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## A Shabbat Message from Rabbi Arthur Weiner

Friday May 3, 2024 ~ Parsha: Acharei Mot

### Some Thoughts About the Crisis on our College Campuses

Dear JCCP/CBT family,

I just finished watching President [Biden's](#) remarks on the ongoing demonstrations at dozens of American universities and colleges. While I appreciate the President's measured words condemning the antisemitism and lawlessness which have characterized so many of these protests, we didn't need him to tell us the obvious. We've got a full-blown crisis on our hands that shows no signs of stopping any time soon.

I spoke about this issue at our recent *Yizkor* services. As many of the readers of my weekly Shabbat message know, the JCCP/CBT has a tradition that at our *Yizkor* observances on Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot, we make an appeal for a worthy and important Jewish organization or charity. At our *Yizkor* services for Passover earlier this week, I made an appeal for two organizations, [Hillel](#) and [Stand With Us](#) that are doing outstanding work with Jews on college campuses. This is especially important now as so many Jewish college students are feeling threatened and abandoned by their friends, campus organizations, and administrators.

As I explained to the congregation, I believe that the violence, intimidation, and destruction of public property so characteristic of so many of these demonstrations, is but one aspect of the crisis. What I think is missing from our understanding of these protests is the fact that this current crisis has been in the making for 40 years. For decades, college administrators have turned a blind eye at best or even encouraged violent activity under the guise of free speech. They have hired and granted tenure to

professors who incite violence and publish outright falsehoods about Israel, Zionism, and the historic connection between the Jewish people and the land of Israel. They have failed to take action against documented antisemitic incidents. They have tolerated an environment where the extraordinarily complicated issues between Israel and her neighbors, or the long and troubled history of Jews, Christians and Muslims in the Middle East have been reduced to the ugly “settler colonialism” framework that posits Israel as a foreign colony, and the Jew as the world's leading colonialist. They have tolerated an environment where pro-Israel speakers are unwelcome, even as they have tolerated convicted terrorists and their supporters to teach, organize, and to abuse the broad freedoms normally associated with university life. They have been happy to accept the donations of Jewish graduates and alumni but have failed to listen to their concerns, or take their criticisms seriously.

To illustrate the severity of the crisis, the ADL (Anti-Defamation League) just started sending a new email called *Daily Campus Crisis Alert*, featuring accounts from campuses to inform the greater community as well as "...resources so you know what to do if your alma mater comes calling for a donation, or a student you know is being harassed." I must tell you that it makes for difficult reading. Today's email detailed:

Police arrests at UCLA.

The [resignation](#) of 7 members of Northwestern University's advisory committee on preventing antisemitism and hate after university president Michael Schill [capitulated](#) to protesters and their demands,

The arrest of 90 people at [Dartmouth](#) for criminal trespass and resisting arrest.

And other stories from colleges including the University of Chicago, Tulane, and the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

This is a turbulent and potentially dangerous time for the Jewish and pro-Israel communities in America. So let me conclude with at least one bit of good news. While we are angry, saddened and even demoralized by what is taking place on college

campuses, the righteousness of any cause will not be measured by how loud the protestors scream, or how much property they destroy. A recent survey commissioned by [Harvard CAPS - Harris](#) showed 80% of registered voters said they support Israel more in this current conflict. Last month, it was 79%. While the college protesters may have seized the moment, most Americans know exactly what this conflict is all about, and which side shares our values.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Arthur D. Weiner