

To All Participants in the Laying of the Foundation Stone of the Beth Rivkah Schools
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

G-d bless you.

Greeting and Blessing :

I extend heartfelt felicitations and prayerful wishes to the President and Board members, as well as to the distinguished guests and all friends participating in this notable event. It is surely an occasion for joy and pride, not only for the Jewish community of Australia, but also for Jewry as a whole.

One of the most serious problems of our day is the confusion, discontent and agitation besetting the young generation. Time-honored norms of ethics and morality, indeed the very foundations of law and order, are all too frequently challenged by reckless and rebellious youngsters and adolescents. Though fortunately in the minority, they nevertheless inflict a heavy toll upon society, materially and spiritually. The conclusion is inescapable that one of the primary causes of this juvenile unrest lies in the fact that some segments of the present-day young generation is growing up without awe and reverence for G-d, which used to be instilled into the hearts of the children in former generations. Consequently, many of them grow up also without regard for the true values in life, values which can be meaningful and enduring only if they are based on the Supreme Authority of the Creator and Master of the world.

It is generally recognized that religion, morality and ethics must begin at home. However, economic pressures and other factors prevailing nowadays have in many families brought about an abdication of parental responsibility. At best, the responsibility for the conduct of the home and the spiritual development of the children has in a large measure shifted from the "head" of the family to the "heart" of the family, namely from the father to the mother.

The Jewish wife and mother has always been recognized as the AKERES HABAYTS, the "Foundation of the home." With the added responsibilities, made more difficult by environmental influences, it has become necessary more than ever before ~~that~~ that the Jewish wife and mother herself be adequately trained and prepared in her youth to assume her responsibilities, and carry them out to perfection.

This is why the Beth Rivkah educational institutions for girls are so vitally important, particularly in this day and age. In many parts of the world, not least in Australia, these fine schools carry out a vital function by preparing future Jewish wives and mothers who will preserve the saintly traditions of the Jewish home, based on the foundations of our G-d-given Torah at Sinai.

The present days of Sefira (Counting of the Omer) remind us again of the role of the Jewish woman in Jewish life. For, as our Sages tell us, these days hark back to the time when our ancestors, upon their liberation from bondage, eagerly counted the days and weeks to the fulfillment of the ultimate objective of their freedom, namely the receiving of the Torah at Sinai. And when that great day arrived, it was the women whose consent to accept the Torah was first sought and obtained, as indicated in the Torah : "Speak to the house of Jacob (=the women) and talk to the sons of Israel (=the men)," as our Sages explained. Thus from the very outset, the Jewish women were given the primary share of the responsibility for the preservation of the Torah and Mitzvot, and of the Jewish home and sacred traditions; how much more so nowadays, as explained above.

I hope and pray that the Laying of the Foundation Stone will be followed by the expeditious completion of the actual construction, so that the new premises will soon be dedicated and filled to capacity with an ever growing number of eager students.

May the Almighty bless each and all of you who are helping this great cause, with a generous measure of Divine blessings materially and spiritually.

With blessing.

Mo. Schneerson.