

Changing of the Guard

I have lived through 13 Presidents (although one I absolutely do not remember, being a baby for five months). I have voted in 9 elections. I learned from my parents that being a citizen meant being socially conscious, voting, caring about issues and learning how to win and lose. When I voted, my candidate did not always win. Yet he remained my President until I got to vote the next time.

It occurs to me that we don't really like the changing of the guard. If we did, we would be more open to someone coming along who said that the status quo isn't working anymore. Moreso, we would not deliver the vitriolic hatred that is tossed upon our President and his supporters. Many have been called white supremacists and racists and just recently a fool. Having lost a bunch of friends due to intolerance, it occurs to me that we have become unwilling to change, unwilling to be kind no matter what, unwilling to hear and share differing ideas.

Intolerance of Presidents is not a new thing. President Andrew Jackson was criticized as a man with no respect for the checks and balances of the Constitution or the rule of law. President John Tyler proved so deeply unpopular during his presidency that all but one of his Cabinet members resigned in protest when he vetoed a bill establishing a national bank. Shortly afterward, Tyler got kicked out of his own political party. And the House of Representatives tried to impeach him. These are two examples, there were many more.

Vicious politics are nothing new. We should not be surprised. But we can, starting with each of us individually, we can listen to disparate views, we can watch our words to ensure they are not hateful or nasty, we can understand that in order to win, others lose and vice versa.

If we want change, we need to be very careful to understand that it may not be the change you want. Everyone has a different idea of change and everyone has a different idea of what the result might be. An example: someone is very sick and we pray for the person's peace and ease from pain. We want that person to get better; unfortunately, s/he dies. Not really what we prayed for but G-d has His own plan. And we actually got what we prayed for but not what we thought would be the upshot.

And so, we need to remember that this is a republic and therefore compromise and checks and balances still remain the foundation. And change means something different to each one of us.

What should not change is our inherent goodness, our desire to be kind and thoughtful and empathetic. We are generous. We mostly watch our words and we reach across the divide to help others regardless. We are, indeed, our brother's keeper. That should not change.