



Jewish Community Center of Paramus
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A Shabbat Message from Rabbi Arthur Weiner

Friday January 7, 2021 ~ Parsha: Bo

A Bitter Anniversary

Dear JCCP/CBT family,

Yesterday, our nation observed a bitter anniversary, marking the riots and attacks at the US Capitol on January 6, 2021. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt called the attack on Pearl Harbor "a day of infamy." I wonder what future generations will call this terrible moment in our nation's history?

President Biden may have said it best yesterday when in an address to the nation he said about the people who took part in the riots, "they weren't looking to uphold the will of the people, they were looking to deny the will of the people". That should frighten us. The events of January 6, 2021 were a direct assault on our great American democratic institutions. Everyone who cares about them needs to understand the threats that challenge them, and our responsibility to defend them. Future generations will not forgive us if we fail.

This Shabbat, I do not want to repeat what others may have said yesterday. There are many voices superior to mine that will offer analysis, context, and opinions about what occurred, what it means, and what we must do. But I do want to offer a perspective for American Jews as we consider the meaning of the insurrection. The true test of our patriotism is not only about learning from last year's riots, but preventing the next attack.

As I shared with the congregation last year on the High Holidays, American Jews must understand and appreciate as never before that American democracy is the most underappreciated, yet at the same time, the most powerful force shaping American Jewish life, and the safety and freedom of American Jews. Good governance, fair elections, a free press, non-partisan courts of law, and a military under the control of a freely elected civilian government are essential for American Jewry to not only survive, but to thrive and allow future generations the confidence that they will have a place in this great nation as did their parents and grandparents. As the great Jewish thinker Dr. Yehuda Kurtzer wrote, "There is no American Jewish wealth without American democracy, no American Jewish future without that same democracy." We have a powerful self-interest as Jews, and as proud Americans who love this country and are committed to its future to do everything in our power to safeguard it, and the institutions that preserve it.

And, I might add, there will be no security for Israel without a safe, strong and democratic America either.

Every Shabbat, we pray in the synagogue *"May citizens of all races and creeds forge a common bond in true harmony to banish hatred and bigotry and to safeguard the ideals and free institutions that are the pride and glory of our country."* Those words are a prayer, but also a responsibility. January 6, 2021 was an assault against the ideals and free institutions that make America the greatest nation in the world, and created the most free and secure diaspora Jewish community that has ever existed.

We must support all efforts to prosecute and punish everyone and anyone involved in the attacks on our nation, and rededicate ourselves to our nation's fundamental purpose. Only by doing so will we right the wrongs that bitter day exposed, and guarantee a secure future for all who love this nation.

Shabbat Shalom, Rabbi Arthur Weiner