

Press Release

8/14/2014

Today, at Aleph Institute we met with two rabbinical students, who are in the process of visiting every Federal and state prison in Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia.

Rabbis Yaakov Yehudah Raskin and Tani Rappaport are students, at the central Lubavitch yeshiva in NY, who have taken a few weeks out of their studies and training to visit the Jewish men and women incarcerated.

With over fifty thousand inmates incarcerated in the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, about the same in Ohio and many thousands more in the Federal and local Jails in Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia, it can sometimes be taxing for the Rabbi's contracted at the institution to meet and deal with all the needs and concerns of the inmates. In addition, due to the locations of many of the prisons, being far away from any Jewish community, there are limited visitors for the Jewish communities in the prison.

The Rabbinical students were welcomed both in person, and at the Aleph Institute. We received letters and messages of thanks for sending in the young men to talk and pray with them.

"In one prison, the men spontaneously got up to dance and sing after the Rabbis spoke, it was so



heartwarming and it gave me strength" said Rabbi Yankel Raskin. Rabbi Rappaport added, "to see the men all trying to learn and become better people, acknowledging their wrong doing and wanting to become productive members of society made the trip all worth it".

"Being in prison isolated from family and friends is grinding, with over ninety-percent of the Jewish men and women scheduled for release, it is imperative we provide them with the 'hope' and of course the tools that they can make it, and become productive members of the community" said Rabbi Moishe Mayir Vogel, Executive Director of the Aleph Institute.

Rabbi Vogel added, "the response from the state employed full-time chaplains seeing new faces dedicating their time to visit the prisons, is gratifying and the chaplains offer to do all they can to make this program a successful one".

For more information about the Aleph Institute or to learn more about the volunteer opportunities at Aleph, please visit the website and contact Aleph Institute at www.alephne.org, info@alephne.org or by phone at (412) 421-0111.