

January 2018 Message from Rabbi Dubin

Dear Friends,

Greetings from sunny Miami, Florida, where I arrived last night to visit with family after spending the last two days driving down with Nancy and two of our four kids. Contrary to what one might expect, it was actually remarkably pleasant to spend almost 24 hours sharing the road with who-knows-how-many-thousands-of-other drivers while confined to the interior of our 2002 Camry.

One of the many differences, of course, between driving and flying almost 1400 miles is the nature of how quickly weather changes. Hopping off a plane, the change can be dramatically drastic. In a car, however, one can grow accustomed to the change over time. For us, however, this was not the case, because when we got out of the car to spend the night with friends in South Carolina on the way down, it was already dark and cool outside. Then, after leaving the next morning and continuing our southward drive all day yesterday, we arrived in Miami, once again, well after dark. Even though it was clearly warmer, there was still a slight nip in the air. It wasn't until this morning, when we woke up to the full sun, that we felt the heat envelop us. Noa's first words to me after soaking it in were, "I now officially forget what cold feels like!" I knew exactly what she meant, and I agreed. But it also got me thinking...

As some of you know, my son, Liron, is currently in the process of applying to college. I mention this not to add to the pressure that he and so many other high school seniors are already feeling, but to share with you a rough draft (applications are not due for another few days, so he is still working on this one...) of one of the many (as per the instructions for this particular question, 250 words, maximum) essays that he is in the process of writing that is relevant to where Noa's comment about forgetting the cold brought me:

Growing up, I was often "accused" of sporting a savior complex. Jumping from cause to cause, I was always striving to perfect the world. Unfortunately, whenever I sensed impending failure, I would give up. Eventually I decided to surrender altogether, because no matter what I did, pain and suffering persisted. And then, last year, a seemingly inconsequential encounter changed everything.

It was an uncharacteristically cold day. I was walking home with my sister to grab a coat. On the way, we ran into a gentleman whom Shira knew as a guest at the soup kitchen where she worked. We stopped to talk. Though only five minutes, it changed me forever. I remember most how pleased he was to be recognized. He was grateful also for the coat he had been given. As we continued home, I noticed others, too, who were cold and shivering. It got me thinking. I knew people suffered in New York, which made me sad, but I knew also that this man suffered less, which made me glad.

When I shared my story with friends, the five of us immediately decided to hold a coat drive. Four weeks later, we had over 104 coats, 21 scarves, 48 blankets, and hundreds of socks to distribute through the soup kitchen. From this, I came to understand that

even though I myself am unable to perfect the world, that's ok, because all I can do is what I can. From our collection, lives were saved. That matters.

The [JCNWJ Sisterhood](#) has organized a coat drive this month to help those who are often overlooked and, quite literally, left out in the cold. We encourage everyone to contribute to the effort by bringing in coats (adult or child) for donation and hanging them up on the rack that we have provided for this purpose. Of course, no matter what we do, no matter how many coats we collect, there will continue to be too many who remain cold and without the help they so desperately need. But that does not relieve us of the responsibility to do what we can. After all, as we learn in *Pirkei Avot*, or Sayings of our Sages:

“You are not expected to complete the task, but neither are you free to avoid it.” (*Lo alecha ham'lacha ligmor, v'lo ata ben chorim l'hibatil mimena.*) And, as we learn elsewhere in the Talmud, “Whoever saves a single life, it is considered as if s/he had saved an entire world” (Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 37a).

Sometimes, especially in a place like Warren County where problems like homelessness may not always be seen in the open as clearly as it is in New York City, we forget that people are in need nonetheless. And no, our efforts will not solve the problem. But if we save just one person, it will be as if we had saved the entire world. So please do what you can. The world depends on your help. Happy 2018 to you all from Sunny Miami (where we will be for another few days),
L'Shalom,
Rabbi Dubin

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