



Carnegie Shul Chatter

November 14, 2018



Keeping the Faith

Yesterday (Tuesday, November 13), my in-box included a Foundations Reflections message from Community Foundation Scholar Rabbi Danny Schiff that first appeared as an op-ed in the *Washington Post* on November 9. The column was entitled, "Anti-Semitic attacks share a pattern. Pittsburgh is different." I thought it would be an excellent piece to include in this week's Chatter.

Then, a little later in the day, I found a story, which was to be published in this morning's *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, that revealed the incredible amount of money that has been raised so far by the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh's Victims of Terror Fund. I knew that I needed to include that article in the Chatter as well.

An Unsung Hero

Today I write about one of the unsung heroes in the aftermath of the attack at Tree of Life. Her name is Sharon Ryave Brody and she is owner and CEO of Ralph Schugar Funeral Chapel.

Being the CEO of a funeral home cannot be an easy job. Every day you go to work knowing that you will be dealing with people at probably the worst time of their lives, the time when they have to say goodbye and bury a loved one.

But how would you like to have to deal with the unexpected funerals of those who lost their lives in the Tree of Life shooting? How would you like to have to comfort the surviving family members and the many, many mourners and dignitaries who attended their funerals?

And those were not the only funerals that Sharon and her staff had to deal with in that terrible week.

And, although I did not attend any of the funerals since I am in Florida, I have no doubt that Sharon handled each and every funeral with the compassion and professionalism that makes her such a tremendous asset to the Pittsburgh Jewish community.

Yes, there have been many heroes in the aftermath of that tragic morning at Tree of Life, and Sharon is certainly one of them.

And then, early this morning I read a Facebook post by Sharon Ryave Brody, owner and President of Ralph Schugar Funeral Chapel, which does many of the Jewish funerals in Pittsburgh, and I knew I had to include excerpts from this article as well.

Why these three articles? Because just when you are about to lose your faith in humanity after the shootings at Tree of Life, and then, just a week or so later, at a night club in California, you read these articles and realize that there are some truly wonderful people in this world after all, and maybe, just maybe, good will prevail over evil in this world.

Anti-Semitic attacks share a pattern. Pittsburgh is different.



Eighty years ago, on Nov. 9, 1938, the Nazis set fire to the synagogues of Germany. Hundreds of synagogues were destroyed, countless Torah scrolls were desecrated, and dozens of Jews were slain. That dark terror became known as Kristallnacht, the “night of broken glass,” for the shattered windows of synagogues and Jewish homes and businesses strewn on German streets. It foreshadowed a descent into the worst evil imaginable.

How did the neighbors react as the sanctuaries of Judaism went up in flames? Mostly, they did nothing. Even firefighters stood by as the synagogues burned, intervening only when they were needed to save nearby buildings.

It was hardly the first time in Jewish history.

In 38 A.D., synagogues in Alexandria, Egypt, were destroyed. The citizenry joined in with gusto. Jews were attacked by mobs who maimed their victims or burned them to death. More than a thousand years later, Jews were still being attacked — in Munich in 1285, 180 Jews were burned to death in their synagogue following a blood libel. In every century, the gruesome history of Jew hatred has repeated itself through horrendous violence.

This singular sequence of suffering leads to an understandable temptation to place the Pittsburgh synagogue slaughter on Oct. 27 in an unbroken line of anti-Jewish evil.

And, in one sense, that is precisely where it belongs. The Pittsburgh murders constitute a distinctly Jewish event, with a lengthy Jewish pedigree.

Seen this way, the current impulse to fit all “hate” into one neat basket is too simplistic. It is comforting to think that all hate is alike because it yields a ready solution: Just combat expressions of hate, and the terrible problems caused by hate will be solved.

But what if all hate is not the same? What if anti-Semitism is distinctive because in no place and at no time has it ever been at zero? What if anti-Semitism, unlike most hatreds, is perpetually reinvigorated by an ever-morphing narrative — the Jews killed Jesus, the Jews dominate the monetary system, the Jews are communists, the Jews are vermin, the Jews control the world, the Jews are colonialists and racists and uniquely brutal oppressors? And what if anti-Semitism is in a special category because it is usually genocidal in nature? It was not by accident, after all, that, according to police, the perpetrator in Pittsburgh yelled that “all Jews must die”; the goal of Jew hatred is rarely satisfied by ostracization,



demonization or a brief killing spree. Elimination of every Jew is the preferred objective.

Let's stipulate: In comparison with any other moment in Jewish history, anti-Semitism is at a low ebb in the contemporary United States. But anxiety over an anti-Semitic resurgence is never far from the surface, and the inexorable drumbeat of anti-Semitism can hardly be said to have been silenced.

When billionaires such as George Soros and other Jewish figures are vilified as "globalists" who do not have the best interests of the United States at heart, Jews recognize that drumbeat. When Israel is singled out for engaging in Nazi-like behavior, Jews hear its echoes.

As a result, for Jews, the Pittsburgh synagogue massacre is not just another American firearm atrocity, not just a generic act of hate. It belongs in a realm with considerably more disturbing overtones.

And yet, while Pittsburgh represents a continuation of the same thread that stretches from Alexandria to Kristallnacht, it is also different. Profoundly different.

Why? Because of the neighbors. Since the Pittsburgh attack, loving individuals of every background have embraced Jews tightly in multiple overwhelming ways. Government leaders, prominent religious figures, corporations, sports teams and an unprecedented myriad of fellow citizens have declared loudly and emphatically that they will stand by Jews.

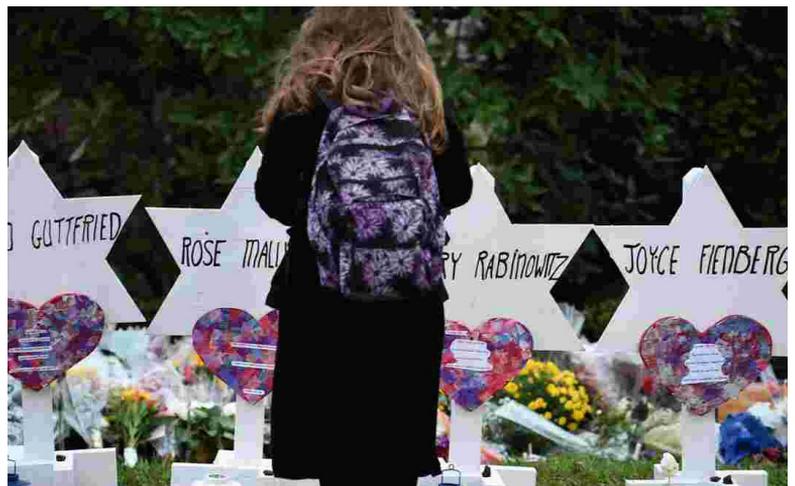
This breathtaking and profoundly moving reality is virtually unparalleled in the Jewish experience. It demands a reappraisal of the classic anti-Semitism narrative. Once, in the not so distant past, Jews faced evil essentially alone; now, whatever evil Jews face in the United States is vastly overmatched by a sea of goodness.

Two contradictory trends are at work: Alongside rising levels of anti-Semitism there exists a dramatic burgeoning of caring for Jews. The pivotal question, in the long run, is: Which trend will prevail?

The United States could turn in the direction of Europe, where many Jews feel fearful and threatened. Or the United States could aspire to become a nation where anti-Semitism in speech and deed is universally despised, building upon post-attack Pittsburgh as its model. Taking the latter path would seem essential to the success of the American experiment.

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Jewish Federation readying to distribute donations to Tree of Life shooting victims

Andrew Goldstein

A committee has been created to oversee the distribution of money donated to the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh for victims of the mass shooting last month at Tree of Life synagogue.

The federation's board Tuesday passed a draft charter to form the seven-member Pittsburgh Jewish Community Relief Fund Committee.



The committee will distribute the money from the Victims of Terror fund, which was set up in the days following the Oct. 27 massacre at the Squirrel Hill synagogue in which 11 people were killed and six were injured.

According to the Federation, the fund will be used for psychological and general services, medical bills, reconstruction, additional security throughout the community and support for the families, as well as counseling and other services that may prove necessary for victims and first responders during their recovery.

The fund had grown to \$3.65 million by Tuesday with donations coming from 46 states and five Canadian provinces. That number was expected to increase as donations continue to be made.

The funds must be distributed within six months, according to the committee's charter. Committee members, however, are striving to get it done much more quickly, said Adam Hertzman, a spokesman for the Jewish Federation.

Kenneth Feinberg, an attorney who has overseen numerous victim compensation funds, including for the 9/11 attacks, BP oil spill and mass shootings in Newtown, Conn., and Aurora, Colo., will advise the committee.

PNC Bank, Schneider Downs & Co., Inc. and the law firm Cohen & Grigsby are providing services pro bono to assist with the distribution, accounting and oversight of the funds.

David Shapira, former chair of the Jewish Federation and former CEO of Giant Eagle, will chair the new committee, which will be independent of the federation's board.

The other board members are: Steven Halpern, board member of the Jewish Federation and president of Woodland Management; Nancy Rackoff, board member of the Jewish Federation and estate planning attorney at Eckert Seamans; Charles "Chuck" Perlow, board member of the Jewish Federation and Chairman of McKnight Realty Partners; Jared Cohon, president emeritus at Carnegie Mellon University; Mark Nordenberg, chancellor emeritus at University of Pittsburgh; and Susan Brownlee, former executive director of the Fine Foundation.

And finally, Sharon Ryave Brody posted an article by Rabbi Daniel Cohen, author of the book, *What Will They Say About You When You Are Gone; Creating A Life of Legacy* that talks about Elijah moments. What are Elijah moments? Elijah moments are the little kindnesses we extend every day. Even the simple act of saying, 'hello,' to someone can change their life, and ours. I did not know about Elijah moments until today, but I have tried to add some Elijah moments to my life every day since the Tree of Life attack and I am certainly glad that I have.

Discovering your Elijah moment

This principle reflects the recognition that each of us can transform every encounter into an eternal one. If we did that with each person we met, our world would be a radically different place. When we walk into a coffee shop, our office or our home, do we ask ourselves what can we do in the next few minutes to make someone's day? Geoff Finch is one example. He was a close friend of my father's who passed away at 65. He was a successful businessman, deeply engaged in communal and family life. He would always say, "I am not concerned whether someone buys from me or not but whether we connected as two human beings. If I can make someone smile or make a difference in someone's life, then regardless of the material benefit, I know I am living for eternity." Being an Elijah means living every day with awareness of our capacity to be the Almighty's agents on earth.

Three Most Important Legacy Numbers (The Tool Box)

1. Remember who you are. Lead a life of courage and conviction reflective of your values whether in private or in public.
2. Three Second Rule – In seconds we can make a day, share a smile, offer a kind word, welcome someone. An Elijah moment ripples forever. We may not change the world but we can change the world of one person.
3. What are the five words you would write on your tombstone? How would the world be different without you? Keep your answers front and center every day.

Yahrzeit Plaques

Commemorate a loved one by dedicating a yahrzeit plaque in his or her memory at the Carnegie Shul. These beautiful plaques, mounted on the sanctuary walls, are lit on the loved one's yahrzeit, Yom Kippur, and days when Yizkor is recited. The names are also read aloud from the Bimah during services on the Sabbath of the yahrzeit and on Yom Kippur. To purchase a plaque, for only \$175, please email Mike Roteman at mrmike7777@yahoo.com.



Please consider sponsoring a Kiddush in honor or in memory of a loved one, for only \$36. Your sponsorship will be announced from the bimah and in the weekly Chatter. To sponsor a Kiddush, email mrmike7777@yahoo.com.