

TORAH THOUGHTS – TRAGEDY AND COURAGE IN NEW ZEALAND

Last week, fifty worshipers were murdered at two mosques in New Zealand, and fifty more were wounded. The perpetrator, described as a twenty-eight-year-old white supremacist, is in custody.

This tragedy could have been much worse. Abdul Aziz, who was at the second mosque, confronted the gunman in the parking lot. Instead of shooting worshipers inside, the terrorist fled and was caught by the police. "I got to be honest it wasn't me, it was God who saved everybody," Aziz said.

Our tradition teaches that one who saves a single life, it is as if he saved the entire world (Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5). Mr. Aziz's quick reaction and courage saved dozens of lives. This, along with his humility, is laudable. May we be as brave as this individual and stand up to hatred of all kinds.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

1. The various arms of the Conservative/Masorti movement issued a statement, condemning the attack. Read it at: <https://uscj.org/blog/conservative-masorti-movement-statement-on-new-zealand-mosque-shooting>
2. As a show of solidarity, the Jewish Federation of Monmouth and Middlesex Counties' Rabbinic Association is promoting "Rings of Peace" gatherings at local mosques. For more information go to https://www.edisontemple.org/rings_of_peace#
3. While addressing parliament on Tuesday, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern vowed never to say the gunman's name out loud, in order to deny him and his views any notoriety. The Torah commands us to blot out the name of Amalek, a cruel tribe that abused our ancestors in the desert (We 'boo' Haman, the Purim villain, in part because he is descended from Amalek.). Do you see a connection between the prime minister's objective and the *mitzvah* to blot out the name of Amalek?

Shabbat shalom,

Rabbi Pont