

Dear Naples Jewish Congregation Family:

We live in an America where blessings abound. There are times, we believe, when we are not thankful enough for those blessings and we simply take them for granted. We are so used to getting what we want and need that we barely ever think about it anymore and if we do think about it, then it's nothing more than a passing thought. We are blessed to live in, grow up in, work in, pray in, create families in, be educated in, and socialize in a place where most of us live free of fear and reside in security.

But no matter how wonderful we feel, in our America, there is no one who is happy and satisfied all the time. There are times when disenchantment and disenfranchisement take hold and we feel compelled to do something about it. We human beings can get to the point where, as the famous line from the 1976 movie "Network" says; "I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore." Our frustration simply boils over into rage. It is a common occurrence and has happened many times over issues in the history of our country. But there are limits that need to be observed. Protest is about as American as "apple pie" and we have had a long history of participating in it. The right to free assembly and free speech are built into our Bill of Rights, but there is no right to violence and insurrection. Protests must be peaceful and they need to have focus if they are to mean anything at all and accomplish any purpose. Both Jewish and American values affirm protest and debate as an ideology to discover truth and work for meaningful change. But we cannot and will not accept violence and wanton destruction to achieve some means to an end. What we witnessed in Washington on Wednesday was the worst of America. The day was dark, sad and humiliating. What we witnessed Wednesday was what damage can take place when people do not accept the truth. There are not "many" truths; there is only one. There may be many opinions, but only one truth. We are better than that and we must work diligently and unrelentingly to achieve our goals through something other than violence, destruction and mayhem. This was a test to see if we can keep our republic. It was refreshing to us to see legislators come back together after the violence, late into the night at the Capitol to allow democracy to succeed. We must never allow violence or seditious behavior to thwart our common united American principles and values.

Wednesday was about as disgraceful a day as any in American history. We are a country that speaks to the world about promoting our ideals and

values. We need to think long and hard about what brought us here and how far we have fallen. We need to think about how to get trust and decency restored. We need to be stalwart against going back to where we were. As Jews, and people of God, we need to implore governing authorities to fulfill God's purpose of bringing about justice, mercy and peace. We, as citizens of this great land, need to heed our obligations to one another as we confront the difficulties of creating a morally just and principled society. We need to actively build a path from the politics of divisiveness and hate to a culture of empathy, concern and tolerance. We need to once again promote civility and acceptance and relearn the dynamics of dialogue and compromise. This is the only way we will be able to survive as the beacon we have been from "sea to shining sea".

May God look favorably upon us and what we have built over the past two plus centuries. May God encourage and inspire us to always stand up for our democracy, our hallmarks of liberty and for the rule of law, ideals that have so ably guided us to this point in time. May God grant us the ability to heal from this disease of intolerance and hatred. May we embrace the gift of shalom, peace, giving us the desire and inspiration to build a more understanding, cohesive and peaceful tomorrow.

With Blessings

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