



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

Friday November 17, 2023 ~ Parsha: Toldot

Dear JCCP/CBT family,

Three Observations From the National Rally For Israel

I, along with other members of the JCCP/CBT and between 200,000 and 300,000 others gathered in Washington D.C. on Tuesday to participate in the National Rally for Israel. I know that many of those who are reading this Shabbat message have read about the accounts of this massive event. It is being called the largest pro-Israel rally ever. I know that many of you were able to livestream some or all of the rally, and hear the speakers and entertainers.

I would like to share with three observations which might not have been evident through a computer, television screen or news reports about this event.

1. Never again.

We are fond of saying "never again" when it comes to standing up to those who would harm us. But "never again" requires organization, logistics, teamwork and cooperation. I was on one of the dozens of buses organized by our local Jewish Federation of Northern New Jersey. With only about 8 or 9 days to prepare, the Jewish Federations of North America organized this massive rally, whose numbers far exceeded expectations. It's hard to imagine what it takes to plan a rally of this magnitude, and have it turn out so successfully. Thousands of buses from all across the country. Securing the National Mall in Washington. Interfacing with every level of government, including the Department of Homeland Security, for what became what is known as a "[Level 1](#)" event, demanding security precautions akin to the Super Bowl or the Olympics. And everything turned out perfectly. The response and attendance

proved that the Jewish and pro-Israel community in America needed this type of rally. Thank God there are Jewish communal organizations with the experience, resources, and political clout to make such an event happen on such short notice. They deserve our continued support.

2. Unity

On the eve of this brutal war, Israeli society was wracked by division. The judicial reform movement in Israel, combined with the inclusion of some truly awful leaders in the current Israeli government, had divided the Israeli public, worried Israel's allies, and frightened the American Jewish community. The divisions in Israeli society had a terrible impact on American Jewry as well. You may recall that I devoted a good portion of my first day Rosh Hashanah sermon to this concern and what we might do to address it. Yet when the war began, the Israeli public came together. The *achdut*, the unity, that now pervades Israeli society has been widely reported both in the Israeli press and beyond. That same unity was evident yesterday at the rally in Washington. The participants represented the entire religious and political spectrum of American Jewry and the pro-Israel community. Wisely, the rally was assembled to aim towards those principles that all could agree on:

Pride in our Judaism and in the face of anti-semitism

Support for Israel

Demand the immediate release of the hostages

It was not a pro government or anti-government rally. It did not seek to tell Israel what it should or should not do. It aimed for the center and the entire Jewish community responded. Despite the gravity of the hour, the mood at the rally was upbeat, even festive at times. And it was a far cry from the ugliness and violence that has characterized so many of the pro-Palestinian (actually pro Hamas if we are really being honest) demonstrations that have taken place in major cities across the world. Americans who care about Israel should be proud of this rally, and its message.

3. Bipartisan Support for Israel

On Tuesday night, a bipartisan vote in the House of Representatives averted a potential government shutdown that would have occurred tonight. While this is welcome news, one can only imagine what a busy day it must have been for the congressional leadership that day. So just consider what it meant for the Speaker of the House, Mike Johnson; the House Minority Leader, Hakeem Jeffries; along with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer to literally stand together and demonstrate unwavering bipartisan support for Israel. It's a signal not only to Israel, but to us as well. This is a bitter fight, one that Israel cannot lose. And in this fight, we are not alone. And that is not a Republican message, or a Democratic message. It is a unified statement from the most powerful Americans in elected office.

These are difficult days for our communities. We are worried about Israel, worried about the hostages, and worried about the uptick in antisemitism at home and abroad. This rally and all it represented is a reminder to all who are watching that despite the challenges, we are here, we are proud and we will use our voices to advocate forcefully for our future and for the future of the Jewish people. That's what all who marched in Washington on Tuesday experienced. I and the other members of the congregation who attended were proud to represent you there as well.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Arthur D. Weiner