

Weekly Teaching

January 13, 2017

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. dedicated his life to improving the world in which we live, and he challenged us all to do the same.

Remembering Dr. King and his legacy this holiday weekend is important. He championed equal rights for all; inspired by our shared Judeo-Christian moral belief that ALL human beings are created equally in God's image. We can best honor Dr. King by seeking out opportunities to strengthen our own performed mitzvahs that can help others within our local community, nation, and the world.

In addition, we can be further inspired by Dr. King in how he did not stand idly by when he perceived injustice. He led a grass roots effort that forever changed the world.

It's in this spirit that we Jews need to also be inspired to "pray with our feet". Dr. King rightfully voiced a strong support for the Modern Jewish State of Israel. He understood the necessary link that must exist between Peace and Security. He was vociferous in his opposition to both anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism.

The birth of Israel during Dr. King's own life served as an inspiration, and he carefully watched and commented on the ongoing struggle that existed then, (and now), by which Israel seeks to build a Jewish nation.

On March 25, 1968; less than two weeks before his murder; Dr. King proclaimed: "peace for Israel means security, and we must stand with all our might to protect its right to exist, its territorial integrity. I see Israel as one of the great outposts of democracy in the world, and a marvelous example of what can be done, how desert land can be transformed into an oasis of brotherhood and democracy. Peace for Israel means security and that security must be a reality."

Dr. King also pledged: "I solemnly pledge to do my utmost to uphold the fair name of the Jews—because bigotry in any form is an affront to us all."

For those who try to separate Anti-Semitism from Anti-Zionism, Dr. King again was a wise teacher. While speaking at Harvard University, a student asked in a hostile manner for Dr. King to address the problems with Zionism.

Dr. King responded: "When people criticize Zionists they mean Jews. You are talking anti-Semitism."

Dr. King understood that to deny the Jewish People their own self-autonomy in their own Jewish State was the essence of Anti-Semitism because every people require the right for self-rule.

There is no question that Dr. King would equally be concerned for the rights of Palestinians to also have their own State, and that he would have encouraged an open direct dialogue by which two People compromise so as to secure both Peace and Security. What he would not have tolerated is either side delegitimizing the rights of the other side. Israel's "right to exist" is a pre-condition to any successful dialogue.

Today, many find themselves confused by the quagmire that is the Israeli/Arab conflict. The problems are extremely complicated, and there are no simple solutions. The only possible impetus to eventual Peace will be a direct conversation between adversaries, and major compromise required. When someone can start with, "I unequivocally believe in your right to exist..." then the conversation can begin. However, there are many anti-Zionists who are not willing to begin their conversation with this inherent belief.

And, they cleverly hide behind the rightful concern for all human beings and try to create the "slippery slope" by which the Jewish State can eventually be eliminated.

Their newest technique is to lead the efforts for B.D.S. (Boycott, Divest, and Sanction); most extremely entrenched with the creation of a hostile environment for Jews on American College campuses.

Jews are threatened, coerced, demeaned, etc.

Administrative leaders who would not tolerate any type of similar hostility directed toward other People of Color, Ethnicity, or Sexual Preference often stay eerily silent when Jews are targeted by B.D.S. activists.

We can further honor Dr. King's legacy by joining our own local grassroots efforts to work together and start an effective dialogue on "Why Israel Matters."

An initiative by a lay group of local individuals has formed "GALVANIZE."

They have put in place as a first step the opportunity for families with high school students to gather and learn about what the challenging landscape is before them with going to college, and how to successfully plan to navigate the obstacles that have been implanted at too many campuses.

If you have children or grandchildren in high school, or wish to become more prepared and informed no matter your own family dynamics, GALVANIZE is a unique opportunity to begin to appropriately educate ourselves, and learn how to be better Zionist advocates.

Temple Shalom has joined many other community organizations that have endorsed this grassroots initiative. Like the Civil Rights Movement that Dr. King led, this is not an effort directed by paid staff or elected leaders. This is laity who have come together to make a difference.

I urge your own engagement!!

Shabbat Shalom,

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