

Lonnie J. Nasatir

President

December 16, 2020

Rav Yona Reiss
Av Bet Din
c/o Chicago Rabbinical Council
2701 W. Howard Street
Chicago, IL 60645

Dear Rav Reiss,

I write to you on behalf of the Board of the Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation of Chicago and my colleagues of the Professional Staff. It was with deep pain and sadness that as the Festival of Hanuka approached we learned that our beloved and revered Rabbi Gedalia Schwartz passed away. As his successor and colleague, there is little about Rav Schwartz that I could tell you that you don't already know or that you have not already experienced.

In the 33 years in which he graced our community with his scholarship, leadership, judiciousness, and his piety and goodness, he came to be both revered and loved across the entire Jewish community of Chicago. As Av Bet Din he helped the Jewish Federation manage a number of complex situations. As a national leader of the Orthodox Rabbinate his devotion to the Jewish United Fund brought our entire community together to serve our common purposes. His leadership was vital in the establishment of the Day School Guaranty Trust Fund. None of us will ever forget that Shabbat following 9/11 in 2001, when he delivered the sermon for JUF Shabbat at Congregation Or Torah. The Torah portion was Nitzavim. Which, as you know, opens with that memorable summons of Moses, our teacher, to the Jewish People.

You stand this day, all of you, before the LORD your God -- your tribal heads, your elders and your officials, all the men of Israel, your children, your wives, even the stranger within your camp... (Devarim-Deuteronomy 29:9, 10)

I was not there, but what he said had such an impact that it reverberates to this day. First, he began by saying thank God, as the Torah portion says, we are still standing! The second thing he said was this Torah portion has particular significance for JUF Shabbat, for it is only through the Jewish Federation, that all of us, the whole Jewish People, are brought together to stand as one. Wherever one turns in our community, one meets men and women, young and old, from all walks of life whom he touched, whom he healed, whom he taught.

That Rav Schwartz leaves us on the eve of Hanuka only increases our sadness. I know that the light that he spread throughout our community is the very light that the Hanuka candles bring into each of our homes. May the Almighty console you, his colleagues who knew him best, and our entire Jewish community.

Best wishes,



Lonnie Nasatir

cc: Rabbi Sha'anun Gelman, President
Rabbi Levi Mostofsky, Executive Director