

President's Column

By Jonathan D. Lubin

The Torah refers to the Hebrew month of Nissan as the first month of the year. Rosh Hashanah falls out in the seventh month. Pesach—Passover—is the central holiday of the first month. In the mind of the Jewish mystics, this first month parallels our infancy—just as the last month of the year parallels our maturity. Pesach, the holiday that celebrates the birth of the Jewish people through their collective salvation from Egyptian slavery, is perhaps the Jewish holiday with the most rules; and if rules aren't enough, many communities have stringent customs that augment the already complex rules. Young people need guidance and rules, even (and, truly, especially) when they don't understand the rules and their purpose.

In that sense, Pesach is the exact opposite of Purim, the holiday that we celebrate in the early Spring which dominates Adar, the last month of the Hebrew calendar. Purim is all festive. It celebrates the heroic efforts of Esther and Mordechai, who independently came to an understanding of how to manipulate the evil king Ahasuerus in order to save the Jewish people. G-d is ever present in the Pesach narrative. His name is not mentioned once in the Book of Esther. The young Jewish people needed G-d's ever-present guidance. Esther and Mordechai were competent to act on their own.

The juxtaposition of these two days, one month apart, teaches us that even at the height of our maturity (even, for example, 80 plus years after the founding of this society), we must always humbly recognize that we have a lot to learn. As president, I have learned a good deal.

Since June, the Decalogue Society has been busy—really busy. As I reported in the Fall Tablets, we've begun a new tradition of holding low- key social activities with other bar associations on a nearly monthly basis. From the get-go, these events have been very popular. We've attracted a good mix of the usual suspects, and folks whom I otherwise may not have met, from the Decalogue side; and it goes without saying that it has given our membership the opportunity to meet people from other bar groups who we otherwise would never have occasion to encounter.

In the Fall Tablets, I made the case that these new acquaintances, perhaps even casual friendships, are all important in times of strife. Thankfully, we in Chicago have been spared some of the horrific incidents of anti-Semitism that have occurred elsewhere in our country. But the history of the Jewish people informs us that we can never be complacent. Our adversaries are always crouching at the door. Thankfully, we have great friends in the Chicago legal community.

When the massacre in Pittsburgh took place, Hon. William Haddad contacted me almost immediately to plan a joint CLE with the Arab American Bar Association on the subject of Hate Speech, Hate Violence and the First Amendment. The Chicago Bar Association very quickly co-sponsored, and graciously offered space in their building, for what ended up being a very well-attended, very important event. The list of speakers at the event—too long to repeat here—is a testament to the fact that Chicago's resident statesmen treat bigotry seriously. Some very good people have our back.

They would have our back anyhow, but it's important to recognize that this support is a two way street. The Decalogue Society, recognizing that the country's recent trend towards nativism mirrored trends that once targeted the Jewish community, authored an Amicus Brief in the matter of *Trump v. International Refugee Assistance Project*, objecting to what has become known as the Muslim Ban. Our members stood shoulder to shoulder with leaders in Chicagoland's Arab community in the weeks after 9-11 to reject bigotry directed at Arab Americans. I'm proud to be part of that important tradition. Leaders across Chicagoland, and indeed across Illinois, should know that the Decalogue Society will be part of the movement to reject bigotry when it rears its ugly head.

This year, we also entered into a partnership with IICLE to bring Decalogue CLEs to a wider audience. Some of our CLEs this fiscal year have been recorded, and we anticipate that many of those will be hosted on the web through IICLE, so that our members can benefit from them even if they aren't present, and so that our presenters can enjoy greater exposure within the legal community. I'm excited to be able to bring greater value to our membership, and to expose the rest of the legal community to the value we bring them.

We also are excited and enthused that many of our members, including past presidents and officers, have been appointed to the judiciary, or have won elections for judge. There are, thankfully, too many to name here. But I'd like to call specific attention to Hon. Michael Strom, Hon. James Shapiro, and Hon. Joel Chupack, three past presidents of the Decalogue Society who have recently either won elections or been appointed to the bench. It makes me proud to know that people who have provided value for their communities are recognized for that; and it gives me comfort to know that the judiciary is in good hands.

As we enter this fiscal year's home stretch, I'm happy to report that the state of the Society is strong. We are strengthening our ties to the greater legal community by bringing value to our membership, those in our orbit and those with whom we are in contact—and we're working on building the numbers of all three of those constituencies. As president, I can take responsibility for next to none of this. It has been, as it always is, a team effort, involving our board, past presidents (including, especially, our immediate past president, Mitchell Goldberg who I have leaned on incessantly), committee chairs and community leaders. Thank you all for continuing to be beacons of light and tireless advocates.