

**D'var Torah for Erev Shabbat, November 2, 2018**  
**#ShowUpForShabbat**  
**Rabbi Ita Paskind**  
**Congregation Beth El Norwalk**

We're still in the early stages of the Torah. I'm going to ask us to fast-forward a couple of books, to the middle of VaYikra/Leviticus. The finishing touches have just been put on the tabernacle, and Aaron and his sons--the soon-to-be-kohanim/priests--have just spent 7 days inside, preparing the space and themselves for service to God and community. On the 8th day, they offer the very first sacrifices of our people, and tragedy strikes. Aaron's son, Nadav and Avihu, are struck down by a divine fire and killed on the spot. It's a day of celebration, and yet the family and the community are plunged into chaos. The Torah is terse as it describes Aaron's response: *vayidom Aharon*. Aaron was silent.

There are rare moments in life when we, too, are stunned into silence. For me--perhaps for you--last Shabbat was one of them. Like you, I had learned of the early reports while I was still here on Shabbat morning. But the full report became clear only as I was coming out of a joyful Shabbat, and I was paralyzed. 11 Jews dead. 4 SWAT personnel injured. An entire shul, an entire city--plunged into grief and mourning. Is this for real? How is it possible? Could it happen here? What do we do now?

Along with the rest of the Jewish world and our country, we too have had to seek out words when it feels like there are none. But as the days pass, and funeral after funeral takes place, and shiva begins and takes its course, the words, the thoughts, the convictions begin to take shape. I'd like, on this Erev Shabbat, to share 2 of these convictions that must become *and be* part of our lives.

We must familiarize ourselves with the notion that hate speech translates into hateful actions, and we **MUST SPEAK UP**. The ADL statistics have gone viral in the last week, particularly the fact that anti-Semitic threats rose 57% from 2016 to 2017. Rabbi David Wolpe, in an article this week in Time Magazine, writes that "Anti-Semitism is a different sort of hatred, the most durable and versatile in history." It's the "longest hatred". People have hated Jews for all different sorts of reasons, and at the heart of it, it's because we're simply who we are. Jews.

I admit I have a pretty short historical memory, and a tendency toward optimism. This event has, for me anyway, flown the red flag right in my face, when I haven't wanted to see it there.

I know you have read some of the words that the gunman used in his social media. They are painful and ugly, and I'm going to say them out loud now because I think we need to hear them, not just see them in print. Just before he went over to Tree of Life last week, he posted "HIAS likes to bring invaders in that kill our people. I can't sit by and watch my people get slaughtered. Screw your optics. I'm going in."

More on HIAS later, but he's of course wrong. And yet there was no time to capture this hateful speech and prevent his horrifying and murderous rampage. But this wasn't the first time he spewed hateful anti-Semitic speech. And he's not the only person who engages in hateful rhetoric. When we see it, we need to name it for what it is, and we must report it, to the ADL and to the police. Hate speech has become acceptable in our society, and that must end. Now. No other person, family, or community should have to suffer injury or death that stems from hateful speech.

The second conviction that I'm sure you already feel is that the greatest way to combat hate in the world is to fill it with love and responsibility. I spoke with so many of you throughout this week, and each of you had your own unique response to this tragedy. With permission, I'll share David Morgan's passionate thoughts. He shared with me that he believes each of us needs to determine, if we don't already know it, our purpose in the world, and we need to pursue it furiously. His feeling is that if we keep too much to ourselves and don't move those around us forward in some way, we may actually be part of the problem. We let things stay stagnant, and they don't change. I found this at first jarring, and then spot on. If we're not filling the world with love and goodness, then we are leaving room for hate to fill the void. And the beauty is, we've all got different purposes in life. Some of us are inspiring teachers, either one-on-one or in a group setting. Some of us are connectors--we bring people together. Some of us like being out there in public. Some prefer to work on our own, and we know the talents we possess. The *ikar*, the essence is: Put goodness into the world. Don't leave room for hatred. Reach out to someone you've not spoken to in some time. Get in touch with someone you've generally disagreed with, and try to bridge a gap. Seek out someone who came to this country as a refugee and reassure them you've got their back. And do whatever you can to support HIAS, which does the incredibly holy work of settling refugees seeking a better life in our beacon of a country.

While we may have experienced shock and paralysis last Shabbat, like Aaron at the death of his sons, we cannot afford to remain silent any longer. *Shtikah k'hoda'ah damei*; the rabbis taught that "silence is equal to agreement." Now is the time for words.

There is so much more than must be said, and we continue to reflect tomorrow as we #ShowUpForShabbat. I pray that each of us, shocked as Aaron was in the Torah, find the strength we need to speak up and to fill this world with goodness, kindness, and love. That's how we defeat hatred. That's how we show that the Jewish people are and will always be an *or lagoyim*, a light unto the nations.