth, which is only currently possible through a “moment of silence.”

Attending³¹ to the education of our children we must not deny them the only true resource for goodness and morality in their lives. They must be aware of the Eye that sees and the Ear that hears who judges the world justly and kindly. Even a child understands that one cannot deceive Hashem. Rather, wanting to receive Hashem’s blessing, he/she will impress upon other children to act according to the Sheva Mitzvos, laying the foundation for a just society.

This is the only way to raise children properly. Only in this way will the national epidemic of rebelliousness against the law in the land cease. Neither money nor special teachers, policemen nor threats will help. You can hide from a policeman but not from Hashem.

It is however necessary that the child incorporate this knowledge into his daily thoughts and lifestyle.

When these truths cannot be transmitted directly to the children within the existing educational setting, they must be emphasized and meditated on in a “moment of silence” at the beginning of the school day. The child should be prepared for the moment of contemplation by the parents who have the

*📅 5743-1983, 5746-1985, 5747-1986

right and responsibility to raise and train their children to be productive humans and not barbaric rebels against society.

These good efforts will bring good health to all who encourage and support these activities and when these efforts are increased with joy and gladness, with the proper publicity, it will bring blessings all over the land, and throughout the world.

And it will speed the fulfillment of the ruling of the Rambam: He (Moshiach) will prepare the whole world to serve Hashem with one accord, as it is written: "For then will I give to the peoples a pure language, that they may call upon the Name of Hashem to serve him with one consent."

This idea is clearly represented by the American motto: "In G-d we trust!" **T**

1. Toras Menachem Hisvaaduyos vol. 34 page 151.
2. Igros Kodesh vol. 22 page 474.
3. Igros Kodesh vol. 22 page 482.
4. chabad.org/2051611
5. Pirkei Avos Perec 2 Mishna 1.
6. chabad.org/2051611
7. chabad.org/1274011
8. Igros Kodesh vol 23 page 494.
9. Ibid. vol 24 page 1.
10. Sichos Kodesh 5741 vol 2 page 177-8.

11. Sichos Kodesh 5741 vol 3 page 109-115.
12. Sichos Kodesh 5741 vol 4 page 150.
13. Toras Menachem Hisvaaduyos 5744 vol. 4 page 2174. 5746 vol. 1 page 408-9.
14. Toras Menachem Hisvaaduyos 5743 vol. 4 page 1750-1, 5744 vol. 3 page 1432-3, 5744 vol. 4 page 2173-4, 5745 vol. 1 page 137, 5746 vol. 1 page 408-9.
15. Toras Menachem Hisvaaduyos 5744 vol. 3 page 1433.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Toras Menachem Hisvaaduyos 5744 vol. 3 page 1434, 5744 vol. 4 page 2174-5, 5745 vol. 1 page 137.
19. Toras Menachem Hisvaaduyos 5744 vol 2 page 622.
20. Toras Menachem Hisvaaduyos 5746 vol 1 page 408.
21. Toras Menachem Hisvaaduyos 5743 vol. 2 page 901-2, vol. 3 page 1389, vol. 4 page 1748
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid. 5744 vol 4 page 2175-6.
24. Toras Menachem Hisvaaduyos 5744 vol 2 page 621.
25. Toras Menachem Hisvaaduyos 5743 vol. 3 page 1299.
26. Ibid. pages 1326-1335.
27. Ibid. page 1385.
28. Ibid. page 1576.
29. Likkutei Sichos vol. 26 pages 132-144.
30. Toras Menachem Hisvaaduyos 5746 vol. 1 page 409.
31. Toras Menachem Hisvaaduyos 5747 vol. 2 pages 53-57.



Read More:

The school prayer and "moment of silence" campaigns are connected to the overall obligation to influence all humanity to observe the Sheva Mitzvos Bnei Noach and the Rebbe's general approach to education for all youth. See A Chassidisher Derher Magazine (53) Shevat 5777: A Light Unto the Nations and A Chassidisher Derher Magazine (67) Nissan 5778: Education Day U.S.A. for more on these topics.



Listen:

To properly understand the Rebbe's approach to a "moment of silence" we suggest listening to the recordings of the following sichos.

Yud-Beis Tammuz 5743 sicha 3, Yud-Tes Kislev 5744 sicha 2, Yud-Beis Tammuz 5744 sicha 3 and Yud-Tes Kislev 5745 sicha 3.