

NOTES FROM THE CANTOR

I learned of the horrible shooting that took place at Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh last month right after our own Shabbat morning services had concluded here, at Temple Sinai.

I barely had time to process what had happened, when I immediately dove into a rehearsal for our upcoming Cantor's Concert. In those brief moments, I didn't have time to mourn the lives lost, nor ruminate on the potential threat to the wellbeing of those present within the walls of our synagogue. When rehearsal ended, three hours later, I went back to my study and began searching the internet for new Jewish music which, believe it or not, is not something I usually do. In retrospect, I am embarrassed to admit that I think I actually repressed my knowledge of the tragic incident, and really wasn't thinking about it at all. As I browsed the online catalogs of new melodies from Jewish singer/songwriters, I came across a *Hashkiveinu* by Elana Arian and couldn't stop listening to it. I purchased and downloaded the sheet music from her website, and I continued to sing it and play it on guitar continuously throughout the rest of the weekend. I taught it to all the children in the religious school that Sunday morning and shared the melody again, the next evening, at our healing service Monday night.

It wasn't until after that Monday gathering had concluded that I realized what I was doing. In the wake of this tragedy, the horrific violence enacted against people, I needed a mantra. And, without my realizing it, this *Hashkiveinu* had become my prayer. The words I needed to sing, over and over again, to feel like we were safe. To feel God's presence with me. To hope and mourn and pray for the greater Jewish community.

Oh God, may we lie down in peace and rise up to life renewed. Spread over us Your shelter of peace. Guide us with Your good counsel. Save us for Your name's sake. Shield us from violence and hatred. Shelter us beneath the comfort of Your wings. Guard us, going and coming, and grant us life and peace, now and always. Blessed are You, God, who spreads Your shelter of peace over us, over all Jerusalem, and people everywhere.

As a parent and a teacher of young children, what I hope most for them is that they have a deep sense of safety and security. At the core of their being, I want them to feel comfortable and at ease. Our liturgy teaches us, through the *Hashkiveinu* prayer, that this is not too much to ask. We, as Jewish adults, and as human beings in this world, are entitled to the same peace and tranquility. The Pittsburgh shooting, this terrible act of violence, took eleven precious lives, and also robbed all of us of the gift of feeling safe and at peace.

Yet, even in the aftermath, we have seen, over and over again, the outpouring of love and support from our Christian and Muslim neighbors. They are standing by us, and many came and worshipped with us at our Shabbat of Solidarity the next Shabbat after the shooting. The police officers who have come to stand by the entrance to Temple Sinai have treated their watch as a sacred responsibility and for that we are so grateful. These acts of humanity, of love and compassion, no matter how big or how small, are helping to restore the peace shattered by a lone shooter. And, as we come together as a community of people of all creeds and backgrounds, we demonstrate that hate will not win over love. And that love empowers strength and resilience. So we do what Jews have continued to do throughout the generations - we persevere. We keep praying, we keep learning, and we keep finding ways to celebrate and rejoice in life.

To that end, I close with a reminder to join me at this year's annual Cantor's Concert, December 9. It's a wonderful evening - filled with beautiful music, delicious treats and great friends. I encourage you to invite your friends from the greater Stamford community as well, as we illuminate the darkness and fill the night air with beautiful melodies, friendship and love.

B'Shira, in song,
Cantor Micah Morgovsky