

March 2019 Message from Rabbi Dubin

Dear Friends,



A few days ago, I received the most wonderful e-mail. It was a photograph from Howie. There was no text, but the subject line said it all: **“Daffodils are Sprouting.”**

Finally, after months of dormancy beneath the surface, the bulbs our community planted in memory of the child-victims of Nazi hatred, have finally begun to make themselves known. It may be hard to spot the tiny shoots in the photo, but if you look closely, you will see them in the bottom portion of the mulch. And once you find them, they will become clear as day, brimming with potential for the future. This makes me happy, because with everything going

on in this world of ours, I could use the promise of a better future.

While anti-Semitism has existed pretty much as long as the Jewish people have existed, and while there certainly have been periods that were both better for us and worse, the renewed trajectory of hatred does seem to be on an uptick. Obviously, we are not in 1942 Germany. Overwhelmingly, America remains a safe and hospitable place for Jews.

But there is something going on. According to a recent *New York Times* article, “There were 55 hate crimes reported in New York City this year as of February 17, an increase of 72 percent over the same period last year, the police said. Anti-Semitic crimes made up almost two-thirds of that, for a total of 36 crimes reported so far this year, compared with 21 last year. The steep rise comes after a year when hate crimes were already increasing. Anti-Semitic crimes in 2018 were up 22 percent compared with 2017.”

Even in the wake of Pittsburgh and Charlottesville, I, for one, have no intention of letting acts of insidious anti-Semitic hatred bar me from living. Even as criticism of Israel is inching closer and closer to hatred against Jews, I continue on. Even as politicians on both sides of the aisle are reverting to old-fashioned anti-Semitic

character assassinations (“It’s all about the Benjamins baby” or the re-Tweeting of messages penned by notorious Nazi sympathizers), I am confident that exposure to the light will cleanse the air. Yes, I feel safe and confident, partly because I do believe the world is made up overwhelmingly of good people, but also because when I look at history, I see a three-thousand-year story of Jewish survival. Nowhere does this narrative cry out more clearly than it does with Purim.

Even though scholars of history are skeptical about the historicity of Purim (see, for example, Adele Berlin, *"The Book of Esther and Ancient Storytelling"*, [Journal of Biblical Literature 120. no. 1 \(Spring 2001\): 3–14](#)), the Book of Esther nonetheless remains one of the seminal chapters of our national book, because every year, when we gather to hear the Megillah, we are reminded of the ever-constant drive to survival that has kept our people alive and thriving for three millennia. When I celebrate Purim, as we all will in a few weeks, I am invigorated and inspired to be exactly who I am: A child of Israel with a rich history behind me and a bright future ahead of me.

As we now prepare to enter into Adar Bet, the month during which Jews are literally commanded to be joyful, I am inspired by the daffodil sprouts that have now begun to push through the soil. We planted them to memorialize the past, but we look forward to their continued growth with anticipation for a better tomorrow.

Ta’anit 29a of the Babylonian Talmud declares:



Looking forward to celebrating with you all at our Purim Shabbat on March 22 and our Sunday Costume Parade and Purim Spiel on March 24.

Rabbi Dubin