

May 2020 Message from Rabbi Dubin

Dear Friends,

Those of you who read these monthly messages may have noticed over the past few years that while I often share personal experiences with you, I always do my best to refrain from writing in a way that might come across as an attempt to brag. When I do share personal stories, it's always with the intention of highlighting a certain value or lesson. Allow me this month to break that general approach, not because I am trying to brag, but because I am overwhelmingly proud of two members of my household and feel the overwhelming need to share. But first, some biblical context:

We read in this week's Torah portion (*Acharei Mot – Kedoshim*):

You shall be holy, because I, the Lord your God am holy
-- Leviticus 19:2

In other words, because we are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), it is therefore upon us to reflect that image as best we can. Since God is holy, therefore, so too must we strive to live lives of holiness. How do we do that? In many ways, of course, but not least among them is to live in such a way that empowers us to bring healing, just like God does:

I am the Lord that heals you
-- Exodus 15:26

As some of you know, prior to becoming "Cantor Nancy Dubin," my wife's professional name was "Nancy Dubin, R.N., B.S.N." Even though May of 2009 was the last time she practiced in a hospital, she's been completing her continuing education credits each and every year in order to keep her license current . . . "just in case." Unfortunately, "Just in case" arrived a couple months ago with the onslaught of Covid-19.

So when Governor Cuomo put out a call to all retired healthcare workers to return to work, Nancy's ears perked up and heard him loud and clear. After giving the situation a good 35 seconds of deep thought, she opened her computer and began searching for the most recent copy of her resume that included mention of her nursing credentials. She then went on-line to begin figuring out how to recertify the specific nursing skills that required documentation. A few days later, she was on the phone with every staffing agency willing to talk with her. And a couple weeks after that, she finally came out of retirement when she reported to work on a COVID-19 floor of Interfaith Medical Center in the Bedford Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn.

Mind you, stepping up to care for patients three shifts per week, 12-hours per shift, has in no way lessened her cantorial obligations at Temple Am Echad in Lynbrook, NY, because even though her congregants' needs are different from her patients'

needs, she is needed all the same. Which is all to say that at this point, Nancy is working two jobs, both of which are vital to serving the health and welfare of New Yorkers. She's exhausted, she's glowing in the image of God, and I couldn't be more proud.

Lest you miss the full scope of what is going on in the Dubin household, however, I should add that Nancy is not the only member of our extended family to be fighting COVID-19 on the front line. Some of you have gotten to know my daughter (Shira's) girlfriend, Rachel Friedman, as she's been joining us at Temple this year for Shabbat services. When Governor Cuomo announced stay-at-home orders a few weeks ago, Nancy and I urged Rachel to move in with us because we felt she could use the support of "family" during these difficult times.

Having been serving as a part time EMS first responder for the past year, Rachel, like Nancy, has now taken on added responsibilities. Like Shira, she continues to be a full-time college student, but her part-time EMS position has morphed into 4-5 ambulance shifts per week at 8-10 hours per shift. Her efforts strike me as slightly extra-human, but I suppose that when someone is doing her best to imitate the ways of God, "extra-human" makes perfect sense.

I know you all join me in thanking not only Nancy and Rachel, but ALL those workers who continue to put their own health and safety on the line in order to help the rest of us live lives of comfort and security. We all look forward to the day – hopefully soon – when this pandemic subsides so that all essential workers can return to their pre-COVID-19 schedules. In the meantime, we here in NYC will continue to bang our pots out the window every day at 7:00 p.m. in solidarity and gratitude, and when it's all over, we will remain as proud as we can be of their selfless contributions.

Be safe, everyone,

Rabbi Dubin

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