

## May 2016 Message from Rabbi Dubin

Dear Friends,

As those of you who follow what our children have been learning in Sunday School already know, we have spent the year exploring the many ways our country (and, indeed, the entire world) has been blessed by the indispensable contributions of Jewish Americans. From Fashion to Film, Technology to Law, Medicine to Music, and Literature to Philanthropy (just to name a few), we have seen that an America without her Jews would be a far less wonderful place. And so we have found good reason on a regular basis to show pride in our people's accomplishments.

This pattern of pride and delight was picked up by the members of our Confirmation class recently, as we enjoyed a trip to Philadelphia, the birthplace of our nation. We began with a fascinating tour of Independence Hall (where we stood in the very room where our Founding Fathers debated and eventually came to agreement on the Declaration of Independence in 1776, and then as they debated and eventually came to agreement again eleven years later on the United States Constitution in 1787). After Independence Hall, we continued down the path of experiencing American history up close and personal as we stood face to face with none other than the Liberty Bell itself, crack and all.

Without a doubt, having front row seats to the founding of our country was invigorating and inspiring. But it didn't hold a candle to what we experienced next. Following the Liberty Bell, we took a three minute walk over to the nearby [National Museum of American Jewish History](#). In three floors of exhibits, we followed the trajectory of American History through a Jewish lens from Colonial days to the present day. It is a remarkable museum, one that I recommend to our entire congregation, especially our school children who would find a number of exhibits on topics that we examined this year. And to the adults who studied the Case of Leo Frank with me, there is a nice exhibit on that as well. As I walked through and saw the evolving natures of how we Jewish Americans have had to fight for our right to be treated with dignity over the years, I couldn't help but think about where we stand in the political election cycle right now.

The fact that millions of Americans have thrown their support behind a candidate for the highest office in the Land who happens to be Jewish this year certainly has not gone unnoticed. Whether or not you plan to vote for Senator Sanders (or already did...) is not the issue. Nor, for that matter, is what you feel about Senator Sanders' form of Jewish expression. What is the issue here is the mere fact that a Jewish candidate has garnered so much support from so many Americans. That in and of itself is indeed remarkable. But what is even more remarkable is the fact that, to huge numbers of Americans, both supporters and detractors of the Senator, his Jewishness is, for all intents and purposes, a nonissue. It neither helps nor hurts his chances. It just is. Not too many people outside the Jewish community care. Now **that** is remarkable!

As the Confirmation students who toured the National Museum of American Jewish History with me learned, it was not easy for the first Jews of the New World to lead full lives of dignity. Politicians like Peter Stuyvesant had no intention of affording our Jewish forbearers the same rights and privileges as he did the Protestants of his day. At first, Jews could own neither businesses nor land. And while Protestant residents were required to serve their community through guard duty, Jews were not only prohibited from doing so, they were even charged a special tax in order to make up for the fact that they were not serving guard duty!

As we all know, anti-Semitism held Jews back in countless ways since Colonial times. I also don't pretend that anti-Semitism has yet disappeared from our national landscape. Certainly the level of one-sided vitriol hurled at the State of Israel on an increasing basis bears witness to the fact that we have yet a way to go. But as the story told through the exhibits of the National Museum of American Jewish History makes clear, not only has Jewish America played a vital role in the successes of America, with each succeeding year, we as a people within a people, have continued to move ever more closely to the day when being Jewish can be both the most important thing in the world to us and simultaneously irrelevant to the opportunities we have for being able to partake in the American Dream.

Rabbi Dubin

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