

Words shared by Rabbi Zari Weiss
At beginning of Service of Comfort in the Shadow of Loss
Sunday evening, October 28, 2018 19 Cheshvan 5779

לְכֹל זְמַן וְעֵת לְכֹל חַפְצֵי תַחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם

L'chol zman v'yet l'chol heyfetz tachat ha'shamayim.

For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven.

There should not ever be a need for a time like this one: gathering together in sorrow and shock, in the shadow of a horrific shooting on a quiet Shabbat morning when honorable men and women were quietly praying to their God.

There should not ever be a need for a time like this one: a time for us to come together to share our sorrow and anguish that innocent human beings—some who had managed to live to into their ninth and tenth decades—sorrow and anguish that these innocent human beings would be killed in the very place that was, for them, for so many years, a sanctuary—a holy place, a sacred place, a place set apart for people to come together and observe their time-honored traditions, a place where they could come every day, sometimes three times a day, every week, every holiday, to affirm their faith in God, to remind themselves who they were, what was important, and what they believed to be true.

There should not ever be a need for a time like this: a time for us to stand together in solidarity, with congregations all over the country, indeed all over the world, who are—despite despicable acts of violence—standing up and working for what they and we believe we *must* do, just as they and we did last weekend, when we honored the important work of HIAS, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, and organizations like it, organizations that have working tirelessly to provide refuge to those who are fleeing violence and persecution in their own countries, to provide support and counsel and trauma counseling for those who have been walking for miles and miles or traveling on trains or caravans or boats to reach the borders of this country where they hope--just like most of our own grandparents and great grandparents hoped--to be able to find a place where they could live in safety and freedom, and where they hoped that their children would have a chance to gain an education, to earn a reasonable livelihood. . . .or simply to live past adolescence.

There should not ever be a need for a time like this, and yet, so sadly, here we are.

We come together this evening to mourn for 11 people whose lives were tragically cut short yesterday morning in their spiritual community in Pittsburgh. We come together to send prayers for healing to their families—to their fathers and their mothers, their sons and their daughters, their cousins and their neighbors, to those who had sat and prayed, for year after year, next to a fellow congregant, a long-time friend, who will not be there next Shabbat, or the next, or the one after.

Though we come together to mourn their lives and to pray for healing for them and their families, we also know that this is not just about *us*. It is also about the families who lost loved ones at the First Baptist church in Sutherland Texas, or world Changers Church in College Park Georgia, or Greater Oak Missionary Baptist Church in Kentucky, or those churches in New York, Wisconsin, Michigan, Louisiana, Idaho, Colorado, Illinois, Kansas, and still, so many more.

It is also about the families of all who have lost loved ones to gun violence, whether on school campuses or in grocery stores. It is about raising our voices and crying out in anguish and anger, and saying we must, we must, find ways to create more sane gun control laws; we must, we must end the demonizing and the inciting to hate and to violence. We must, we must, demand a return to civility, a return to honorable speech and behavior.

And . . .

L'chol zman v'yet l'chol heyfetz tachat ha'shamayim.

For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven.

A time to be born, and a time to die.

A time to weep . . .

A time to grieve . . .

Tonight, is a time to weep, to grieve, to mourn those who have died, to pray for the healing of those who survived, and for the healing of those of us who are left to go on and do what we can, in spite of, our great sorrow, to bring about greater *tikkun*, repair, to this broken world . . .

Those killed:

Daniel Stein, 71

Joyce Feinberg, 75

Richard Gottfried, 65

Jerry Rabinowitz, 66

brothers Cecil Rosenthal, 59, and David Rosenthal 54

husband and wife Bernice Simon, 84 and Sylvan Simon, 86

Melvin Wax, 88

Irving Younger, 69

Rose Mallinger, 97