

Melanie Phillips: *When Anti-Semitism Goes Unnamed and Unchallenged*
A Presentation Sponsored Jointly by AIPAC and TBHBE
April 30, 2015, 8:00 pm

April 21, 2015 / 2 Iyyar 5775

Dear Friends,

Yom HaShoah/Holocaust Memorial Day is marked throughout Israel by ceremonies in nearly every community, on television programs and radio interviews. But it is the siren, heard in every corner of the country, which serves as the unifying moment for the nation. It is a moment in which there are no words to speak, a moment in which we contend with our own thoughts and the pictures which we hold in our mind's eye. We each carry images representing the horrors of the Holocaust which were perpetrated upon the Jewish People some 70+ years ago. Somehow, being left to one's own thoughts can be as powerful as the words of the most eloquent of speakers.

Like hundreds of others on the highway last Thursday morning, we pulled our car over to the shoulder of the road, stepped outside and stood at attention for two minutes. As we stood in silence, I thought about another siren, the one which will be heard tomorrow. Once again, that siren will conjure memories and images which are painful. These are the memories of those who have died in defense of the State of Israel. That siren will be sounded just prior to the celebration of Yom HaAtzmaut/Israel Independence Day. The message of that siren is clear: there can be no State nor celebration without first acknowledging the sacrifices of those who have fallen and, in all likelihood, will fall in the future, in defense of this tiny strip of land on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean.

There is another siren, a third siren, which is also part of life in Israel. It is a siren which is not pre-planned nor is it predictable, for it could be sounded at any moment. Lori and I heard that siren this past summer. That siren is the "tzevah adom," the alarm announcing that a rocket has been launched in your direction. This siren does not conjure for us memories of the past. This siren urges us to find cover....now! If anything, this siren calls upon us to remember that the past is still with us, that the desire to kill Jews is not a thing of the past. It is an ever-present threat.

There are certainly distinctions which define each siren. But beyond the specific meaning of the sirens sounded in Israel, the sirens we hear remind us of our vulnerability and of the fact that the war against the Jewish People continues unabated. We are reminded that we continue to live in a world in which hating Jews is a constant. In Europe in particular, those who are listening hear a siren there as well.

On Thursday evening, April 30, at 8:00 pm (following a 7:00 pm dessert reception open to all of our congregants), our synagogue will host a program jointly with AIPAC. The featured speaker will be Melanie Phillips, a well-known BBC broadcaster and hero to many. She is one of a small number of journalists willing to take a stand against the rising tide of anti-Semitism in the UK and Europe. Ms. Phillips has been a powerful voice against the European veneer of anti-Zionism, a veneer which seeks to obscure an underlying and ubiquitous anti-Semitism. The rise of anti-Israel legislations in Parliaments across Europe, the unabashed efforts to hurt Israel economically through boycotts, sanctions and divestments, are presented in Europe as moral imperatives. It is only when voices, like that of Melanie Phillips, are heard, that the false

distinctions between anti-Israel/anti- Zionism are unmasked as nothing more and nothing less than anti-Semitism.

AIPAC events, such as this, occur throughout the country as an ongoing effort to bring to the pro-Israel community strong voices of support for Israel. Although these programs are created for those who belong and contribute to AIPAC, as hosts of this event, our congregants are warmly invited to attend. I hope that you will take this opportunity to hear from a journalist who confronts anti-Semitism on a daily basis. It will be my pleasure to welcome her to our congregation. I hope that you will plan to welcome her along with me.

We live in a world in which the sirens of hatred continue to wail against Israel and Jews. Some sirens remind us of the Holocaust as we hear the calls for the destruction and eradication of the Jews. Some sirens remind us of the price, in blood, which the Jewish People have paid, and continue to pay, for the rights of Jews to live freely, to determine our own destiny and identity. And we continue to hear the sirens announcing the rockets aimed at us, the sirens which remind us not to take our security for granted. We continue to be the world's most hated people. Even in today's world, with the Holocaust still a first-hand memory for some, the sirens we hear remind us that it is still dangerous and costly to be a Jew.

I hope that you will join me on Thursday, April 30th to welcome Melanie Phillips to our community. I hope that her message regarding the depth of anti-Semitism in Europe will be heard. Although the US continues to be a relatively safe-haven for Jews, I hope that you will attend, to show your solidarity with our brothers and sisters for whom the sirens blare.

More information about this program can be found at our online site: www.tbhbe.org.

Shalom from Jerusalem,

Neil S. Cooper, Rabbi