



Learning from a Puerto Rican Rapper

I caught the Superbowl Half-Time Show on Monday morning. My American, rabbinic colleagues were already posting about it. The Israeli writer, Hen Mazzig <https://www.instagram.com/p/DUjPEnOCdUP/>, suggested 'Bad Bunny' offered a "masterclass in a lesson every minority community needs to learn". I think his analysis might be the most interesting take on antisemitism and how to defeat it I've encountered in several years.

It's not been any easy time to be a Latin American immigrant in the United States and when the NFL invited a politically active rapper from Puerto Rico to perform before 100million American Football fans, many expected a combative attack on ICE and the like. What happened was a celebration of love, Puerto Rican culture and an ending that took my breath away in its audacious reclaiming of the phrase, "God bless America," chanted before listing every country in the entire northern and southern continent in front of a massive advertising billboard which proclaimed, in capital letters, "THE ONLY THING MORE POWERFUL THAN HATE IS LOVE."

Mazzig's point was that 'Bad Bunny,' "didn't ask for a seat at the table and then protest when it wasn't offered." He just, "took up space." His suggestion to those who wish to end antisemitism is that, "Rather than asking the world to be afraid on our behalf," we should celebrate our culture and contribution with the all the vibrancy we can muster. We should focus on showing "true humanity and [proclaiming a] love that is universal in any race, religion, or ethnicity."

I certainly have and will continue to expend time, effort, breath and ink opposing antisemitism. It's vital to confront antisemitism. But antisemitism will not be ended ONLY by opposing it. Mazzig argues the mere act of opposing antisemitism highlights our fragility. My fear is that if the only way we seek to end antisemitism is through opposition, we will be outnumbered by those forces which are more powerful than we are. We cannot place our faith in our ability to overwhelm our opponents. We have to seek to transform them into our allies. I know that is not easy. It's just that I don't think we have another option.

Antisemitism, racism and other examples of what Abraham Joshua Heschel called, "the maximum of hatred for the minimum of reason," can only be ended by all peoples finding points of commonality. We need to share why others should be proud of us, find delight in us and open ourselves to be proud of others in their differences and find delight in them. It is through pride and celebration that we have a chance to create a less antisemitic world and a better world for us all. So be proud and celebrate.

This Shabbat we welcome Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg to New London, the Synagogue of his childhood. Rabbi Jonathan's leadership of Masorti in this country continues to be remarkable. He's an extraordinary Darshan and I warmly encourage making a special effort to be in Shul to hear him. It would also be a lovely thing to remind him of what is quite so special about the Shul that started it all.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Jeremy

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The Jew(ish) Book Club

New London Council Member, Mika is launching a “Jew(ish) Book Club
The aim of the book club is to have a chill get-together every other month where we discuss books and Jewish thought. The book preference is swaying heavily towards non-fiction but fiction recommendations are always welcome!

Next meeting:

 : 25th Feb, 19:00

NW6 – address supplied on enquiry

 : Zakhor by Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi

There is a WhatsApp group which people can join via this link:

https://chat.whatsapp.com/GRrSw5AesFUFTWONJIX6bQ?mode=gi_t