

High Holidays 2022

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Malibu Jewish Center & Synagogue

Rabbi Cantor, Rabbi, Members, and Friends – G'mar Chatima Tovah. Welcome to each of you joining us here at MJCS and virtually from home. Whichever way you're here, you're within the warm embrace of your loving MJCS family.

Last Yom Kippur, I spoke about our sanctuary as both a consecrated place for prayer and as a refuge from an increasingly hostile world.

Just ten weeks later, on the first night of Hanukkah, hundreds of families in Beverly Hills and the Westside awoke to find fliers on their doorsteps that read, "Every single aspect of the Covid agenda is Jewish." The fliers were sealed in plastic bags along with rice - so that their message wouldn't be smudged by sprinklers or carried away in the morning breeze.

A few weeks later, in January of this year, a man walked into Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, Texas and held the rabbi and congregants hostage at gunpoint.

In May, a gunman entered the Tops grocery store in Buffalo and killed 10 people. He left behind a manifesto that said while he was targeting Blacks, it was really Jews who were to blame for the world's problems and Jews who must be eliminated.

I could go on. The ADL says the number of hate crimes against Jews in the US hit an all-time high last year.

We hear this troubling statistic, but many of us are calloused to it. We **know** we're targets. As Jews and Zionists, we've been targets for ages... But it feels different today. I want to talk about three warning signs that suggest ...

Here in America, we no longer have the luxury of taking Judaism for granted.

First, antisemitic hate groups are forming... and expanding fast. Every adult here has heard of QAnon and The Proud Boys. But what you may not realize is that QAnon was founded only five years ago. And The Proud Boys only a year before that. They've become household names virtually overnight.

Second, antisemitic conspiracy theories are spreading like wildfire across the internet and and even in popular media. You've heard the lies... about pedophiles and baby

eaters, genetic mutations in Covid vaccines, the globalists, and the elites. At their root, they all say the same thing – that Jews pull the strings and that it's us to blame for the world's problems. Sadly, many of our fellow Americans buy-in to the hate. Even in a civilized society... lies can turn neighbor against neighbor.

And finally, for the first time in our lives (at least the first time I can recall) serious people are talking about the fragility of our democracy. They see... we all see... that a growing number of Americans want to radically change this country. Their stated goal is to make the US an officially White Christian nation and they plan to strip away rights from anyone who's not like them. They call themselves White Nationals and Christian Nationals. They believe in The Great Replacement Theory. And their rallying cry makes their intentions crystal clear... "Jews will not replace us."

So, what's driving this surge in antisemitism?

Maybe it's the growing cultural divide... the widening chasm between the haves and the have-nots. Those left at the bottom feel (maybe somewhat justifiably) that the world is passing them by. **They long for the old days, when life was simpler and racism and bigotry were more tolerated... but society has progressed. They want the same jobs their fathers and grandfathers had... but those jobs have gone obsolete.** They feel as if they've been robbed of the America they once knew. And if they've been robbed... it figures there must be robbers. But who could be clever enough to take over a nation? In their minds, the culprits must be the conniving cabal that controls the media and the banks. The idea that Jews have stolen America and changed the American way-of-life is an organizing principle of QAnon, The Proud Boys, The Oath Keepers, The Three Percenters and all the rest. In a twisted way, they get satisfaction from this... they take pride in being robbed... because if they've been robbed of their country, it must mean... they were once its rightful owner. This idea fuels their recruiting effort. And as the cultural divide widens, more will join their ranks.

Some of us choose to minimize what's happening today by saying the fliers, chants, and conspiracy theories are just words. But think for a moment about how the Holocaust started. It didn't start with yellow star badges or razor wire. It started with words... and the words turned into actions.

So, what can we do?

Plenty. We can keep our heads out of the sand. We can stay informed. We can speak out. And we can show the haters that we're standing our ground... by redoubling our

support for Jewish causes and communities that strengthen our foundation and keep Judaism alive for future generations.

It's in that spirit that I call upon you today to support your own Jewish community, MJCS.

As you know, wonderful things are happening here. We have a new Rabbi. He may be new to the title, but he's long been our spiritual leader, teacher, pastor, and friend. We're blessed to have Rabbi Cantor Marcelo and the rest of our outstanding Clergy Team, including Rabbi Bill Kaplan, who brings warmth and positive energy to every Shabbat and every holiday... as well as Rabbi Judith HaLevy, Rabbi Janet Madden, and Chaplain Ruth Belonsky.

I'm pleased to report membership is strong, so is enrollment in the Religious School. Sisterhood is active and the Mens Club is back. And, as always, MJCS remains dedicated to ensuring that young people with special needs... learn critical life skills through MJCS's innovative Hand-in-Hand program and through our partnership with Shalom Institute's Shemesh Farms.



But what I'm most excited to tell you about is the future of MJCS. We're strengthening our foundation... to ensure that we're here to serve families in and around Malibu for many years to come. A few months ago, we announced that the city and coastal commission approved our building project to replace the crumbling trailers. Groundbreaking is slated for this coming summer. The Board's Building Committee is looking for temporary housing for the roughly two years we'll be under construction. When it's complete... the project.. which has been designed by a longtime MJCS member and acclaimed architect, David Gray, will be stunning. We'll have a beautiful and functional campus with a chapel and social hall, clergy and staff offices, Religious School and adult education classrooms, comfortable spaces for members to gather, and an early childhood center housing a state-of-the-art preschool. Outside will be an amazing area for weddings and other simchas. MJCS will finally become the Jewish Center... the center of our Jewish lives... that was envisioned from the beginning. The project is a gift... paid for by a very generous Member who believes in the importance of Jewish communities and in our mission here in Malibu.

Now, let me show you what your synagogue will look like in just a few years...

VIDEO

As you can see, we have a bright future ahead. A future in which MJCS will thrive with more families joining our community.

The new campus is a transformative gift, but it doesn't change our financial picture today. MJCS relies heavily on the pledges you'll make on this single day. In fact, nearly 1/3 of all the money we'll take in, from any source, in the entire year, will come from today's Yom Kippur appeal.

Your membership dues are important and appreciated, but they don't cover your share of the expenses.

Your High Holiday ticket is also your pledge card. Use it to select your giving level now. You can also make your pledge safely online at MJCS.org or by sending an email. If you give at the 5783 level, we'll engrave your name on a leaf on the beautiful Tree of Life in the courtyard. And if you give at the \$10,000 or greater level, we'll place your name on the Honor Wall directly behind the Bimah.

Any increase you make to your pledge this year will go twice as far. Two generous families have committed up to \$100,000 to match any increase you make to your last year's pledge.

On the upper right of the card, you'll see a tab that says, "I would like to add 10%." No matter which giving level you select, please turn that tab over.

Ushers will be coming through in a moment to collect your pledge cards.

In America, Jews are under attack today... and it may get worse. If you believe Judaism is worth protecting for us and for those who'll come after us...the place to start is right here, right now... in your own community.

If you're saying to yourself that you have other priorities for your money, imagine what would happen if everyone else here thought the same way. We'd eventually have to shut our doors. Imagine if Jews across LA... across the country... thought the same way. All of their synagogues would shut down too. And the antisemites would win.

Now is the time to redouble your commitment to your heritage and your legacy. Do all you can, right now, to keep Judaism alive in Malibu and to help MJCS get to its bright future.

On behalf of the Board and every MJCS Member, you have our sincere thanks for your generous support of our beloved community.

Albert and I wish you Good Health and Peace in the New Year.

G'mar Chatimah Tovah.