

Last Yom Kippur I had the honor of giving the d'var at the mincha service. The reading of the Leviticus passage (18:22) on that day - labelling certain sexual expressions, and associating them with same-sex relations, as "abominations" - certainly warranted a response, especially but not exclusively from the GBLTQA community. I argued for the honoring of the exquisite particularity of each person, something that is obliterated by the pronouncements of what is "natural" or "normal," judgments that so easily become enacted in exclusion and persecution. After the carnage last week in Orlando, I again stand before you, our beloved TBZ community, where my wife Kimbell and I were married by Rav Claudia nearly five years ago. This time, after such a tragedy, I wish to say just a few words that, in a way, extend my previous talk, as here too I address abomination and exquisite particularity.

The murder of forty-nine people and the physical and psychological injuries and traumas that were inflicted on many more – most, but not all, members of the GBLTQA community - is an abomination, of that there is no question. That it resulted from the action of a particular individual, for whatever combination of twisted and pathological motivations, must of course be acknowledged with outrage. But he is dead, as it the case with most of these mass killers. But now what needs to be real object of outrage is the abomination of such mass killing itself: that one person was able to commit a crime of this magnitude. What allowed this to happen needs to be convicted, needs to face its demise.

Those of us trained in archaeology are more aware than others, I think, of the way in which one material – metal – had on tremendous impact on the course of history, especially in Europe and Asia. Indeed, this substance brought great good and advance, without doubt. Most people don't think of this, but when stone and pottery were replaced by metal in many cultures, a new responsibility - I tell my students "an ethics of metallurgy" - emerged. For as forensic archaeology tells us, copper, iron, and bronze allowed for mass killing to occur at a scale previously unknown. Weapons, the fittings for horses and chariots, helmets, and the ways to shackle people all enabled many great "civilizations" to emerge.

Some traditions have recognized the dual life of metal, including our own. Isaiah 2:4 (and Micah 4:3) contain the oft quoted line "from the word of the Lord in Jerusalem," instructing nations to turn their "swords into plowshares," and "spears into pruning hooks." But there is an exquisite particularity here as well: the sword in the wrong person's, and just only nation's, hand can create devastation that is also catastrophic. The imperative to turn that destruction into a plowshare - an object to till, not kill – should be just as compelling, especially in the United States. For here, weapons in the wrong set of hands have slaughtered school children and teachers in their classrooms, queer people and their friends enjoying a festive evening together in a club, a group gathered for Bible study in an African-American church. The Talmud (Megillah 28a) explains that one should never seek to gain honor at the cost of a fellow human's degradation, "illustrated by Rav Huna, who was once carrying a plowshare on his shoulder." Let us never forget the cost of the misused weapon upon our fellow human beings; please pick up the plowshare of advocacy, in the various ways possible, for better gun regulation and the banning of certain weapons in private hands altogether. This is the best way to honor the

memory of all that could have been planted, cultivated, created by each of those everywhere whose lives have been lost to gun violence.

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