

November 2020 Message from Rabbi Dubin

Dear Friends,

As I sit to write this message on October 27, 2020, I do so with a heavy heart, with my thoughts racing back exactly two years, to Shabbat morning October 27, 2018. It was on that morning, in Pittsburgh that 11 innocent Jews were murdered as the [Tree of Life Synagogue](#) was transformed into a site of horrifying death when a gunman fueled with hate and vitriol entered the sanctuary, screaming anti-Semitic statements and opened fire. What resulted was the single most deadly anti-Semitic attack in the history of our nation.

As I wrote to you back then, the ironic calamity of the massacre was palpable. Not only was the mass murder committed in the heart of Square Hill – one of the flagship American Jewish communities – and not only did it happen in a holy sanctuary on the holiest day of the week as holy words were being sung, but even worse, it happened just as a family was celebrating the act of introducing a new life into the Covenant of Israel.

That was two years ago, but the pain lingers. We continue to mourn with the families shattered, and we pray for the day when violence and anti-Semitism are no more. Following events like these, we often hear people say that “there no words,” but of course the Jewish community does have words:

We have words of peace: *“Grant abundant peace to Israel Your people forever, for You are Sovereign God of all peace.” (Shalom Rav)*

We have words of comfort: *“May the Omnipresent comfort you among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.” (Epilogue to Mourner’s Kaddish)*

We have words of strength: *“Praise to You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who girds Israel with strength.” (Nisim b’Chol Yom – For Daily Miracles)*

We have words of protection: *“Grant, O God, that we lie down in peace, and raise us up, our Guardian, to life renewed. Spread over us the shelter of Your peace. Guide us with Your good counsel; for Your Name’s sake, be our help. Shield and shelter us beneath the shadow of Your wings. Defend us against enemies.” (Hashkiveinu)*

We have words of tenacity: *“Though I walk through a valley of the shadow of deaths, I fear no harm, for You are with me.” (Psalm 23)*

And we have words of love: *“Everlasting love you offered Your people Israel.” (Ahavat Olam)*

Yes, there are people in our midst driven to evil by the sin of anti-Semitism. They represent the worst of our country. But we are strong. We have the strength to move forward. We know this, unfortunately, because it is a strength on which we have had to call before. And I’m sure we will have to again in the future. But it is a strength nonetheless, and it is a strength born from the fact that we are a community that inherently loves more than we fear.

All the same, we recognize that in the context of the ongoing reality of anti-Semitism, the prudent thing is for Jewish communities everywhere to show heightened vigilance regarding our physical safety. And that is exactly what we've been doing over the past year, ever since our federal security grant application (drafted primarily by Debbie Kahan) was approved. Howie Hirsch and Jeff Berkowitz have been busy investing that money in ways that have improved the security of our building tremendously, and we are grateful. In keeping with protocols developed by security experts nationwide, I won't itemize those improvements in this message (which is available on our website to the general public – including those that may wish us harm), but please do rest assured that a detailed communication regarding our improved safety measures will be made available to the congregation prior to our eventual return to 115 Youmans Avenue.

In the meantime, I wish you continued safety.

And finally, to our extended Jewish family in Pittsburgh, you remain in our hearts. To the murdered – to Joyce Fienberg (75), Richard Gottfried (65), Rose Mallinger (97), Jerry Rabinowitz (66) Cecil (59) & David Rosenthal (54), Bernice (84) & Sylvan Simon (86), Daniel Stein (71), Melvin Wax (88), and Irving Younger (69) – to all of you, we make this solemn promise: We promise to do everything we can to ensure that your names will be remembered for blessings. Your lives mattered, and you will not be forgotten. And to the survivors, we offer our deepest care and support. We are your family, and we love you.

L'Shalom,

Rabbi Dubin

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