

Dear PCS Members,

This coming weekend congregations have been asked to participate in "Stand Up Sabbath" to remember the nine innocent worshippers killed at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston one year ago. Little did the organizers realize that a much larger mass shooting would take place this week, an event whose impact has traumatized our nation with sadness, anger, and fear. Our Torah and heritage can guide us at moments like this, helping us deal with these emotions.

Sadness: "Whoever destroys one life, it is as if they destroyed an entire world," taught our sages. We can address our sadness and grief by reading about the wounded and the deceased, coming together, holding vigils, and including the victims and their families in our prayers, **as we will do this Friday night at services (June 17, 8:00pm)**. Some dismiss the power of prayer as mere lip service, but we should not ignore the deep sorrow that faith is best equipped to address.

Anger: I am not usually an angry person, but this latest and horrific manifestation of gun violence in America infuriates me. As someone who grew up learning to shoot at our ranch in Texas I understand the history, but I am appalled at how far and out of bounds the gun culture has grown in recent years. Yes, this shooting appears partly motivated by self-radicalized Islamic extremism, a subject too big for this letter. But whether the perpetrators of mass shootings are motivated by radical religion, baseless hatred, or mental instability (all of which seemed to contribute here), they cannot perpetrate massacres without the lethal means that are all too readily and legally available. Our sages knew that anger can be a dangerous emotion, but channeled properly it becomes righteous indignation and can lead us to change our world for the better. The danger of anger is that it always has a target, and too often can be directed at scapegoats. Or it can turn inward and create more crippling fear and anxiety. Personally, I will channel my anger to work with groups that are working to change the culture, like Rabbis Against Gun Violence <https://www.facebook.com/RabbisAgainstGunViolence/> and Gabby Gifford's organization: <http://americansforresponsiblesolutions.org/>.

Fear: The last toxic emotion can be a sense of fear for ourselves and our own loved ones. Taking common sense security measures for our communities and institutions is a wise course. Taking time this week to get out in nature, work off the adrenaline, and put aside the news feed to reflect quietly can help us to deal with the anxiety. **I think that the best antidote to fear, though, is to let others who fear know that we care about and support them.** The fear is multiplied for our LGBTQ community, who have so often been targeted and attacked just for being who they are. All who call ourselves allies need to reach out and share our unwavering support and solace. The Latino community is also deeply impacted by the losses and needs our support. We can also reach out to our Muslim friends and neighbors. Our friend Dr. Hassan told our local clergy today of the anguish felt by her Muslim community when one hateful and radicalized person makes all Muslims vulnerable to backlash. Fear can make us withdraw, but reaching out can bring us courage.

Adonai oz le-amoyiten, Adonai yivarech et amo ba-shalom, May God give us the strength to persevere and to work for what is right, and bless our communities and our nation with peace.

With blessings of healing to all, Rabbi Julie Hilton Danan