THE TROUBLE WITH TEENS
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- What a difficult week this has been a difficult week to be a teenager or the parent or grandparent of a teenager
    - The accidental shooting at a Gardenia HS
    - The intentional shooting of a School Police Officer and subsequent lockdown of so many of our middle and HS children, some for more than 5 hours as they searched for the suspect
    - The suicide of 14 year old Mathew Mezza, a Santa Monica HS student and leader in his Beth Shir Shalom Youth Group
    - It is no comparison to the loss of life and security experienced in the above, but last night was hard too – particularly on parents. Last night more than 200 parents came here to screen the movie Race to Nowhere about the relentless drive for grades and college admissions that is putting indescribable pressure on children and families.

- Its' been a hard week to be a teen or raise a teen. Though it goes with the territory adolescence is hard on all involved.
    - Unpack the word ADOLESCENCE – what does it really mean, it means that these beings sometimes seemingly from another planet *adel* – *your-essence*, they poke and prod and challenge who you yourself think you are, your values, and priorities so they can in turn figure out and define there own.

- With each successive event I have been searching for answers, for lines of connection. Why would a teen to bring a gun to school? Why does a shooting near a school result in a lockdown of 9 schools and 9,000 students? Why does a happy, successful, well-liked and deeply admired 14 year old leave soccer practice and jump off a building? Why did 200 parents come to synagogue on a Thursday night for a film about teen stress?

- As I look at these events the answer that keeps coming to the surface, the emotion that seems to connect all the above is FEAR.
    - Fear of failure, as a students, as a parent, as a school
    - Fear of not being like everyone else, not being normal
    - Fear of the unknown, of what might happen if…, of the God forbid.
        - That's why they lock down 9 schools and 9,000 students because what if…
        - That's why our kids have hours of homework and a resume driven lifestyle, because what if they don't get into a good school, are unprepared, are not at the top of their class

        - Fear is why kids bring guns to school and take their own lives, they fear failure and see no way out.

- Last week we read the story of the parting of the Red Sea, but before the waters parted the Israelites to complain to Moses. They cry out to him as the Egyptian Army bears down on them, their backs to the sea, no place to run, no way out. They cry accusingly to Moses, "were there not enough graves in Egypt that you had to take us out here in the desert to die. Better we should have remained slaves than to die at the hands of the Egyptian army."
    - Moses hearing this says to them, Al Tira-oo, Don't Fear! Just watch and wait, lets see how this plays out, God will deliver us, just have a little faith.
    - And then there is a gap in the text, something seems to be missing because the next line is spoke by God and he rebukes Moses and says to him, "Why do you cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to go forward!"
    - God is angry with Moses because he has given the Israelites useless advice, "Don't fear, just have faith" is not what they need to hear, it is not the Jewish response to fear and crisis.
    - We are a people of deed, not creed.
    - God says: Moses be a leader, your people are scared and they turn to you, so do something – don't just stand there and whine about it. Now is not the time for prayer it is the time for action.

- This is my message this evening, the best response to fear is not faith alone, rather it is action guided by faith. When faced with fear, take hold of your faith, your values, your principles and allow them to, make them move you to action.
    - Look who is in this room tonight, nearly every single one of you has a child or grandchild impacted by these events, by the pressures put on teens and on families today.
    - I spoke about this three years ago at the High Holy Days and nothing has changed, indeed it has gotten worse. Not that I would expect my sermon alone to change the world, but I did think it might give it a nudge.
    - Enough whining, no more waiting for superman – to reference another documentary about our failing educational system. No more fear induced paralysis. If that were the way of our people we would still be standing at the shores of the Red Sea, or more likely we would be lying dead beneath them.
    - Tonight we pray, but later at the Oneg, in the days ahead lets do something.
    - Join one of the conversations our Judeans for Justice group is having about this very topic in the next few weeks, we are meeting at members homes and seeing what we can do to turn fear into action,

sign up online and lets show the community and each other what a couple hundred courageous Jews can do.