

### ***From Rabbi Kogan...***

Dear Friends of Hillcrest Jewish Center,

I wish I wouldn't need to write about anti-Semitism, and I hope this is the last about the subject you will hear from me for a long time. Our times, however, demand that we talk about anti-Semitism, and even more, that we do something about it. On Sunday, January 5th, I participated together with over 30 members of Hillcrest Jewish Center and 25,000 additional caring citizens, in the *No Hate, No Fear* Solidarity March.

From all the speeches at the rally, the most salient one was delivered by Bari Weiss, a staff editor in the opinion section of *The New York Times*. Perhaps because her speech was different from the conventional speeches expected and usually delivered by politicians, or perhaps because many of us have mixed opinions when it comes to *The New York Times*, we welcomed Bari Weiss's address as a breath of fresh air.

Personally I believe Bari Weiss encapsulated the way most Jews feel and even more importantly, wish our children would feel. When my daughter gave me the speech and said to me, "Abba, you must read this!" I knew Bari Weiss had gotten the job done.

Below is the full text of Bari Weiss's address at the "No Hate, No Fear" march. I hope you find it as meaningful as I did.

*Rabbi Manes Kogan*

My name is Bari Weiss.

I am a proud American. I am a proud New Yorker. And I am a proud Jew.

I am not a Jew because people hate my religion, my people, and my civilization.

Not for a single moment does Jew-hatred, like the kind we are seeing in this city, make me a Jew.

I am a Jew because of the audacity and the iconoclasm of Abraham, the first Jew of all. The whole world was awash in idols, and he stood alone to proclaim the truth: There is one God.

I am a Jew because my ancestors were slaves. And I am a Jew because the story of their Exodus from Egypt, their liberation from slavery, is a story that changed human consciousness forever.

I am a Jew because our God commands us to never oppress the stranger.

I am Jew because Ruth, the first convert to Judaism, told her mother-in-law Naomi, "your people will be my people and your god will be my god," reminding us of the centrality of the Jewish people to Judaism.

I am a Jew because of Queen Esther, who understood that she had attained her royal position in order to save her people from destruction.

I am a Jew because the Maccabees were the original resistance, because they modeled for us — and for all peoples — how to resist the temptation of self-erasure.

I am a Jew because when Rabbi Akiva was being tortured to death by the Romans he laughed. He laughed and he told his students that he could finally fulfill the commandment to love God with all of his being.

I am a Jew because even after the heart of Judaism and Jewish sovereignty were destroyed my people refused to accept the logic of history and disappear. And I am a Jew because some of our greatest renewals took place in exile.

I am a Jew because my people have been targeted and despised and murdered by the Nazis and Soviets.

**I am a Jew because evil hates my people.**

I am a Jew because my people managed to turn destruction into redemption by returning to their land after 2,000 years.

I am a Jew because our Founders saw themselves as new Israelites.

I am a Jew because the biblical words on the Liberty Bell – proclaim liberty throughout the land! – rang out from the righteous mouths of this country's abolitionists as they fought for universal freedom in this New Jerusalem.

I am a Jew because it was Emma Lazarus who etched the biblical injunction to welcome the stranger onto the consciousness of America when she wrote the words: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free."

I am a Jew because of the martyred of Tree of Life and Chabad of Poway and Jersey City. And I am a Jew because of the courage of those who fought back in Monsey and who then, immediately after the attack, gathered together to sing. And I am a Jew because of my brothers and sisters in Crown Heights and Boro Park and Williamsburg who refused to hide their Judaism.

I am a Jew because of students across this country who refuse to be smeared and denigrated because of who they are, who are standing up against humiliation, pressure and abuse to affirm the justness of Zionism.

I am a Jew because my brothers and sisters in England and France are battling the anti-Semitism of populist thugs and the anti-Semitism of politicians in Parliament.

I am a Jew because I refuse to stay silent in the face of injustice. I am a Jew because I have no patience for leaders who speak boldly while failing to take the actions necessary to protect our community, or for partisan hacks who claim that anti-Semitism is the exclusive domain of their political opponents, or for leaders who believe they can fight Jew-hatred while making political alliances with anti-Semites.

**I am a Jew because I refuse to lie.**

I am a Jew because Jews are of every color and class and politics and language. And I am a Jew because hatred of us has no color or class or politics or language.

**I am a Jew because Jews do not cause Jew hatred. Ever.**

Today, as in so many times in history, there are many forces in the world insisting that Jews must disappear or die. Some say it bluntly. Some cloak it in the language of progress.

But I am a Jew because I know that there is a force far greater than that, and that is the force of who we are and the force of our world-changing ideas.

**The Jewish people were not put on Earth to be anti-anti-Semites. We were put on Earth to be Jews.**

**We are the people whose God never slumbers or sleeps, and so neither can we.**

**We are the lamp-lighters.**

**We are the ever-dying people that refuses to die.**

**The people of Israel live now and forever.**

**Am Yisrael Chai.**