

Rabbi's Column

[As of this writing, I do not know if there will be any local solidarity or anti-hate event; some of the regular people are out of town.]

The writing this week will be disjointed. That's kind of how I feel after the events of these past few days.

In case you missed the news over the weekend and have not caught any of the aftermath - At Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, PA during a Brit Milah being held there on Shabbat morning, an individual with several guns in hand came in with the plan to kill Jews. He did - 11 of them. He wounded 6 other people, including some first responders. He planned on killing these Jews because last Shabbat they participated in the HIAS Immigrant Shabbat (just as Abram and Sarai wandered away from home, immigrants also wander away from the home they grew up in), and he did not like the thought of supporting the current wave of immigrants.

This is the incident of hate that affects us as Jews -

This is not the first time this has happened to us as Jews. This is not even the first time this century this has happened to us as Jews.

This is the largest set of fatalities in one incident for Jews who are living in America.

It is bad - it could have been worse. We know this from history.

Mister Rogers grew up in the greater Pittsburgh area. His mother told him to find God in the good that people do in response to evil acts. There are vigils nationwide. The criminal involved has been arrested. People have spontaneously contacted us as a community (both here and nationally) because we are always supporting them in their moments of need.

I do need to mention that this was not the only hateful act over the past few days.

When an individual down in Louisville could not enter the local black church, he went to the grocery store to shoot some people who might have been members there. He succeeded in murdering two before he was caught.

Another individual spray painted anti-gay graffiti on a church in Lander, Wyoming. (defacing is not in the same category as destroying, hatred of the other and denial of God are what they have in common).

There is no race to see whose hate crime is the worst. For each population involved, these incidents add more than enough fuel to the fire.

We cannot control the hate others feel. We can control our own hateful language, and the hateful posts we might follow or like because we usually agree with the person making the hateful posts. We cannot control other people's prejudices. We can search ourselves and see if we are guilty of judging others because of what they look like or how they behave, and then try to decrease our tendency to do so.

May this week be much better than the last.