



Jewish Community Center of Paramus
Congregation Beth Tikvah
304 E. Midland Avenue ~ Paramus NJ 07652- 201.262.7691

A Shabbat Message from Rabbi Arthur Weiner

Friday March 18, 2022 ~ Parsha: Tzav

The Enduring Lessons of Purim

Dear JCCP/CBT Family,

For many years, I have taught our JCCP/CBT community the Talmudic dictum *we start inquiring about the laws of Passover 30 days before Passover begins* (Pesachim 6A). 30 days before Passover is Purim, which ended last evening.

Today we should be looking forward to our next holiday. Most years, I would be tempted to start sharing Passover information or perhaps an early Passover message with you right now, as we will soon begin to prepare for what is arguably the most important Jewish holiday of all.

But not this year. Today, I would like to say one more thing about Purim. Even as we enjoy the memories of the wonderful Purim celebration we had this year, I want the congregation to think about the valuable and timeless lessons that Purim teaches and how they to address the many issues that Jews face today. There are four ideas that are worth thinking about right now.

1. The refusal of Mordechai to bow down to the wicked Haman reminds us that we must never accommodate or come to terms with evil, or honor people and institutions that epitomize it. Purim demands that good people work together to promote the highest of values, and the dignity of all people. It demands that we have both the courage to confront our enemies and the vision to build alliances with those who share our values.
2. The courage displayed by Queen Esther demonstrates the deep wellsprings of pride and commitment to the Jewish people that reside in each of us, and can motivate us to work on behalf of our faith when we are challenged to do so.
3. The giving of Tzedekah (charity), one of the four great mitzvot (commandments) of Purim, challenges us to transcend the ethos of selfishness so rampant in our culture.

4. The overriding message of the entire *Megillat Esther* (Book of Esther): the difficulty yet worth of maintaining Jewish faith and integrity even under difficult circumstances. Mordechai and Esther rise to the occasion when the community is threatened, and motivate others to join them to save the Jewish people from violence and destruction. Their courage and efforts have inspired Jews for centuries whenever the need arose. This is a time of celebration and possibilities. But let's make sure that the festive nature of Purim never obscures the questions that Purim poses, and the answers that it offers. There is a reason why our Rabbis taught that when the Messiah arrives the festivals will cease to be observed, but Purim will continue to be observed (Maimonides *Hilkhot Megillah* 2:18). Its lessons must be considered every day!

Shabbat Shalom, Rabbi Arthur Weiner