



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

Friday March 3, 2023 ~ Parsha: Tetzaveh
Shabbat Zachor

Dear JCCP/CBT family,

A Purim Letter to our College Students

A member of the congregation came in the office earlier this week as I was working on my annual Purim letter to our synagogue's college students. She was surprised (and delighted) to learn that the JCCP/CBT sends packages and mailings to our college population several times a year.

She was interested to know about the letter I send them. So I gave her a copy to read. After reading it, she told me, "Rabbi: that would make a good Shabbat message. You should share it with the congregation."

So here goes!

Dear College Students,

On behalf of the Jewish Community Center of Paramus/Congregation Beth Tikvah, let me wish you a Happy Purim. I hope that this Purim mailing finds you healthy, happy, and enjoying your college experience.

As you well know, Purim is a holiday characterized by behaviors, antics, and observances that seem almost silly. Dressing in costumes, shaking groggers, making noise, even drinking (be careful with this one!) are all part of the tradition. Yet Purim also has a serious side to it that is worth considering. Purim tells the story of a Jewish community that knew freedom, and had achieved great heights. Yet even the status and high rank of its members was not enough to ward off threats to its security. When challenged and threatened, the Jews of ancient Shushan were forced to take a stand for their faith, and its cherished values. That they did so, despite the risks to their position in society, struck a responsive chord, and we still celebrate their deeds and recount their story each year. Yet when we do so, we too are challenged. Not in

the way they were, but in our own way as well. Are we willing to take a stand for the values that our faith holds dear? Will we speak out against threats to Jewish concerns? Are we willing to risk that which we have attained to help others defend their rights as well? These are, no doubt, difficult questions indeed. Purim's greatest gift is, perhaps, the opportunity to consider them afresh each year.

You may be surprised by the inclusion of some money in this Purim mailing. No, it's not much, but that's not the point. There are four specific *Mitzvot* associated with Purim:

- Reading the *Megillah*
- Festivity and rejoicing
- Sending food to friends (*Mishloach Manot*)
- Giving gifts to the poor (*Matanot La'evyonim*)

These dollars are to remind you of the importance of the final mitzvah. On Purim, in commemoration of the great victory that our ancestors experienced, we reach out to those less fortunate than ourselves, and try to share some of the joy of the holiday with them. It's a *Mitzvah* to give *Tzedakah* to at least two people, or two worthy organizations that help the poor. I hope that this small token inspires you to give even more.

Let me take this opportunity to wish you a joyous, wonderful Purim. I hope that I will see some of you next month during Passover, or during any spring vacation that you may have. As always, I wish you much luck and success in you college experiences, and much enjoyment as you go through it.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Arthur D. Weiner

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Arthur D. Weiner