

Message from Rabbi Brian in response to attack on Jews in Pittsburgh

Saturday, October 27, 2018

Dear Friends,

A few hours ago, as I was spending a beautiful Shabbat day with my grandchildren in New York, when I heard the news of the shocking attack on Jews during a Shabbat morning service at Tree of Life Congregation in Pittsburgh. Tears rolled down my face as I read the emerging details about the number of people killed by a man filled with hatred for Jews and for many other groups of people.

Firstly, I am writing to join with you in sorrow and love. Our hearts are with all the families who lost loved ones in this outrageous attack. May the Source of all Life comfort them among all who are mourning the loss of loved ones. We also express our solidarity with all the members of the Tree of Life synagogue and with the Jewish community of Pittsburgh.

And, I am writing to express my outrage at the hateful and violent rhetoric of the President and his enablers, that is directly related to the violent attack today and to the violence of the mailing of pipe bombs to his opponents over the past two weeks. His rhetoric has emboldened and unleashed this violence.

I am writing to express our commitment to increase our efforts to speak out clearly and boldly against all forms of hatred - racism, sexism, Islamophobia, homophobia to name a few - and to join together with people of all faiths to advocate for justice, compassion, equity for all. We, as Jews, will only be safe when all are safe. We, as Americans, will only be safe when all are safe.

Shortly before he carried out his attack, the terrorist/murderer wrote about his outrage at National Refugee Shabbat organized by the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society last shabbat and celebrated in a large number of synagogues nationwide, among them the Martha's Vineyard Hebrew Center. I participated in that inspiring and beautiful service. It is not coincidental that the murderer used the same rhetoric as the President in referring to those who seek refuge in our country.

We, at TVO, will continue to celebrate Shabbat and we will continue to love one another. We will hold one another as we share our sorrow, our grief and our anger, over the next few weeks. We will continue to advocate for justice for all. We will love our neighbors as ourselves and we will continue to love the stranger as the Torah commands us. And we will join with other Jews and people of all faiths in this sacred commitment.

Hazak v'ematz! We must be strong and courageous at times like these.

In sorrow and love,

Shavua Tov/May it be a week of doing and acting for good for all,

Rabbi Brian