



Dear Temple Beth-El friends and family,

It is with great outrage and sadness, but a lesser measure of surprise, that I share with you news of an antisemitic incident that occurred yesterday in downtown Ithaca. A sign that had been posted in front of a local, Jewishly owned business (Court Street Chiropractic) – ironically a sign decrying racism and bigotry – was defaced with an antisemitic slur, as shown in the photograph below.

The business owner, Patti Jacobson, a member of Tikkun va'Or, was quick to respond, bringing the event to the attention of the Ithaca Police Department, the Mayor's Office, and friends in the local Jewish and general community. In response there has been, in Patti's words, "an overwhelming outpouring of support" from avenues both official and unofficial.

I have, on the congregation's behalf, been in conversation with Patti, with our colleagues at Tikkun va'Or, with the local clergy association and with the offices of the Mayor and the Chief of Police. The last of these individuals, with whom I spoke earlier this afternoon, asked me to convey to the TBE community the same message that he shared with the press, namely:

We at the IPD take acts that direct bigotry and hatred towards others very seriously and we encourage anyone who has any information about this incident to reach out to us to share it.

My clergy colleagues have similarly showered me – and by extension, our community – with innumerable expressions of support and solidarity. We will be meeting as a clergy association this evening to plan a concerted response, details of which I will share with you once they are in place.

Suffice it to say, we as a Jewish community are certainly not alone in the revulsion we experience in response to this hateful act and to the sentiments that lie behind it. And there are many who are standing with us in mobilizing a quick and decisive response. However, we *are* in a distinct place in terms of the fear and uncertainty that incidents like this sometimes trigger in the minds of our members and in the ways that such incidents intersect with a difficult, sometimes personal or familial history.

Know that I am available in a pastoral capacity to speak with any members of the community (writ large) who would like support in processing the thoughts and feelings that this event may have dredged up, along with the larger anxieties and uncertainty with which so many of us are grappling in this period of deep divisions, widespread enmity and generalized angst. Our people, who have over the years had to grapple with many frightful challenges, have developed a rich trove of resources to support us as we navigate these fraught waters.



I look forward to communicating with you again soon about concrete steps that we will be taking but in the meantime share with you an assurance found in Shir haShirim:

כִּי-עֵזָה כְּמוֹת אֶהְבָּה

Love is stronger [even] than death. (*Song of Songs, 8:6*)

We will not let such hateful acts deter or define us, whether as a community or a society.

-- Rabbi Rachel Safman

