



ADL X REPAIR THE WORLD

TOGETHER AT THE TABLE

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH BE'CHOL LASHON, KESHET, AND ONETABLE

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A sanctuary is a sacred space that is separated from the rest of the world. Similarly, *Shabbat* is a sanctuary of time separated from the rest of the week. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote in his book, *The Sabbath*:

“Judaism teaches us to be attached to holiness in time, to be attached to sacred events, to learn how to consecrate sanctuaries that emerge from the magnificent stream of a year. The Sabbaths are our great cathedrals...”

This *Shabbat*, let's discuss how we can create our own sanctuaries in time and space to heal and grow as we connect with each other and navigate these challenging times together.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE HERE?

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. We are here, together, this *Shabbat* in shock and mourning after a brutal mass murder among us that is beyond our ability to describe, much less to fathom. As singularly painful as this is, for those of us who feel targeted as Jews or for those of us who lost someone on that day, we can also see that this attack is part of a broader eruption of hate, terrorism, racism, anti-semitism¹, xenophobia, and white supremacy. In the week before the shooting, a leaked White House memo outlined a plan to legally erase transgender and gender non-conforming lives and identities. On the Thursday before the attack, two Black elders were killed in a Louisville Kroger's after the gunman attempted to enter the First Baptist Church of Jeffersontown.

Silently, read the description by the Anti Defamation League (ADL)² of last week's violence, including the attack at the Tree of Life synagogue, home of Tree of Life, New Light, and Dor Hadash congregations.

“Last week, we saw several hate-inspired incidents that have shaken our nation. Many are worried about the toxic nature of our discourse, and the direction our country is headed.

The week started with a string of thirteen separate pipe bombs sent to a group of mostly prominent Democrats: former Presidents Obama and Clinton, progressive philanthropist George Soros, several members of Congress, former FBI and CIA officials, a famous actor, a major Democratic donor, CNN and others. Most of the bombs were intercepted before reaching their intended destinations and none detonated. What the thirteen recipients have in common is that they have been critical of and have been criticized by President Trump...

...On Wednesday, a Kentucky man named Gregory A. Bush attempted to enter a historically black church and then fifteen minutes later, arrived at a grocery store and shot two African-American grocery store customers [Vickie Lee Jones and Maurice Stallard]. He allegedly told a white bystander, “Whites don't kill whites...”

...On Saturday, Shabbat morning, at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Robert Bowers entered the

¹ The belief or behavior hostile toward Jews just because they are Jewish. It may take the form of religious teachings that proclaim the inferiority of Jews, for instance, or political efforts to isolate, oppress, or otherwise injure them. It may also include prejudiced or stereotyped views about Jews. - definition from the [Anti Defamation League](#)

² Anti Defamation League. [The Week in Hate and Bias](#). October 30, 2018.

holy place of worship and yelled “All Jews must die.” Armed with an assault rifle and several handguns, he opened fire, killing eleven congregants [Joyce Fienberg, Richard Gottfried, Rose Mallinger, Jerry Rabinowitz, Cecil Rosenthal, David Rosenthal, Bernice Simon, Sylvan Simon, Daniel Stein, Melvin Wax, and Irving Younger], and left four police officers and two other civilians wounded. This shooting and murder spree is being described as the deadliest attack on the Jewish community in the U.S.

A social media profile, which appears to belong to Bowers, highlights his virulent anti-Semitism. Alongside his anti-Semitic comments, Bowers also posted xenophobic, anti-immigrant content, claiming that Jews are helping to transport members of the migrant caravans in Latin America. The last of his social media posts claimed that ‘HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) likes to bring invaders in that kill our people. I can’t sit by and watch my people get slaughtered. Screw your optics, I’m going in.’”

Grounding ourselves in the moment, let’s begin our dialogue tonight.

LEARNING FROM OUR NEIGHBOR

Mr. Fred Rogers lived in Pittsburgh’s Squirrel Hill neighborhood, just blocks away from Tree of Life Synagogue. He is best known for his television program *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood* and his teachings on how to be a good neighbor. As we mourn the lives lost due to hatred, anti-semitism, racism, and the other griefs we hold, we turn again to Mr. Roger’s words from *The World According to Mister Rogers*.

“Confronting our feelings and giving them appropriate expression always takes strength, not weakness. It takes strength to acknowledge our anger, and sometimes more strength yet to curb the aggressive urges anger may bring and to channel them into nonviolent outlets. It takes strength to face our sadness and to grieve and to let our grief and our anger flow in tears when they need to. It takes strength to talk about our feelings and to reach out for help and comfort when we need it.”

Let’s take a moment to be strong and check in with ourselves. ***Take a deep breath – in through your nose and out through your mouth. If you feel comfortable, close your eyes.***

- How are you feeling in your body in this moment? Any aches, pains, or tensions? Slowly scan yourself from your toes to your head.
- What emotions have been coming up for you this week?
- How have you been taking care or not taking care of yourself?

If you feel comfortable, turn to the person next to you and share one point that came up for you from this emotional, physical, and spiritual scan.

We all process feelings differently, and need different things from ourselves and others to mourn and move towards healing. Tonight, show an abundance of empathy for everyone engaging in this discussion with you and for yourself.

REBUILDING SANCTUARY

FRAMING

In Jewish tradition, the synagogue is a sanctuary. It is a place where people gather and connect, to the Divine, to themselves, to Jewish tradition, and to each other. Over the past couple of years, more and more sanctuaries have been violated and destroyed. As Rabbi Sharon Brous noted on a Facebook post³ on the night of the shooting:

“Even as we grieve, even as Tree of Life in Pittsburgh joins the sad and sorry list of sacred spaces that have borne witness to massacre in America, alongside 16th Street Baptist in Birmingham, the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin in Oak Creek, Emanuel AME in Charleston, First Baptist in Sutherland Springs and others, even as we struggle to hold the enormity of this tragedy, we must be clear-headed about what prompted this deadly event. There is a disease in the culture of this nation—this shooting is only the latest deadly expression of it.”

Now we are here in the aftermath. How do we mourn? How do we hold the needs of a multiracial and multiethnic Jewish community with a wide range of gender identities and sexual orientations? We have different experiences and practices, and therefore, very different relationships to safety and security. The traumas and tragedies of today and past generations inform us on how we build sanctuaries that welcome our whole selves and whole communities safely today.

INSTRUCTIONS

Find a *havruta* (a partner) and choose a text to read together. Discuss the guiding questions and share any takeaways with the group.

A NOTE ABOUT HAVRUTA LEARNING:

Havruta literally means "friendship" or "companionship." It is the traditional rabbinic approach to Talmudic study in which a pair of students analyze, discuss, and debate a shared text. Unlike a teacher-student relationship, partnered learning puts each student in the position of analyzing the text, organizing their thoughts into logical arguments, explaining their reasoning to their partner, hearing out their partner's reasoning, and sharpening each other's ideas, often arriving at new insights into the meaning of the text.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- How do the different texts understand the idea of sanctuary and what contributes to a sanctuary?
 - How do people, time, and place come together to create sanctuary?
- What does sanctuary look like for me? Who are the people who are a part of my communities?
 - How do I build or rebuild sanctuary? Who does it include?
- What does safety look like for me? What does safety look like for my community?⁴
 - What do I need from my community? What can I offer?
- How might safety look different for people in my community who hold different identities?
- What does safety really look like when we require it to be based in our commitment to racial equity and justice?

³ Rabbi Sharon Brous is a leading voice in reanimating religious life in America, working to develop a spiritual roadmap for soulful, multi-faith justice work in Los Angeles and around the country. Her piece was posted on [Facebook](#) on October 27, 2018.

⁴ Questions inspired by webinar with Ilana Kaufman, Director of the Jews of Color Field Building Initiative.

Building a Sanctuary

An excerpt from Exodus, the second book in the Torah. The following passage⁵ describes the way that people contributed to the construction of the Mishkan⁶, a holy structure used to house the Ten Commandments that were received on Mount Sinai.

¹ Let, then, Bezalel and Oholiab and all the wise-hearted people whom God has given the skills and abilities to complete all the tasks connected with the sacred service of the sanctuary carry out all that God has commanded.

וְעָשָׂה בְּצִלָּאֵל וְאֶהְיֶיב וְכָל אִישׁ
חֲכָמִים לֵב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן ה' חֲכָמָה וְתַבּוּנָה
בְּהֵמָה לְדַעַת לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־כָּל־מְלָאכֶת
עַבְדֹת הַקֹּדֶשׁ לְכָל אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה ה':

² Moses then called Bezalel and Oholiab, and every wise-hearted person whom God had given skill, everyone who excelled in ability, to undertake the task and carry it out.

וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה אֶל־בְּצִלָּאֵל וְאֶל־אֶהְיֶיב
וְאֶל כָּל־אִישׁ חֲכָמִים לֵב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן ה'
חֲכָמָה בְּלִבּוֹ כָּל אֲשֶׁר נִשְׂאוֹ לִבּוֹ לְקַרְבָּה
אֶל־הַמְּלָאכָה לַעֲשׂוֹת אֹתָהּ:

³ They took over from Moses all the gifts that the Israelites had brought, to carry out the tasks connected with the service of the sanctuary...

וַיִּקְחוּ מִלִּפְנֵי מֹשֶׁה אֶת כָּל־הַתְּרוּמָה
אֲשֶׁר הֵבִיאוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמַלְאכֶת עַבְדֹת
הַקֹּדֶשׁ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֹתָהּ...

“America — and Judaism — at Its Best”⁷

Lev Golinkin is a refugee and writer. On Sunday, October 28, 2018 he wrote an op-ed in The New York Times about HIAS⁸, the organization that helped save his family.

Two decades after I came to America, HIAS found itself at the crossroads. For the first time in memory, there weren't large numbers of Jews in need of resettlement. It was other people who needed help: children fleeing gang violence in Central America, victims of wars in East Asia, and most of all, refugees from the wars in the Middle East — people who had endured horrors that make my family's experience seem like a luxury cruise in comparison.

Some felt it was inappropriate for HIAS, a Jewish group, to devote resources to aiding Muslims; HIAS, to its eternal credit, disagreed. As Mark Hetfield, the president and chief executive of HIAS, once told me, “We decided to help, not because they are Jewish, but because we are Jewish.” On Oct. 19, HIAS organized a national refugee Shabbat.

The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society became simply HIAS, to reflect the fact that about 90 percent of its clients were no longer Jewish. Offices sprang up in Kenya, Greece, Venezuela and Chad. The group engaged the same American Jewish communities that had adopted families like mine; today, more than 400 Jewish communities — including Pittsburgh's — have committed themselves to helping refugees. And after Donald Trump became president, HIAS became one of the most vigorous and vocal opponents of the White House's attempts to ban refugees.

What does HIAS mean today? To refugees around the world, it's become an international word for hope, in dozens of tongues and for numerous faiths. To me, it symbolizes America — and Judaism — at its best. And it's easy to see how HIAS stands for everything white supremacists hate: tolerance, understanding and empathy.

⁵ [Exodus Chapter 36:1-3](#)

⁶ The *Mishkan* was the temporary and mobile Tabernacle that the Ancient Israelites constructed to house the two tablets of the Ten Commandments as they traveled throughout the desert, on their way to Canaan.

⁷ Lev Golinkin. “[America — and Judaism — at Its Best](#).” *The New York Times*. October 28, 2018.

⁸ HIAS is an organization rooted in Jewish values, that serves refugees and those seeking asylum in the United States. Learn more at hias.org

For The Sin of Prejudice: Growing Up Jewish as a Person of Color⁹

Rafael Lev is an entrepreneur and active member of the Twin Cities Jewish community, serving as a coach and mentor for Jewish youth. He also creates awareness for issues related to race, religion, and the intersection of the two, through his work as a public speaker and multimedia producer. He is a member of Beth Jacob Synagogue in Mendota Heights, MN.

Every year on the High Holidays, police officers sit outside our synagogue to protect our community and building from harm.

I understand why the police are there. I know the risk that comes with openly celebrating Judaism. And I appreciate their presence...until all their eyes are on me, a man wearing a kippah (head covering) and a gold Star of David necklace who also happens to be a person of color.

When I arrive, the officers stop, get out of their cars, and follow me into the building. They don't stop pursuing me until the greeter has given the officers a thumbs-up, signaling I am "safe."

I have been attending the same synagogue in Minnesota for more than 20 years, and I have never seen this happen to anyone else. I am left to think that the only possible sign of threat is the color of my skin, as 99% of the people who walked into the shul before me are white.

...whenever I see police, my blood goes cold, my legs start shaking as if everything below my kneecaps has disappeared, and I get a knot in my stomach the size of a cantaloupe.

And when I walk through the synagogue parking lot on the holiest of days and glimpse police cars through the corner of my eye, my mind races with nervous energy and "What ifs." What if an officer stops me before I walk into the building? Will they know that I won't have my wallet on me for immediate identification? What if the police arrest me? What if there was no one waiting at the front door to greet me and give the officer that thumbs up?

The problem does not lie solely with the police. They have a very difficult and honorable job. I respect what they do. But how can we encourage all officers, and all people, to extend the benefit of the doubt to people of color?

Who is going to lay down the first brick to start building trust?

As Jews, we can begin by challenging our assumptions - by reminding ourselves and our children that not all Jews are white. I have fear in my blood, but hope in my heart.

Come Back Together

Once you have read the texts in your pairs, come back together as a full group.

Reflect on the guiding questions and share:

- What resonated with you in the texts? What challenged you in the texts?
- What additional narratives and stories do you want to bring into the conversation?
- How has this conversation informed your ideas of what it means to build or rebuild a sanctuary where Jews with different identities and lived experiences are welcomed?

⁹ Rafael Lev. [Growing Up Jewish as a Person of Color](http://GrowingUpJewishasaPersonofColor.ReformJudaism.org). ReformJudaism.org. September 23, 2014

WRAPPING UP - WHAT COMES NEXT

What comes next is always relationships. We move forward not in isolation, but as intertwined individuals and communities. During a traditional *Shabbat* (Sabbath) meal, it is customary to start with a blessing over lit candles, wine, washed hands, and finally bread. One bread traditionally eaten is *challah*, a braided bread consisting of three or more strands of dough. Salt, flour, water, and yeast are mixed and woven together to become delicious sustenance for our work of rest and renewal.

Like *challah*, our communities are made up of different strands. We hold different identities, lived experiences, and practices. But we are bound together by both joy and trauma and a shared commitment to creating a more just world. Over the past week, think about the people who reached out to you, supported you, and sent you their love. Think about the people you showed up for, texted, messaged, or hugged. Depending on your *Shabbat* practice and who you are with tonight, reach out to one (or two or five!) of those people. **Or reach out to someone you did not have the chance to connect with. Thank them for being there for you.** Check in on how they are holding up. Make plans to take action.

Next Steps: Learn, Act, Reflect. Then Repeat.

In defiance of these horrific acts of hate, keep welcoming people to your community and finding opportunities to create sanctuaries (or dedicate spaces) together. Engage in a continuous cycle of learning, action, and reflection to create social change, building relationships between communities and lead by people directly impacted by the issues. Below are some next steps to start on continue your work after tonight. Or brainstorm your own!

Learn:

- [Understanding Anti-Semitism: An Offering to Our Movement](#), Jews for Racial and Economic Justice
- [Anti-Semitism in the US](#), Anti-Defamation League
- [Notes From the Field: After a Shul Shooting, Keeping Our Multiracial Jewish Community Safe](#), Ilana Kaufman
- [Towards the Next Jewish Rebellion](#), Yotam Marom
- [Beyond Internalized Anti-semitism: Healing the Collective Scars of the Past](#), Cherie Brown¹⁰
- [Serving as an Educator at a Time of Loss, Pain and Grief](#), Shuki Taylor
- [Resources for Coping after the Pittsburgh Synagogue Shootings](#), Union for Reform Judaism
- [I Pray that the Same Support for Pittsburgh's Jewish Community be Replicated for all Marginalized Communities](#), Zack Block
- [The Victims of the Tree of Life Synagogue Massacre are Martyrs](#), Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg
- [After Pittsburgh, Why "They" Won't Win](#), Marcell White Campbell
- [What It Was Like To Grow Up Multiracial and Orthodox in a Hasidic Enclave](#), Isaiah Rothstein

Act:

- Considering taking action with the [Anti Defamation League \(ADL\)](#), [Supporting HIAS](#), [Hosting with OneTable](#), [Participating with Moishe House](#), or [Volunteering with Repair the World](#).
- Vote! Vote! Vote! [Vote for candidates](#) who stand up to anti-semitism and racism
- Serve in your local community
- Donate to organizations fighting hate
- [Write a letter urging the Secretary of State](#) to fill the vacant State Department position of the U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism

Reflect:

- Find someone to discuss these resources with, hold you accountable to taking meaningful action in partnership, and reflect afterwards

¹⁰ Many thanks to National Council for Jewish Women for sharing this resource

A Word of Thanks

Thank you to all who have shown up and responded to the needs of the victims, their families, and everyone affected by the hateful acts on our communities. To the first responders and officers who arrived on scene, to our leaders, friends, and allies who have shown support in times of pain, to those who have given their time, resources, and energy towards healing our fractured world and towards those affected by these hateful acts, we thank you and appreciate you.