HATE HAS LED TO SUFFERING
Temple Sholom - July 30, 2015
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Sometimes I wish I were wrong. I don't mean to say that I am always right – I am certainly not. But sometimes when I am right, I wish that I was wrong.

Last Rosh Hashanah I gave a sermon about the growing hatred for the other, for outsiders, non-Jewish immigrants, for arabs, for non-orthodox in Israel today, a hatred that stems from fear, a fear that leads to anger and ultimately leads suffering. I spoke then about the worry amongst thoughtful Israelis of what was becoming of a generation of young Jews who had never known a time without war, who had never known 'good arabs', who feared terror at every bus stop and coffee shop.

They worried, these thoughtful Israelis and I worried that such growing hatred would lead to a breakdown in the fabric of Israeli society, and Jewish social discourse that we would see growing Jewish terror – and sadly we were right.

This week at the Jerusalem Gay Pride Parade, a celebration of LGBT visibility and equality, an ultra-Orthodox Jew stabbed six marchers, two of whom remain in critical condition. The attacker had served 10 years in prison for stabbing participants at a Pride Parade in 2005 and was released just a few weeks ago. Two of my closest friends and colleagues were marching in that parade, I worry about them living in Israel all the time, but I wasn't worrying about them marching in a Jewish Gay Pride Parade – why should I? I wouldn't worry here? Now I have to worry its not safe to be out and gay in Israel? And who should I fear, religious orthodox Jews?

Is that my Israel? Is that my Judaism? Is that what religious people do, take a knife and try to maim and kill other people? I do not accept that. I will not excuse that or rationalize that. It has no place in the Israel I love, the Judaism I identify with, the religion I practice.

Then last night a group of settlers attacked a Palestinian family home in a *"tag mahir"* or "price tag" attack in the northern West Bank, throwing firebombs into the house, which subsequently caught fire. The mother and father were able to escape the fire with their four-year-old child, but tragically, their 18-month-old son, Ali Saad Daobasa, did not survive. The words "revenge" and "long live the Messiah" were spray painted in Hebrew on the walls of the home.

People of conscience, politicians, rabbis and Jewish community leaders will rush to condemn these attacks, as we all should. But the time has come not only for condemnation but also for a serious *heshbon hanefesh* – soul-accounting.

As I warned this past Rosh Hashanah both attacks are the logical outcome of the atmosphere of racism and intolerance that has been festering over the past many

years in Israel and spreading throughout the Jewish world, yes even here in Vancouver.

From the ubiquitous labeling of 'traitor' to anyone who challenges the logic of the right wing, to government ministers calling asylum seekers a cancer and the Knesset Member who just this week called for the High Court to be bulldozed, to the thousands of daily musings from pundits, rabbis and community leaders who fuel or simply excuse a growing violence and intolerance in Jewish and Israeli culture, and then act with shock and disgust when incidents of violence occur. Israeli religious leaders that attack and beat Jewish women for reading a Torah at the Western Wall, and a Israeli criminal justice system and police system doesn't arrest the violent attackers but the Jewish women who would dare to read Torah at the Kotel. Just last week on Tisha B'Av an Israeli conservative synagogue was vandalized by ultra-orthodox Jews, its doors barricaded, its façade defaced while its worshipers were inside *davening* – the police called it a prank and never filed any charges or pursued a serious investigation. All of this while the rest of us whisper quietly our growing discomfort, afraid to speak out lest we, too, have our loyalty or love for Israel questioned.

Love for Israel questioned like it was two weeks ago when Congregation Har-El in North Van joined with young leaders from Temple Sholom Next Generation in hosting a Shabbat dinner and discussion about religious pluralism in Israel that was to the shock and horror of some in our community sponsored by the New Israel Fund of Canada. An organization that I support and who has as its mission, "fostering the development of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state as envisioned in its Declaration of Independence." And does so through providing financial support to projects and programs in Israel that strengthen and safeguard civil and human rights, bridge social and economic gaps, and foster tolerance and religious pluralism for all of its residents.

The social media terrorist Pamela Geller, notorious for sponsoring the 'Draw Muhammad' event in Texas that incited its own terror incident. And who sponsored inflammatory posters on the New York Subway system that read, "Killing Jews is Worship that draws us closer to Muhammad." next to the image of a young man in a checkered headscarf with the tag line "That's His Jihad. What's yours?" That Pamela Geller reach through the internet into our Jewish community here in Vancouver and accused Har-El's of supporting the BDS movement because it partnered with New Israel Fund of Canada, who doesn't support BDS, but the truth doesn't matter when you are blinded by hate.

Geller's blasphemous and incendiary email was picked up by leaders in our own Vancouver Jewish community and Har-El under immense pressure cancelled the event. Because apparently to have a conversation amongst 20 and 30 year old Vancouver Jews about religious pluralism in Israel today was seen by some right here in our community as a treasonous act against Israel.

Do you want to begin to imagine what those 20-30 year olds think now about where they and their values fit in the larger Jewish community? Its not inside the walls of our synagogues that is for sure, and if their values have no place here, neither will they or their children.

As my friend and colleague Rabbi Adam Kligfeld shared with his congregation tonight, "The fanatics have stolen the headlines. In thinking they are defending the Torah, they are perverting it. Destroying it. In thinking they are protecting Israel from terrorists, they are becoming terrorists. We have to say it that starkly, because it is true. And because mild, pareve apologies for Jewish ugliness are the moral abomination. They believe the Gay Pride parade is obscene. They believe that Arab homes on ancient land is obscene. I believe their hatred is obscene. And unless we condemn their behavior, their leaders' rhetoric, the state's—at worst active, at best passive—tolerance for and even coddling of their extremism, we are equally obscene."

And I must add, as many of my colleagues have said across the Jewish world, 'As painful as it is, we must acknowledge that a culture of racism, hatred and indifference has become a culture of violence. The hatred and rage manifest in the Jewish community that led to climate that enabled the assassination of Yitzak Rabin in 1995 never went away, and it is now rooted in the political system of Israel.

It's time for us to take responsibility for building a political and social reality that reflects Jewish values of tolerance, equality and humility, one that promotes civil discourse and fights, above all, for human dignity.

It's time to stand with strength and courage not only to offer words of condemnation and consolation, but to fight to change our social, political and religious reality so that such things never happen again, not in Israel, not here in Vancouver.

And on this matter I know I am right and I pray so do you.