

Washington Jewish Week

Chief rabbi urges Jewish unity during visit to Washington

OCTOBER 21, 2015 BY SUZANNE POLLAK — [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

Rabbi David Lau, the Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Israel, left the Washington area with a copy of Jewish Washington: Scrapbook of an American Community and a greater understanding of Jewish life here.

Lau came to the region to participate in the Israeli-American Council's conference that took place from Saturday through Monday. During the short visit, he squeezed in visits to two Jewish day schools and several synagogues, and he also placed a mezuzah on the Chabad of Silver Spring's new building.

"His messages were very much about preserving unity and preserving tradition" amongst the Jewish people, said Rabbi Levi Shemtov, executive vice president of American Friends of Lubavitch. "Sometimes preserving both simultaneously presents challenges, but I believe the Jewish people need for us to try, even if it seems difficult at times."

While at the Jewish Primary Day School of the Nation's Capital Friday afternoon, Lau spoke with fourth- through sixth-graders "about the connectedness of all Jewish people, addressing the students as his young brothers and sisters," said Adina Kanefield, director of institutional advancement.

The students told Lau what they have been studying and presented him with the Jewish Washington scrapbook. Upon receiving it, Kanefield said Lau told the children that he hoped a page would be added in the scrapbook about them, "because you are Jewish life in this city."

Lau also spent a short time Friday at the Torah School of Washington in Silver Spring. Headmaster Rabbi Yitzchak Charner said Lau spoke with the entire 345-member kindergarten through sixth-grade student body, reminding the children to work together.

He referred to the weekly Torah portion and told the students that all types of animals entered Noah's ark, which could have been disastrous, but the animals were better off than had they been outside during the flood. There was unity among the animals, Lau stressed to the students.

Together, Lau and the students recited Psalm 130, Charner said.

Charner said the event was "pretty moving," but noted that higher praise came from a few students. "They said it was cool," Charner said.

In addition to those stops, Lau, who was elected in July 2013, also had lunch with about 150 people

at The Shul of the Nation's Capital, which hosted him, visited Kemp Mill Synagogue in Silver Spring and attended a sunrise service at the Yeshiva of Greater Washington, also in Silver Spring.

Lau also had a dinner to end Shabbat with the Chabad community.

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