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New Course Asks: Is Our Criminal Justice System Fair?

Winnipeg, MB—This February, Rabbi Shmuly Altein of Chabad-Lubavitch in Winnipeg will offer *Crime and Consequence*, a new six-session course by the acclaimed Rohr Jewish Learning Institute (JLI) exploring 3000 years of Jewish perspective on conviction, sentencing, and criminal rehabilitation.

Beginning Tuesday, February 12 at 7:30 pm, participants in the course will challenge their thinking, ponder the implications of ancient Talmudic wisdom for complex modern cases, and get to the heart of the most pressing injustices facing our criminal justice system today.

“DNA testing is proving that we’ve been convicting innocent people. When we incarcerate first-time offenders, we’re turning them into hardened criminals. Known murderers are able to walk free on a technicality. How can we stand by and remain silent to these serious flaws in our criminal justice system?” Rabbi Shmuly of Chabad, the local JLI Instructor, told the *Jewish Post and News*. “I believe the first step is for us, as a community, to acknowledge the issues and explore possible solutions. And can you think of a better place to look for guidance than Judaism’s wisdom of the ages?”

Participants in the course will ponder foundational questions: What is the goal of criminal punishment—to gain retribution for the victim, to keep criminals off the streets and safeguard from

future crime, to set an example and instill the fear of law, or to rehabilitate the criminal and reintroduce him to society? Should we consider testimonies given in exchange for a reduced sentence as reliable evidence?

The course also boldly addresses society's most serious sentencing questions: Is life-without-parole a justifiable penalty? May we sentence a person to death? When would these options be warranted? Is there a better way?

"Crime and Consequence is for people who care deeply about humanity, who are enraged at injustice, and who are fascinated by real-life catch-22 scenarios," remarked Rabbi Zalman Abraham of JLI's Brooklyn, New York headquarters. "Participants in the course will uncover the humanity within all people—including criminals, question judicial practices that seem unethical and unfair, and explore effective crime deterrents."

"It is a profound irony that the United States is a true beacon of democracy, freedom, and the rule of law while it imprisons more of its own citizenry than any other country," wrote Professor Alan Dershowitz, Professor Emeritus at Harvard Law School, in his endorsement of the course. "Crime and Consequence . . . brings rigorous legal analysis, statistical data on incarceration and rehabilitation, and case studies into a uniquely profound dialogue with the values undergirding our entire political tradition."

Scott Turow, attorney and author of *Presumed Innocent* and thirteen other best-selling novels on criminal law, commented that this course ". . . shows that this is a subject that involves our oldest and most treasured ideas of right and

wrong.”

Crime and Consequence may be reported for up to 9 hours of eligible CPD activity for Winnipeg attorneys and other law professionals. Like all JLI programs, this course is designed for people at all levels of knowledge, including those without any prior experience or background in Jewish learning. All JLI courses are open to the public, and attendees need not be affiliated with a particular synagogue, temple, or other house of worship.

Interested students may call 204-339-8737 or visit ChabadWinnipeg.org for registration and for other course-related information.



The Jewish Learning Institute is the adult education arm of Chabad-Lubavitch and a partner agency of the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg. As the preeminent provider of adult Jewish learning in Winnipeg, JLI's mission is to make Jewish learning accessible and personally meaningful to every Jew, regardless of background or affiliation.

Chabad-Lubavitch provides Jewish education, community outreach and social service programming for families and individuals of all ages, backgrounds, and affiliations. Thousands are touched by Chabad each year through our school, day camps, early childcare centre, adult education institute, library, kosher kitchen, family workshops, youth groups, and holiday programming.
