

Delivered by Rabbi Aaron Krupnick 11/2/18

***A Message from Rabbi Green:***

Most of our lives, we feel certain and protected. We think we know what our plans are for the next day, the next week, month, year. We imagine ourselves invincible... And then something happens like what happened on Shabbat October 27 at Tree of Life \* Or L'Simcha in Pittsburgh, and we realize our vulnerability. So we resolve to make every precious moment of life count until our last breath, until we perhaps lapse again into routine and complacency.

But what happened in Pittsburgh stings deeper and I pray we won't lapse again. It stings because it happened in our home, in a place where we feel safe, in a place very much like Congregation Beth El, a place that is our sanctuary, where eleven precious souls were taken by a man poisoned by hate.

It stings because there are people who hate Jews, even here. There have always been people who hate Jews, who make us 'other.'

And it has nothing to do with who you are or who I am. You are without doubt, beautiful and amazing and holy and loved, created in Gd's image. You really are. I know you. (It's my job.)

But the feeling of being 'other' is nothing new to us as Jews. More than any other commandment, the Hebrew Bible instructs us thirty-six times to remember that we were strangers in the land of Egypt, and thus we must protect the vulnerable and welcome the stranger.

This attack was meant to make us feel threatened, vulnerable, and alone, but I want you to know that wherever you are, you are not alone. We at Beth El are here for you, holding you, thinking of you, crying with you. And though our hearts are broken, over 1200 flooded our sanctuary the night after the attack, coming together with tears and embraces, in sadness and love, to lift each other up and find comfort in community. And it wasn't just Jews at our shul that night: our interfaith brothers and sisters showed up in force. Christians and Muslims and Hindus and more. So did our law enforcement and political leaders. And the reason they came is to remind us that we are safe, that our synagogue is safe, and that we can depend on each other. They do not see us as strangers or as 'other', but as beloved friends, neighbors, and citizens. They support us, value us, and love us.

As eleven shiva candles burn at Beth El in their memory, know that what was intended to strike fear in our hearts instead let us see how deeply we are loved and how much we love each other. In my sadness, this more than anything brings me comfort.