

March 29, 2019 /22 Adar II 5779

Dear chevreh,

I remember once being on a silent meditation retreat in Barre, Massachusetts. I was walking through the woods, resplendent in its snowy beauty, when suddenly it dawned on me: *tikkun hanefesh IS tikkun olam*. The healing of our souls and changing of our own minds IS fixing/healing the world; they are inextricably connected. I believed it then - over 16 years ago - and I believe it now. In order to change the world at a deep level, we must also address systemic injustices such as racism and oppression of many kinds.

As part of a training connected to the interfaith racial and economic group POWER, I just attended a two and ½ day workshop through The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond called *UnDoing Racism*. The Institute website says, "The fabric of racism is inextricably woven and constructed into the founding principles of the United States. Racism was done and it can be undone through effective anti-racist organizing..." [www.pisab.org]

As we approach Passover, we commemorate the liberation of our people from slavery in ancient Egypt, and our subsequent freedom as a nation. This story of liberation forms one of our core stories as a Jewish people in shaping our identities. In the United States, we continue to grapple with the imprints and impact of slavery, part of our national origin story. Currently, the American political landscape is unstable, racialized and divided. White supremacy is on the rise. Those of us who are Ashkenazic, white Jews must recognize our white privilege, and work to dismantle racism *even as* we recognize that our privilege is provisional, and that white supremacists have anti-Semitic as well as racist ideology at its core.

I look forward to having deep conversations this Sunday at 1:00 pm about systemic issues at our POWER listening session at KHN. If you are interested and cannot make it, please reach out to me at rabbidianamiller@gmail.com. We can find another time to begin or continue this discussion. We hope to create important systemic changes with fellow activists across faith traditions in Bucks County.

At this time of increased anti-Semitic and racist acts, let us support each other, remain hopeful, speak out, and be inspired by all who continue to fight for justice. As we come into Passover this year, let us bring our boldest selves to explore power dynamics in our broken country, and pursue freedom for all peoples.

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Diana