

December 14th, 2018/6th Tevet, 5779

Dear chevreh,

Our world continues reel from all the violence and hatred.

Six years ago today, 20 first-graders and six educators were murdered at Sandy Hook Elementary School, in Newtown, CT. Heartbreakingly, this community was re-traumatized today with threats resulting in an evacuation of the school. We hold the families in our hearts and the memories of the those lost who would have been teenagers now.

Earlier this week, 37 tombstones and a monument to Holocaust victims were defaced with swastikas and other anti-Semitic graffiti in France, not far from a Christmas market in Strasbourg which experienced a deadly attack.

Additionally, there was terrible violence in the West Bank and Jerusalem this week by Palestinian extremists. We grieve for those murdered and their families, as well as the dismal chances for a peaceful situation in the land at this time. *Below, is the statement on these recent events in Israel from the Reconstructionist Movement.

It's hard enough just to be human and deal with illness, suffering, and inevitable challenging situations in our lives. Why these other layers? When will we find solutions to all the violence plaguing even our youngest citizens here in this U.S? When will this cycle of violence and terror in the Mideast stop? What will it take? What can help to abate the rising tide of anti-Semitism, particularly in Europe where more and more Jews feel unsafe? As Bend the Arc, an organization devoted to justice from a Jewish perspective asks, "When will we reject the politics of hate and create a world where everyone has safety and dignity?"

Holy One, help us to keep our hearts open to each other, to see each other face-to-face, panim el panim, to listen to each other across differences with curiosity and empathy. Help us mere human beings to create safe spaces for our children, to enact reasonable laws, to elect wise and compassionate leaders and to learn to value human life more than hatred. Help us to have the courage to feel the fullness of our own humanity so that we may recognize it in others. Let us know a time when all can know safety and dignity.

Shabbat shalom,

Rabbi Diana

*Reconstructing Judaism and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association condemn and are saddened by the recent terror attacks by Palestinian extremists against Israeli soldiers, police and civilians in the West Bank and Jerusalem. In the past week, two attacks near the settlement of Ofra have claimed the lives of two Israeli soldiers and a prematurely delivered infant, and have wounded nine Israelis. We mourn those who have been killed and we pray for speedy and thorough healing for all those wounded. Terrorism is never justified, and attacks like these increase the potential for escalating violence as Israeli forces respond with intensified measures in the West Bank. We urge the leaders of all parties to prioritize the sanctity of human life, to deescalate the current flaring of violence, and to seek pathways back to good faith efforts to negotiate a just and lasting future of dignity and peace.