

October 5, 2018 / 26th of Tisrei, 5779

Dear chevreh,

I was not able to send out last week's rabbi's message, and did not receive instructions how to send an email from the new website until recently, so this week's message will incorporate those aspects of last week's which are still relevant. Thank you to all those who have updated our website beautifully, and to those who are helping to fix technical difficulties.

It's been an extremely rough couple of weeks in our country. For anyone following the news, it's been painful, at times excruciating. For anybody who has trauma around sexual assault or violation, or having your story silenced, or who cares about people who have, it has been a highly triggering, heartbreaking time. We have seen shocking expressions of anger and blame. We have seen our own president mock Dr. Ford's reporting of having been abused. And many people cheered. Many of us feel shaken to the core, vulnerable, enraged, scared.

Here is an article where several rabbis -including two who teach at RRC – bring nuanced Jewish teachings and questions to the issues of sexual assault in general and specifically to the context of current news [although this was published before the Senate hearings and investigations.]

<https://www.jta.org/2018/09/27/news-opinion/understand-kavanaugh-allegations-according-rabbis>

Additionally, here is a Petichta (opening) to the Prayer for our Country which Rabbi Annie Lewis who is the Director of Rabbinic Formation at Reconstructing Judaism wrote for this past Shabbat:

Ufros aleinu sukkat shlomecha

Spread over us, Shekhina, Your shelter of peace,

Your sukkah of wholeness.

This week, when we are confronted with

the brokenness of our country

and our own broken hearts,

embrace us as we are, where we are.

Help us to bear witness,

to hold our pain and the pain of others

with compassion,

those of us in our beloved community

who live with assault and abuse,

those of us who are survivors.

Give us the courage, like Dr. Christine Blasey Ford

to tell our stories, to speak our truth,

even when we are afraid we will not be heard.

May bystanders have the insight to acknowledge our complicity.

May perpetrators be brave enough to take responsibility.

El Rahum v'Hanun - Compassionate One,

Be with all the women and trans and genderqueer folks of our country

who have been told from generation to generation

not to take up space,

to dim our light

and to mute our voices.

Help us to believe ourselves and one another.

Help us to believe in ourselves and in one another.

May we build a sukkat shalom in this sanctuary

and in this land,

a shelter of wholeness and equity,

justice and dignity.

For the integrity of our country and our Torah,

for our sake, for our mothers before us,

for all who are yet to come.

Ufros aleinu sukkat shlomecha

This is a time to take care of ourselves, our bodies, our souls, each other. I am available to speak should you want to reach out for support. Additionally, locally there is NOVA at <https://www.novabucks.org>, an organization which provides direct support to victims of sexual assault and other personal violations in Bucks County. Also, the National Sexual Assault Telephone Hotline number is: 800.656.HOPE (4673) to be connected with a trained staff member from a sexual assault service provider in your area.

We have finished the holiday cycle, have read the last section of Deuteronomy and are beginning Genesis again. We are in the place in our Story where Creation happens, where order can come out of darkness and chaos. We must tap into that energy as individuals and as a nation, and remember that we are co-creators with the Holy One, and we must take our unique abilities, voice and vision to help make this world the place we want it to be. We must remember that a key teaching from this week's Torah portion is that each human being is created b'tzelem Elohim, in the Divine image.

Shabbat shalom,

Rabbi Diana