

This Week's Message from Rabbi Rick Rheins

Acharei Mot, After The Death

We will not become desensitized from the ceaseless acts of violence.
We will not become paralyzed by fear and cower in hiding.
We will not become deaf to cries of anguish and pretend to hear nothing.
We will not become numb from the drumbeat of violence and await our turn.

“Never again” was never a slogan recited meekly. Rather, we angrily screamed “NEVER AGAIN” as a vow, a sacred pledge that bullies and anti-Semites and racists, and bigots will never again roam the streets unopposed. Yes, they’re still out there. And once in a while, they creep out from their retched holes of hate and inflict pain and suffering. They are well-schooled in the art of terror. They know that they are too few and too weak to win, so they settle for acts that sow fear and chaos.

The Jewish community is still shaken by the latest incident of terror. As we concluded Passover, our Festival and Shabbat peace was shattered by a murderous attack against a synagogue in the San Diego area. Lori Gilbert Kaye z/ was murdered as she attended services at the Chabad of Poway. The Rabbi and others were shot.

The Muslim community is still shaken by the murder of 50 worshippers in a Mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand.

The Christian community is still shaken by the murder of 253 worshippers on Easter Sunday.

All of God's creation is shaken by man's inhumanity to man.

But being “shaken” will not help. Being upset and outraged may even cause an increase in the cycle of violence and hate. Rather, after the deaths, we must seek the holy in ourselves and others. Yes, it sounds rather platitudinal to speak of searching for holiness when around us we see so much suffering. And yet, the antidote to poison is not more poison. Rather, it is to find a healing medicine and treatment.

Along our 3,500 year Jewish journey, we have confronted hate and hate-mongers time and again. We have pressed on through eras choked with arrogant cruelty. We've survived the institutionalized terror of governments and despots.

We've endured the rampaging mobs of religious fanatics and deranged nationalists. And we have done so, not by raising a bigger army or hiding behind a bigger fence. Rather, the Jewish people are here today, strong, proud, and empowered because we confronted hatred with the greatest weapon of all: an inexhaustible love of life.

And so, we read in this week's Torah portion that *Acharei Mot*, after the death of Aaron's sons, he was instructed to prepare for rituals of redemption, forgiveness, introspection and renewal. It is a blueprint for a nobler way of life. After tragedy, seek holiness.

And so, too, our tenacious pursuit of love, holiness and renewal in the face of terror and demonic mayhem will be amply on display throughout the world on Wednesday and Thursday as we observe *Yom HaShoah*, The Holocaust Memorial Day. On Thursday, May 2, an estimated crowd of over 1,700 people will attend the 38th annual ADL-Governor's Holocaust Remembrance program. Holocaust survivors will be honored and we will share memorial prayers for the 6-million Jews murdered by the Nazis and their allies. Fittingly, representatives of many different faiths will be present. Together, we will share prayers of hope, respect and peace. Together, we will stand for justice. Together we will stand proudly against those who breed contempt and hatred. Together we will emphatically declare "Never Again" will the good be bullied into silence.

B'vrakhah, With Blessing

Rick

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