

## **April 2017 Message from President Howie Hirsch**

A fiddler on the roof? Strange. I saw the play recently at Warren Hills High, and I do not think I had seen it since I was a little boy back in the Sixties. The music in the first act is superb. It is energetic, fun and truly enjoyable to listen to. While the authors have captured your attention in the first act with the music, there are many underlying themes that are either obvious or not so obvious. The idea that tradition rules the lives of many people around the world, and the courage that it takes to buck the traditions of your parents and their parents. Tevye, the main character, had 5 daughters. The first daughter decided to marry someone else after her father had promised her to another man. His second daughter becomes enamored with an idealist and runs away from her family to join her love, who is imprisoned for who knows what crime, in Siberia. The third daughter chooses to marry outside of her faith, angering her father to no end. And then at the conclusion, we see the effects of the Russian Revolution forcing the Jews to leave their homes of many generations with no time to prepare.

Okay, that is a short synopsis from my point of view of the events of the play. How does this affect our lives as reform Jews in 2017? Reform Jews have opened their hearts to fight against SOME traditions of the past, but are also tied to parts of that past as well. We do not forget our Torah. We do not forget our holidays. We do not forget our families. But where we hope we have become more enlightened is that if someone in our family does not follow our tradition, we do not cut them off from us. If our child marries outside the faith, we embrace the new family as our own. If our child is LGBTPQ, we embrace them for who they are and love them as we would every other child.

The part regarding the pogrom of forcing the Jews from their homes by people who they had considered their friends was the scariest part of the play to me. I would like to think that we have assimilated into the culture of the United States and that we are considered every bit as American as any other ethnicity, but so did the Jews of Nazi Germany. They considered themselves Germans and were shocked when the population of the country turned against them.

I urge you to keep vigilant for any signs that our country could be putting us as "inferior" citizens because of our religious beliefs. Do not be so complacent that it could not happen here. BUT, don't let that rule who we are or what we do. We do much charitable work for the needy and we need to continue to do this. We need to support the arts and music programs in our schools, so in case budget cuts come, they do not take away from the arts and music programs.

And as my good friend Lenny has said for years, "Don't just be good, be good for something!!!"

May you enjoy a joyous Passover.

Howie

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