

I write in the midst of major political upheaval and the blurring of the standards of public leadership and political discourse. We see a rise in hate crimes, the targeting of minority groups, attempts to slash education and health care, and certainly the loss of leadership on clean energy. There is much to fear.

Yet, as Jews, our community can show leadership in such a time. Our people have survived thousands of years of exile, displacement, destruction and at worst, massacre. Jewish communities through most of history have existed as vibrant counter-cultures to the dominant empires. We have accumulated wisdom for moments like these.

First, our tradition teaches mourning and outrage. Within Psalms and our liturgy, there is a category of prayer known as kinot - laments. When the Temple was destroyed, we didn't get over it. We didn't get used to exile. We kept a vision of redemption, partially by consciously making the space in the liturgy and in our year-cycle to mourn the brokenness of the current reality. So too, now, Judaism can again be an effective counter-culture by refusing to adapt or normalize what is utterly outrageous and unacceptable.

While our tradition embraces outrage, it forbids despair. As Rabbi Nachman of Breslov taught, "If you believe humans have the power to destroy: believe we have the power to fix." One of our tools of repair is the idea of obligation, to each other and to the community. We don't help others when we feel up to it. We don't speak up for justice when we feel hopeful. The obligation is to show up, even in the absence of inspiration. In other words, perhaps, to "fake it til you make it."

Finally, we have Shabbat: for six days, we live and struggle in the world as it is. Shabbat is time for rest, community, and renewal. For all of us, especially for the activists in this community, Shabbat will be important for seeing us through. We get to nourish our souls in this way.

As we learn to navigate whatever comes, please remember that we need each other, however we're feeling. Please engage and participate with TBI when you are feeling hopeful and when you are feeling demoralized; when you are energetic and when you are exhausted. Let this continue to be a place where we are real, where we survive and thrive together.