

In 1790, President George Washington wrote to the Jews of Newport, Rhode Island, "For happily the Government of the United States gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance." His words, written specifically in support of religious liberty, stand as an enduring legacy for America as a nation that has evolved as a model to the world of openness, tolerance and diversity. Washington's moral courage represents what we seek from our political leaders. He understood that liberty is more than the rule of the majority. It demands an open acceptance of rights for all citizens and residents of our nation. It ensures the security of all. The very least we expect from our political leaders is an embrace of Washington's clarion call against bigotry, hatred and violence.

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We are heartened by the majority of politicians who are appalled by the recent rise in our land of anti-Semitism, racism, Islamophobia, homophobia, and hatred. Their statements remind us what truly makes America great. At the same time, we are deeply disturbed by the President's words that have not, in our view, adequately and justly placed blame where it lies for the rise of anti-Semitism, racism and hatred of others. This is not the time for moral equivocation, but for an embrace of the clarity of moral vision that President Washington expressed two and a half centuries ago.

As Jews, heirs of a tradition of diverse opinions and acceptance of the free expression of one's mind, we embrace the Constitution's guarantee of the freedom of expression. Yet no virtue stands isolated from another. When the message is one that creates fear and terror, we expect our political leaders – most notably the President – to say forcefully and clearly that such expression besmirches the virtues of our nation.

The approaching Days of Awe are a time of deep self-reflection. As Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel taught, "...indifference to evil is worse than evil itself ... in a free society, some are guilty, but all are responsible." With this in mind, we will not be silent, for silence is complicity. As Washington's words inspire us, so – we expect – his words will inspire all our leaders, that "the Government of the United States gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance."

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May each of us, those in our communities and our leaders, take to heart the themes of this season to lead us towards a new and better year ahead.

Rabbi Renni S. Altman Great Neck, NY	Rabbi Steven Conn Cantor Morris Wolk Plainview Jewish Center	Rabbi Mark Greenspan Oceanside Jewish Center	Rabbi Steven Moskowitz Congregation L'Dor V'Dor	Rabbi Howard Stecker Rabbi Daniel Schweber Cantor Raphael Frieder Temple Israel of Great Neck
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Rabbi Todd Chizner Temple Judea	Rabbi Stephen Goodman Garden City Jewish Center	Rabbi Dr. Janet B. Liss North Country Reform Temple	Rabbi Helayne Shalhevet Temple Beth Emeth of Mount Sinai	Rabbi Simcha Zamir Temple Shalom of Westbury
Rabbi Jeffrey Clopper Cantor Alison Levine Temple Beth El of Huntington	Rabbi Alysa Mendelson Graf Port Jewish Center	Long Island Board of Rabbis	Rabbi Jaimee Shalhevet Rabbi Rachel Maimin Cantor Kyle Cotler North Shore Synagogue	Rabbi Irwin Zepelowitz Rabbi Sam Pollak Cantor Claire Franco The Community Synagogue
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Rabbi Judy Cohen-Rosenberg Community Reform Temple		Rabbi Michael Mishkin Cantor Baruch Blum Temple Beth Israel		

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