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June 8, 2020

One of the many posts to opine on the nationwide protests and riots which have rattled us to the core invoked the memory (and threat) of Kristallnacht. Kristallnacht had a cause and an occasion, and we should not confuse the two. The cause of Kristallnacht was a venomous regime whose younger members were searching for an occasion to riot, loot, and murder. The occasion was the assassination of a German diplomat in Paris by a seventeen-year old Jew. Herschel Grynszpan, that young Jew, did not cause Kristallnacht.

The occasion for our current upheaval is the murder of George Floyd, may his memory be for a blessing. But let us not for a moment allow ourselves the illusion that his murder is the cause of the anger and violence in the black community and beyond. The cause goes back to Virginia in 1619. Or, the cause goes back earlier to African slave traders. Or, the cause goes back to the Torah: “Cursed be Canaan. A slave to slaves shall he be to his brothers” (Genesis 9:25). (Canaan is the father of the African peoples.) The causes of racism and white supremacy are many and beyond my ken. But I do know that these protests and riots were not caused by anything that happened in 2020.

In a White House address on racism in the early 1960s, my teacher’s teacher, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, pointed fingers: “Some are guilty, but all are responsible.” I must admit, with both clarity and embarrassment, that racial justice has not been at the top of my agenda. But as the psalmist wrote, “They are violating Your Torah -- it is time to act.” And as Hillel asked, “If not now, when?”

Because of the pandemic, our Congregation will not be engaging in outdoor protests as a community. But we refuse to wait to express our rejection of the injustices that are systemic throughout our country. In the short term, we are putting together a Signs of Solidarity campaign that will focus on the Old York Road Corridor.

Please note that the first email you received, this past Friday, referred to certain biblical quotations which were to appear on the signs as options for sponsorship or purchase in support of our campaign. Several of our members made us aware that some of these quotations, and their accompanying graphics, might be interpreted in ways we did not intend. We are grateful to have had the opportunity to preempt any misunderstandings.

**Consequently, we’re now offering the option of two biblical quotations that will be printed on signs that will run along Old York Road from Gratz College in Elkins Park to Temple Beth Am in Abington. The quotations from which to choose are “Love your neighbor as yourself” and “Justice, Justice we shall pursue,” and both signs will feature the same graphic image of a black and a white hand reaching across a large heart.**

The response from AJ members thus far has been very gratifying. If you haven’t had a chance to sponsor or purchase Signs of Solidarity for yourselves and your neighbors, please do so by going to [www.adathjeshurun.info/form/Signs\\_of\\_Solidarity.html](http://www.adathjeshurun.info/form/Signs_of_Solidarity.html).

Any profits will be donated Project Home ([www.projecthome.org](http://www.projecthome.org)).

Responsibility in Hebrew is אחריות, *acharayut*. The Israeli officer’s motto is אחראי, *acharai*, follow me. Leading the charge to a more just world is our responsibility. “To do justice is what God demands of everyone,” spoke Rabbi Heschel at the White House. “It is the supreme commandment and one that cannot be fulfilled vicariously.”

L’shalom,

*Rav Shai Cherry*