

Defeating Hate and Antisemitism

Noah 5784

It has been another hard week. Maybe harder than last. While the shock is still there, we are now faced with the reality that the pain, the trauma, and the challenges for Israel will not go away any time soon, if ever.

Thankfully, we have each other, and hundreds came out to our Vigil for Israel on Thursday evening; three synagogues all came together - Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox - even with our differences. And I am most grateful to our Christian and Sikh leaders who came out to support us. They are true friends whom we can and do call in times of trouble. We also thank them for their notes and letters of support.



So, just before the vigil, we were making sure the final pieces were in place. Of course, the sound system wasn't working - I felt at home 😊.

I was just about to open the program when a woman started walking toward the platform. She was carrying a large bouquet of flowers, which she placed right in front of our podium and then disappeared.

And I have placed them here—a gift of love, of peace, of friendship.

She left no card, and like the prophet Elijah, she slipped away into the dusk. I don't know her, I don't know who she is. But I know she was bringing a simple gesture of kindness and love into the moment.

And I have carried that with me...



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Parashat Noah opens with violence. With lawlessness.

With similar behavior, we saw two weeks ago today.

It begins with a description of the world before the flood - *Va'timalei ha'aretz hamas* - the world was filled with hamas.

What is hamas? In Biblical Hebrew, it means violence and lawlessness. In Arabic, it becomes hamisa - meaning zeal or strength.

Hamas, the modern terrorist organization, chose this name in 1987 as it broke away from the Muslim Brotherhood. It is an acronym for Islamic Resistance Movement - *Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya*, but it clearly connects to the Arabic word for zeal and the Biblical word violence.

Hamas is zealous in their violence in order to rid the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea of Jews.

Further, as their charter states, they aim to kill all Jews.

Their charter quotes an Islamic source: “The Day of Judgment will not come about until Moslems fight Jews and kill them. Then, the Jews will hide behind rocks and trees, and the rocks and trees will cry out: ‘O Moslem, there is a Jew hiding behind me, come and kill him.’” (Article 7).



Photo : Hadi Mohammad

FARS NEWS AGENCY

They are explicit. They are focused. They murdered my two close friends, [Matt Eisenfeld and Sara Duker](#), z"l in 1996 and they continue to be locked in on their goal.

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But, it's not just Hamas that is a problem.



It is that so many people in our country and around the world do not understand what happened to the Jewish people. The trauma. The re-triggering of the Shoah.

Many universities do not get it.

Many students do not get it.

Many people in movements we care about do not get it.

They seem only to see the ensuing war as the issue to address; they see everything through the political conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.

For them the terrible death of Gazan children as the only issue, and let me be clear:

I mourn the death of every Palestinian as we do every Israeli and the people from 29 countries killed or taken hostage.

Every human life, as our tradition teaches, is created in the image of God and is of ultimate value.

But people leave out the context.

They do not know, or they forget that Israel pulled out of Gaza, uprooted all the Jews from their homes in 2005, gave the Palestinians the keys to their greenhouses, and said, go and build a state. We will help you.

The Gazans chose a different path; they voted for Hamas - there was a civil war there between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority, and Hamas slaughtered the leaders of the Palestinian Authority. They defeated the voices of moderation, creating an Islamic terrorist entity on Israel's border that has launched rockets incessantly over the last 17 years.

This is why Israel tried to stop goods from passing through - to stop weapons. Tragically, as we saw two weeks ago, Israel failed even at that...

Hamas took all the money they got from Qatar and, instead of building a state, they built terror, which they planned and, most horrifically, successfully executed when Israel was caught off-guard.



Israel, whose [Prime Minister](#) sadly decided to focus on weakening the more moderate PA and strengthening Hamas in his effort to prevent a two-state solution.

A PM who tragically moved three divisions of the Israeli Army from the Gaza border to the West Bank just three days before this attack to defend the settlers.

And so now the world turns against Israel and against Jews. They see the deaths of Palestinians in the hospital killed by a misfired Islamic Jihad rocket as Israel's fault.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7v40bJGqfEo>

They blame Israel when Hamas launches rockets from homes and mosques and Israel tries to stop them.

It blames Israel when Hamas uses its people as human shields.

[We need more voices like President Biden's and like many Western leaders who powerfully condemn Hamas.](#)

Its atrocities.

Its brutality.

Its savagery.

Its burning and beheading.

Hostage taking or children, the elderly, young women.

And the hostages, their suffering keeps me up at night, whose tragedy fills me with tears.

We don't hear that from our esteemed universities—it's just bland, mealy-mouthed statements about this ensuing war. Another “cycle of violence.”

Where is the statement about the terrorist attack?

Start with that.

Full stop.

Then, discuss what has happened since. But these leaders seem to be unable to do that.

They are unable to condemn terrorism and call it what it is.

[Watch the video of the Israeli Columbia professor who calls out many schools and their presidents for their lack of moral clarity.](#)

Bushah, bushah - shame, shame on them.

Call out the violence.

Call out the Jew hatred.

We have received calls and emails from parents and students in local public schools, in local non-Jewish private schools, in universities telling us

how their school leadership have missed the boat; they are so focused on hate against other communities - that they forget about us.

Do they not remember the Holocaust?

Perhaps not, because they don't teach it anymore.

Do they not remember Pittsburgh?

Do they not remember Charlottesville?

Do they not remember Arlington, MA right here - where an antisemite tried to burn down a shul - twice?

Jews live with trauma.

Do they not see that we need to protect our synagogue with guards?

And I am thankful that we have them - that we are safe. Thank them when you leave.

Thank you to Michael Roskind and Adam Samansky for leading this.

We now need police and private guards to protect us. Thanks to them I feel safer here at Temple Emunah than Jewish students do at my alma mater, at Columbia, where Jewish students had to be locked into the Hillel building for their own safety when the Palestinian protesters marched by chanting "From the River to Sea Palestine will be free."

What will it be free of?

Jews.

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So let's return to our text. It was a video quoting Onkleus who converted to Judaism in the First Century.

Onkleus actually explains the word Hamas as hostage-takers! Writing 2000 years ago, Onkleus is prophetic. The hateful behavior before the flood was taking captives.

The verb that is used there - *vatimaleh* - is passive - the earth seems to become consumed by this hamas, this violence, this hate.

It just spills into everything.

This is exactly what we see today - messages of hate spread even more easily than before. They spread on the Internet like COVID- quickly, and they take over their hosts.

Most often, hate consumes young men without good work, without relationships, without the potential for a future, who are easily indoctrinated. We see them on the far-right, in White Supremacists; we see them in many places in the Muslim world, and now, more and more, we see some of this hate creeping into the far-left. Along with hate's cousin, apathy.

But Onkelus says that God - the Force of goodness, of morality in this world - is with us, helping us rid of this evil

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But to me, it's not just getting rid of hateful ideology, of hateful terrorist groups, it's thinking about how to rebuild the world anew, away from this terrible path.

The Torah does just that - it does not leave us with a destroyed world, but then it speaks of a new creation, a renewed world. Once the world dries off after the flood, the world is created anew.

God blesses Noah and his sons, and says to them, "Be fertile and increase and fill the earth.

פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ:

It's the same language used for the first creation.

The Torah is giving us hope that somehow we can get through times of loss, of violence, reminding us - as we see in the opening chapter of the Torah:

כִּי בְצַלְמֵם אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה אֶת־הָאָדָם:

For in the image of God was humankind made.

All of humanity.

Even when other people forget that, we dare not to remember. We act differently.

Let us not descend into the abyss of depravity, of hate, because then the terrorists win.

While we must stand up and defend ourselves, we do not speak words of hate; we do not commit atrocities, we try to prevent the loss of every innocent life, as the IDF tries to do even in the most difficult circumstances.

After the flood, God gives us a path of peace - the sign of a new covenant with humanity - the rainbow: the *keshet*.

“I have set My bow in the clouds, and it shall serve as a sign of the covenant between Me and the entire earth.”

A reminder to God and to all humanity about how to behave.

As we stand up and defend ourselves, let's remember what our ultimate goal is.

We close every Amidah, every Mourner's Kaddish, every service, with that goal: the hope for Shalom, for peace and let us say Amen.