



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

Friday January 23, 2026 ~ Parshat: Bo

Dear JCCP/CBT family,

An Open Letter to Governor Sherrill on Leadership, Responsibility, and Antisemitism

Dear Governor Sherrill,

Mazal Tov on your recent election and inauguration as Governor of the State of New Jersey. This moment is a significant personal achievement and a meaningful milestone for our state. I want to wish you much success as you assume the responsibilities of leadership, and pray that your tenure will be marked by wisdom, courage, and a deep commitment to the well-being of all New Jersey's residents.

New Jersey has a habit of producing leaders who attract national attention. Ambition, in itself, is not a flaw. It can even be a blessing. But leadership begins at home, and in this moment, the needs of New Jersey's Jewish community cannot be deferred or diluted.

As we welcome Shabbat, we mark your recent election as Governor of New Jersey with both hope and expectation. Jewish tradition teaches that leadership is not measured by how far one's voice carries, but by how carefully one listens, especially to those who feel newly vulnerable.

And today, many Jewish residents of New Jersey feel exactly that.

Antisemitism is no longer abstract, theoretical, or confined to history books. It is present in our neighborhoods, on our college campuses, online, and sometimes frighteningly close to our synagogues and schools. Jewish families are asking questions they should not have to ask in America in 2026: *Is this place safe? Will anyone name what this is? Who will act?*

Our tradition is unambiguous at moments like these. Silence in the face of danger is not neutrality; it is a failure of responsibility. We need powerful voices to advance our unique needs. We need your voice, and your leadership.

Which brings us to clarity and to priorities.

One essential step your administration can help advance is the passage of legislation adopting the IHRA definition of antisemitism in New Jersey. This legislation is not about silencing debate or narrowing speech. It is about giving educators, institutions, and law enforcement a clear, internationally recognized framework to identify antisemitism when it occurs — especially when it hides behind euphemism or selective outrage. The previous administration and the New Jersey Legislature decided not to advance legislation that would have adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism. It was a profound failure to meet the urgency of the moment. At a time when antisemitism is rising across New Jersey, the nation, and the world, our state chose hesitation where clarity was required, and avoidance where moral leadership was needed.

We urge you to work actively and publicly toward the passage of this bill. Not quietly. Not eventually. And not as a symbolic gesture, but as a practical tool to protect real people. We need you to succeed where Governor Murphy failed.

We also ask for sustained attention to the security of Jewish institutions, expanded support for education that confronts hatred honestly, and clear expectations for college campuses to ensure Jewish students can learn without fear or intimidation. These are not “special interests.” They are basic obligations of a state that promises equal protection to all its residents.

Governor Sherrill, Jews are not strangers to patience. We have waited through longer nights than this one. But patience should never be confused with passivity, and concern should never be mistaken for political calculation.

New Jersey’s Jewish community does not ask for perfection. We ask for presence. We ask for clarity. And we ask that, at least in these early days of your leadership, the safety and dignity of the people you were elected to serve here — at home — take precedence over every larger stage.

As we light Shabbat candles this evening, we pray for leaders guided by courage, wisdom, and moral focus. May your tenure be one that brings security where there is fear, clarity where there is confusion, and justice that does not require footnotes.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Arthur D. Weiner