

Weekly Teaching

August 18, 2017

The “Unite the Right” violent rallies in Charlottesville were a terrible reminder of how much senseless hatred still exists within our Nation.

As Americans and Jews, we need to seek out a full understanding of what our Jewish Faith teaches us, and what we are then obligated to do.

There is no time to delay; hateful fringe groups are no longer feeling confined to the shadows.

Core to our Judaism is that racism contradicts and offends our most fundamental beliefs and values.

Judaism affirms the **“equality of all humanity.”**

In our Torah’s Creation Story, one human being, Adam, is the ancestor of all races.

The Talmud explicitly states: **“How can one claim my blood redder than yours, when all have the same parentage.”**

The commandment most often repeated in the Torah is not the commandment “to keep the Sabbath,” or any ritual law, but rather the commandment repeated the most is **“to love the stranger and to treat him or her properly.”**

The purpose of this proliferation of the same commandment, as noted in the Torah, is to teach us that it is **pure evil** to oppress the helpless or defenseless.

Since the stranger is the most defenseless, how he or she is treated, is a key moral barometer of our society.

To add to our own need to nurture empathy for the “other,” the Torah repeatedly links the commandment **“not to oppress the stranger”** with the reminder that once **“we were once strangers in Egypt.”**

Jews understand how it feels to be discriminated against.

We know, unfortunately, only too well, how it feels to be oppressed by the majority.

The Torah also reminds us to **“not stand idly by.”**

To begin, we need to further nurture our own compassion, and consciously seek out opportunities to foster inclusivity within our homes and community.

At every opportunity, we should seek to affirm the value of diversity and the need to honor the dignity of every human being.

These are Divine Calls for activism and advocacy.

Some Sacred Actions to Consider:

- Ensure that our public leaders stand up against hate.
- Demand of our elected representatives that their good works go well beyond mere condemnation. They should develop a plan of action to combat white supremacy and all forms of hate, including investing funds in countering violent extremism.
- Push for policies that promote inclusivity and justice.
- Monitor extremist groups and speak out against their rallies when they are planned.

Last weekend painfully demonstrated the consequences of emboldened hatred. The trauma created is still reverberating through those targeted communities.

We should take note that the marchers directed much of their bigotry and hateful rhetoric toward the Jewish community; a painful reminder that anti-Semitism is intertwined with racism and xenophobia.

This Shabbat, Temple Shalom joins USCJ synagogues throughout the nation for a **“celebration of unity and diversity in the face of fear and division.”**

We invite you to join us TONIGHT at 6:30 pm Services and/or TOMORROW, at the 10:00 am Service.

The USCJ declared: “...Regardless of where we each stand politically, we can ALL agree: hatred, bigotry and violence cannot be tolerated. When our values are threatened in this way, we raise our voices and rise up-not just in opposition but in unity...”

A Prayer to add to this week’s Shabbat Observance:

HaKodesh Barchu; Holy One Blessed be Your Name; help us to better recognize and revere Your divine image and likeness that is in our neighbor. Enable us to see the reality of racism, and strengthen us to challenge and uproot it from our society, our world and ourselves.

AMEN!

Shabbat Shalom,
Rabbi Mitch

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