

Dear Friends,

As we approach the Jewish New Year, we are only two months shy of a controversial political election in which many of us have very strong feelings relating to the direction in which our country should proceed. This is in addition to dealing with the ongoing covid -19 pandemic and its health, economic, and social impacts on each and every one of us.

With all this on our shoulders I would like to take this opportunity to remind us of a prayer which we recite every year during the afternoon service of Yom Kippur:

“You shall not hate your brother or sister in your heart. Rather, you must reason with your kin so that you do not incur guilt on their account. But you must not seek vengeance, nor bear a grudge against your kin; you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Eternal One”.

As we navigate through the next two months it is in our best interest to remember and be guided by the wisdom of our ancestors and implement three fundamental Jewish values.

1. You must reason with your kin

Take the time to listen to the other side. You may not change minds, but you may learn, understand, and appreciate their point of view.

2. Nor bear a grudge against your kin

No matter what the outcome of the conversation, while we may disagree on the implementation, we all want what is best for our country and our community.

3. You shall love your neighbor as yourself

At the end of the day, despite our political differences, we are one family that has so much more in common than not.

As we celebrate 5781 years of Judaism, let's pledge to be better people and better friends, and together let's celebrate all that is good, positive, and promising for a wonderful Shanah Chadasha (New Year).

On behalf of the Jewish Federation of Central California, I wish you and your family a Shanah Tovah U'Mushart (a happy and blessed New Year).

Esti Barak
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