

DATA of Plano

Parshas Cahyei Sarah | 25 Cheshvan 5779 | November 3, 2018

Sermon

with Rabbi Zakon



Shoot for the Stars

Friday

Mincha / Candle lighting: 6:16

Special Shabbat Service in Memory of the Pittsburgh Victims: 6:30

Shabbos Day

Shacharis: 9:00

Latest time for shema: 10:28

Learners' Service: 10:45

Kiddush following services:

11:45

Mincha: 5:50

Shabbos ends: 7:19

Learners' Service



The Power to Heal

From the Desk of Rabbi Yogi

Responding to Tragedy - The Pittsburgh Shootings



I heard about the shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue on my walk home for shul on Saturday afternoon. A Jewish neighbor of mine went out to grab his mail and stopped in his tracks when he saw my family and I walking down the sidewalk in our Shabbos attire. After a little informal chit-chat, he asked me about my feelings about Pittsburgh. "I'm not sure what you're referring to," I replied. "You mean you haven't heard?" He stopped for a moment, seemingly surprised by my ignorance of the matter. "A gunman shot up a shul in Pittsburgh."

My heart stopped. I was stunned to silence. However, as a Jew connected to a national memory stretching back through the anti-semitic ages, I was not completely shocked.

I'm certainly not the only one who has sat in shul and proactively planned an escape route in case of a terror attack. In fact, I regularly think about my unique role in case of such an attack as one of the only people in my synagogue who faces the back of the sanctuary, with a perfect view of anyone, famil-

iar or otherwise, who might come in.

As Shabbos ended, whatever feelings of peace and tranquility I had managed to retain over the remainder of the holy day left me as I read one news article after another and update after update on the carnage that was wrought in Squirrel Hill by a man firmly set on killing as many Jews as he could get his hands on. Sadness tinged with righteous anger filled me. One mourning Jewish heart in Texas reaching out to Jewish brothers and sisters far away.

My nine year old son noticed my distressed, mournful countenance and soon I sat him down and told him what had transpired in Pittsburgh. It wasn't long before tears began tumbling down his cheeks. "I'm scared to go to shul," he said. "Will that happen to us to?"

I've no doubt many Jewish parents had this same conversation with their children that night and in the days that followed. Sadly enough, such conversations are Jewish rites of passage - waking us up to a realization as old as our people, that we live in a world in which people might want to kill us for the simple fact that we are Jews.

I remember sharing my sons fears and waking up to the truth of the fragile existence of the Jew in this world during what seemed like yearly bomb threat evacuations at my Jewish day school in Atlanta, and through multiple swastika painting incidents at two different schools I attended. More than these events, though, it was watching CNN's live coverage of scud missiles raining down on Israel during the Persian Gulf War that made me fully aware of the potential consequences of my heritage. I was only a little older than my nine year old son was then.

We, as individuals and communities, will mourn and

pray over the coming days and weeks. We will try, as best we can, to allay our children's fears. These things are both appropriate and praiseworthy. But we must equally confront the hulking elephant in all of our rooms. The question of all questions at a time like this. Why do we continue to inflict ourselves and our children to this national fate? Why do we not choose to slink back and camouflage ourselves amongst our non-Jewish neighbors and communities? We can assimilate as many others have done before. And so, the question remains, why don't you? And why don't I?

Ben Shapiro, editor-in-chief for The Daily Wire, asked this question to his audience of online readers and wrote what I believe to be a quintessentially Jewish response to the question. I will leave you with his profound words; words which we ought share with our children as they begin to navigate their new reality in a world much darker than it was but days ago.

"In that Pittsburgh synagogue on Saturday morning, the Jew-hating murderer rushed into a room in which a *brit milah* was taking place: a circumcision ceremony, a ceremony as old as the Jewish people, a ceremony welcoming an eight-day-old child into the community of the Jews. In other parts of the synagogue, different *minyanim* were reading the story of Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac on a mountain.

Why would Jews continue to inaugurate children into the most targeted community in human history? Jewish destiny may be inescapable, but why *embrace* that destiny? The members of the Tree of Life Synagogue were shot to death in a synagogue. So why continue to cluster in synagogues, fulfilling age-old commandments, the elderly passing down their traditions to infants?

Because, as the Tree of Life Synagogue's



name attests, the Torah – the Jewish destiny – is a “tree of life for all those who cling to it.” (Proverbs 3:18) And we are enjoined to choose life. That, after all, is the story of Abraham and Isaac: a story not of God asking Abraham to kill his son, but a story of God asking if Abraham is willing to place his son in mortal danger in service to God – and God’s grace in saving Isaac thanks to Abraham’s commitment. That is the story of the Jewish people. That is the story members of the Tree of Life Synagogue were reading as they died *al kiddush Hashem*, in the sanctifi-



cation of God’s name.

And that is the story of our civilization. An attack on the Tree of Life is an attack on all of us – those of us who wish to imbue our own children with a sense of Godliness in a dark world, a sense of eternal value in a society eating away at itself. Inside the sanctuary, all was peaceful on the Sabbath -- until the gunshots rang out.

The only proper response is the same response Jews have given throughout time: to fight back. To stubbornly cling to that which stamps us with the image of God. To fight darkness with light, untruth with truth, and death with life.”



Mazel tov to Evan Kimmel on his Bar Mitzvah.

Mazel tov to Staci, Adam and the entire family.

Kiddush is sponsored by the Kimmel family in honor of the occasion.

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CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

The youth center is nearing completion, and should be getting paint and flooring soon. Plumbing for the new bathrooms in the shul is set to be installed soon as well. We are well underway with this exciting project, and looking forward to a bigger and better center for all of us. Two important reminders about the ongoing project:

1. Please remember to only bring children to shul who will remain in the service **the entire time**. Unfortunately, there is no place for children to hang out during the construction.
2. We will be holding a large one-day fundraising campaign on November 14. Please consider volunteering some time at the shul on that day to help make phone calls. We will have an exciting "War Room" with refreshments for the volunteers.



WEEKLY LEARNING SPONSORSHIP

THE LEARNING THIS WEEK AT DATA OF PLANO IS SPONSORED IN MEMORY OF

DR. PAUL NEUMARKT, OBM

PINCHAS BEN YAAKOV

By his loving grandchildren, Allison and Brian Cox in observance of his Yahrtzeit, 24 Cheshvan.

Born in Berlin, Germany and a survivor of the Holocaust, Dr. Neumarkt emigrated with his family to Israel and then to the United States after his first wife's passing. He earned many degrees and enjoyed much recognition throughout his lifetime, but his greatest achievement was his warmth, kindness respect and love of learning that he imparted to his family for generations.

To sponsor a week of learning, contact enissel@dataofplano.org.