

First Part

We are approaching Tisha B'Av, the ninth day of the midsummer month of Av (August 8-9, 2011), the day of Jewish mourning for the destruction of two ancient Temples in Jerusalem. On that day [Orthodox Jews] fast from sunset to sunset, sit on the floor, cover mirrors, drape the Ark of the Torah and the Torah itself in black, and wail the text of the "Book of Lamentations."

there was a path laid out [by the rabbis] for moving beyond grief and collective trauma to consolation, even celebration: Tu B'Av, the 15th day of Av, the Full Moon.

On that day, young women danced in the fields wearing white dresses, beckoning to young men of their choice to become their husbands.

Both these practices – the dancing and sexuality in a biblical Judaism that was focused on the body, the prophetic words in a rabbinic tradition focused on words – reached toward a way of transcending the collective trauma of suffering defeat and spiritual disaster.

In our generation, it is the universal Temple of all humanity, the Earth itself, that stands in danger of burning and destruction. So in our generation, we need to birth a Transformative Judaism committed not only to renew the Jewish people but to join with other communities to heal and transform our world. [This embrace of difference and unity, of the body and of the spirit, is at the heart of our community of KHN]

Second part

[Monday], with the coming of the New Moon's sliver of light, Jews entered the month of Av; Muslims, the month of Ramadan. I want to take this moment to examine ways in which Jewish-Muslim relations have become entangled in the broader crisis of Europe and America that has led to attacks on Muslims and to the atrocious murders in Oslo last week

Jewish tradition blamed the disasters of the temples' destructions partly on Imperial arrogance, but partly on internal Jewish failings and corruptions.

For observant Muslims, Ramadan is a month of spiritual self-examination and redirection. Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset each day in order to turn their attention from physical satisfactions to spiritual growth; read the entire Quran during the month; increase their sharing

with the poor. They end the month with Eid ul-Fitr, the Feast of the Break-Fast.

The effort to transcend trauma is not for Jewish hearts and minds alone. Islam as a whole has during the last several centuries been conquered, colonized, subjugated by various Western powers, from Morocco to Indonesia. Palestinians in particular have tried to elevate this experience into a kind of Tisha B'Av of their own, observing the Naqba – the “Disaster” that came upon their community as Israel was established.

for many Muslims, the Disaster still means military weakness, less-creative arts and sciences, stagnant economies. Can the Disaster itself be turned into fertile soil for a new Islam --as Rabbinic Judaism flowered from the ashes of the Second Temple

Perhaps there is even a hint of what Jews could do, in the cultural history of Morocco. There the Jewish and Muslim communities feed each other – literally – at the end of Ramadan and the end of Passover. Muslims bring Jews the first post-Passover bread -- for a celebration that became known as “Maimouna,” “Prosperity-time.” And Jews bring Muslims the first food for the great Break-Fast at the end of Ramadan.

What if synagogues agreed that during every Shabbat during Ramadan, they would read and study a passage from the Quran?

Third Part

The US and much of Europe are awash in fear, and this fear has led to a wave of anti-Muslim hatred. Some powerful corporate forces in our society have both helped create the fear by their economic policies and profited from it in their political deals For Americans, fear that our society has gone profoundly astray is rooted in a great wave of disemployment; two unwinnable and unendable wars; earthquakes upending old habits of domination in family, sexuality, and race; the paralysis of the US government in dealing with great issues; and the discovery that great oceans no longer protect Americans from massive violence.

For Europe, fear has sprouted from economic crisis and cultural transformation; the unexpected quandaries of integrating large numbers of Muslims in previously homogenously Christian societies; and bitter anger at betrayal by ancient anchors of certainty like the Catholic Church (as in the sex-abuse scandal) and modern ones like honorable journalism (as in the Murdoch scandal).

One result has been the greatest trans-Atlantic wave of ethnic and religious fear and hatred -- directed toward Muslims -- since the trans-Atlantic wave of anti-Semitism during the 1930s, in the midst of the Great Depression.

There are two levels of action that we need to take. One is to address this wave of anti-Muslim hatred directly. The other is to address the underlying fears and failures of our societies.

The fear is not rooted in the tiniest radish of reality. *Sharia* (an Arabic word for “the path”) is an internal law code for Islam that in a free society like the USA, Muslims can choose or refuse to follow, in part or in whole. It prescribes times and forms of prayer, the nature of marriage and divorce, what to eat. . . . In all this it is like the Jewish law code – *halakha* -- (which also means “the path”)

So it is shameful that some Americans, especially the broadcasters of Murdoch’s Fox “News,” have multiplied the lie that Sharia is about to take over American and destroy our freedom. But it is even more shameful, more outrageous, that, as the *NY Times* and the *Jewish Forward* reported, one of the major aspects of hostility to Islam has been a campaign to make sure that *sharia* does not replace the US Constitution and American law. And that one of the principal purveyors of this poison has been an Orthodox Jew named David Yerushalmi who has also been a settler in Ma’ale Adumim, a large Jewish settlement in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

His campaign is not just one man’s craziness. The manifesto of the Oslo mass murderer Breirik supports those Israelis (still a minority, but growing in actual effectiveness) who want to expel Palestinians from the West Bank. His insistence on the Crusader vision of a Christian Europe welcomes these right-wing Israelis as the front-line shock troops against Islam. His hatred of Islam and his glorification of the settlers merges with his hatred of the social-welfare, multiculturalist vision of Norway’s Labor Party, just as Yerushalmi’s hatred of Islam and his own choice of West-Bank settlerhood melds with US right-wing hatred of American economic and cultural liberalism.

Out of such a toxic brew, 76 Norwegians were slain because of their commitments to multiculturalism. This Congregation remembers them tonight and our other personal losses at this time of year . . .