

# Hate on a Day of Love

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Today is Tu B'Av, a day for lovers in Jewish tradition, a day filled with weddings! Tomorrow morning for Shabbat we will chant the *Shema* and *V'ahavta* from *parashat Va'Etchanan*, the quintessential passage from Torah about our love for God.

It makes sense that both of these happen soon after *Tisha B'Av*, our painful commemoration of many of the worst tragedies that our people have faced throughout our history, and survived. We must acknowledge our pain, and let ourselves grieve, but then we must pick ourselves up and embrace life. Grief, anger and pain cannot be the building blocks of our lives, or of our civilization. Rather, light should follow darkness, and our response to our suffering should be love. For us, that is the purpose of this time, the cultivation of love for each other and for our God.

We were heartbroken by the news from our beloved Israel this morning of several heinous acts of hatred and murder committed by extremists who are also Jews. Yesterday, an ultra-Orthodox man stabbed six people at a Gay Pride march in Jerusalem. This very same man attacked marchers at the 2005 Pride parade, and was just released from prison.

Then, at four o'clock the next morning, two Palestinian homes were firebombed in the West Bank village of Douma. The words "Long live Messiah the King" and "Revenge" were painted on the walls. An 18-month old baby was burned to death, and its 4-year old brother and both parents are fighting for their lives in the hospital, burns covering most of their bodies. The language on the wall makes it clear that people who claim to be religious also committed these crimes.

We condemn these senseless acts of violence, and repudiate their perpetrators. They have cultivated hatred in place of love, and have chosen destruction, assault and murder as a result. We are outraged by their twisted acts, mourn for the dead, and sit in solidarity with the victims. They DO NOT represent Judaism or the Jewish people, and in committing these crimes they have violated us all.

In this week's Torah portion, we are commanded to love God, but just before that we are commanded to listen, with the *Shema*. Love begins with listening, with allowing room for another (whether it is God or a person or group of people) in our lives. We cannot commit violence against anyone we love; violence requires disassociation, the separation of ourselves from the other. We all have been suffering for far too long, and the cycle of hate and violence is only repeating and intensifying. And it is not just in Israel - racial tensions continue to grow here in the United States.

Without listening to each other, we will never be able to heal. Without healing, we will never be able to love. Without love, we will have no future.

*Shema Yisrael!* Listen O Israel! Let us love God with all of our hearts, our strength and our souls! And let us begin today – not tomorrow – with love for each other.