

November 30th, 2018/22nd Kislev, 5779

Dear chevreh,

Sometimes it would feel easier if I just didn't watch the news. I've heard some of you say similarly. This day for me comes once a week, each Shabbat. Except for extreme situations where I would want to be in contact with my KHN community, I try to guard Shabbat and my spiritual and emotional well-being from the onslaught of the negativity in so many realms.

Before we go into Shabbat, I'd like to reflect on two realms that have been with me throughout this week. The first is the continual uptick in anti-Jewish incidents in the form of swastikas being sprayed at Teachers College at Columbia University and at peoples' homes and other institutions. In our own country, there is a remarkable, frightening amount of anti-Semitic appearances just one month after Pittsburgh. There are two White House roles unfilled, one being an anti-Semitism envoy and the other a Jewish liaison; there is also little being done to stem the dangerous tide of far-right extremism affecting Jews as well as others. Ha'aretz reports that the White House has boosted funding to the Department of Homeland Security, ignoring evidence that far-right groups in the United States have been far more deadly than the Islamic terror threat. According to the Anti-Defamation League, 71 percent of deaths caused by extremist violence between 2008 and 2017 were attributable to the far right and white supremacists; 26 percent were caused by Muslim terrorists.

[\[http://www.haaretz.com/us-news/.premium-a-month-after-pittsburgh-no-sign-of-bold-steps-by-trump-to-fight-anti-semitism-1.6701367?fbclid=IwAR2CfLhA-YyeMBqOzB_GZT-R8IMmsGuGODh8pRGGbfHcKbBUe1i7Ez74QQ8\]](http://www.haaretz.com/us-news/.premium-a-month-after-pittsburgh-no-sign-of-bold-steps-by-trump-to-fight-anti-semitism-1.6701367?fbclid=IwAR2CfLhA-YyeMBqOzB_GZT-R8IMmsGuGODh8pRGGbfHcKbBUe1i7Ez74QQ8)

These attitudes are not only in the United States. Key findings from a recent CNN poll about Europeans' attitudes towards Jews reveal that more than a quarter of Europeans polled believe Jews have too much influence in business and finance; nearly one in four said Jews have too much influence in conflict and wars across the world; one in five said they have too much influence in the media and in politics, while a third of Europeans in the poll said they knew just a little or nothing at all about the Holocaust

[\[https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2018/11/europe/antisemitism-poll-2018-intl/\]](https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2018/11/europe/antisemitism-poll-2018-intl/)

We are living in frightening times. Class and race privileges that many Jewish people enjoy in this country do not prevent harm and terror where the participation levels in hate-filled groups is swelling.

I just finished reading journalist Eli Saslow's book, "Rising Out of Hatred: The Awakening of a Former White Nationalist," which charts Derek Black's conversion from a right-wing extremist to an outspoken critic of the white nationalism movement. Having proximity to people who are different than ourselves helps keep their humanity alive for us, and this was the case with Derek Black, son of a former Ku Klux

Klan grand wizard and godson and mentee of David Duke. While troubling to read about the widespread extremism in our country, it was nonetheless inspiring to get an inside view from somebody who through willingness to listen to others, shed his hateful views and became an outspoken champion of America's diversity and democracy.

The other area, among many, unfortunately, which is most on my mind is learning about what is happening at our border to asylum seekers. Here are two ways that you can help and protect asylum seekers:

1) Contact your elected officials through HIAS and let them know that asylum seekers and the asylum system must be protected:

https://act.hias.org/page/5465/action/1?utm_medium=email&utm_source=hias.org&utm_campaign=November2018_action&utm_content=Asylum+Seekers+Must+be+Treated+Humanely+and+Fairly&ea.url.id=161258

2) Support the emergency shelter for migrants operated by the Jewish Family Services of San Diego, with financial donations - <https://www.gofundme.com/migrantreliefsd>

Locally, you can continue to support the two Syrian families who successfully sought asylum here in our area by coming to the Bucks County Interfaith Coalition for Refugee Resettlement event this Saturday from 4:30 to 6:30 pm at Congregation Kol Emet, 1360 Oxford Valley Road, Morrisville, PA 19067. There will be tickets at the door for an afternoon of Syrian food, culture and fun.

As Jews living in the United States, we need to continue to stand up to protect ourselves as well as stand with others who are at risk. Our tradition dictates it. From Pirkei Avot 1:14 we learn, Hillel says, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, who am I? If not now, when?"

I hope to see you this evening at 7:30 pm for services, tomorrow at 9:00 am for kids and tot Shabbat, at 10:15 am tomorrow for Shabbat Zimra followed by a dairy potluck, and Sunday morning for a Coffee Talk between 10:00 am and noon. We will explore what Reconstructing Judaism (Reconstructionism) is together.

Shabbat shalom,

Rabbi Diana