

Shabbat Zachor--- A new definition

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Morristown Jewish Center

March 2016

Two weeks ago the Cantor led us in a prayer welcoming the new month of Adar, or, more accurately, since this is a leap year, Adar Sheni. As we welcomed this month, we say- or sometimes sing, the phrase

Mishnichnas adar marbim besimcha

When the new month of Adar begins,

We increase our joy everyday – and we increase our joy everyday until we reach the holiday of purim

Purim-You know that holiday---This week we will celebrate Purim Wednesday night, and I hope all of you will join us for the fun and festivities

Purim- It's the one day of the year on the Jewish calendar, that encourages us to break loose - we party and wear costumes and become a hero or Heroine, or vilian and let all of the outside world just slip away

Yet no sooner did we announce this new month two weeks ago

The news came out of Israel

March 8th

In that one day there were three terrorists attack...a shooting in Jerusalem where two boarder patrol guards were wounded, a stabbing of a pregnant Russian immigrant, and a second round of stabbings carried out by a young Palestinian in the Jaffa Port. In all, 10 people were stabbed, including Taylor Force, a 29 year old US veteran of Iraq and Afganistan, and a student at Vanderbilt University. He later died of his wounds, and his wife is still in the hospital in Israel recovering from her wounds

And so we can rightly ask- how can we be really joyous?

But lets go back to the Purim story

On the surface, Purim looks like a simple melodrama

We have a one dimensional King, and evil villain, and two heroes, Esther and Mordechai

But look below the surface, and we see it is a much deeper story.... And one that is not so simple after all. In fact,

At its core there is a message not about celebrations, but about evil in the world and the ongoing need to confront it...

Which leads us to this Shabbat, with the special name

Shabbat Zachor

The Sabbath of remembrance.... The special title given to the Shabbat just before Purim

What are we remembering today? And how is that connected to the Purim story...

We are told to remember Amalek ...So, who were they that they get so much attention—

...you might say the people of Amalek were the first terrorists of historythe ones who, after we crossed the Red Sea, attacked the Jewish people, for no apparent reason

And further- their attack was cruel... They did not attack the Israelites with bravery --- instead, they attacked the women and children and disabled, the weakest in the back of the line...

They are the first terrorists of history and they become the symbol of evil in the world too.

Now, paradoxically we are told to remember them, and also to blot them out...that in itself is a contradiction...if we blot them out, if we blot out their names from history.. then we don't need to remember them? Yet the Torah tells us, that we have to work to blot out these people and these kind of people in every generation...

Let's think about that..the Torah has reminded us that no matter how much we try to erase evil in one generation, evil and in more particular terms, anti-Semitism, will somehow find its back

Which is why the megillah tells us that Haman was a descendant of these people of Agag, who was a descendant of Amalek,... And he-Haman- now becomes the representative of anti-Semitism in his generation..

Abba Eban, in his history of the Israel, once said that anti-semitism is the longest running social pathology in human history...the baseless idea that when something goes wrong in your society, blame the Jewish people

Read the story of the Megillah, carefully and see how easily Haman can get the king to issue a decree against the all the Jewish people in the kingdom... a decree that is no less than a decree of genocide

Purim is not a simple melodrama after all...and it's dark sound haunts us Maybe that's way we celebrate so heartily, so that we can try to forget

And we look again and we find one more lesson in the Purim story..And one more lesson from Shabbat zachor...

Shabbat zachor is there to warn us the Jewish people that anti-semitism, and anti Israel sentiments will be part of our experience not only from the past but in every generation, including today

But here is the thing...as Jewish people, do we really needed to be reminded of this truth and reality?

Who would have thought, after all the so called lessons the world should have learned after WW2 that anti-semitism would return which such force in France and throughout Europe?

Who would have thought that Israel would, so to be 68 Years after it's founding, would still have to fight terrorism everyday, would still have to fight on the world stage at the UN and the world court to be recognized?

Which is why today, I want to suggest a new understanding of Shabbat zachor....Shabbat is not only a time for us, the Jewish people, to remember Amalek, and Haman...We know it and we live it

Shabbat Zachor is also a time for us to remind the world what we know. After all, anti-semitism, terrorism and evil can not be blotted out from the world unless the world joins in.

In the next few days, 18,000 people, Jews and supporters of Israel, will gather in Washington DC for the annual AIPAC American Israel Public affairs committee) And though I will not be attending this year There, those who attend will join together to celebrate Israel, and will have an opportunity to remind the world to join us in the fight against Amalek and all it stands for.

How thankful we should be that we, American Jews, like Esther and Mordechai, have a voice in our society, have a voice in our world.

Let us use our voice on this Shabbat Zachor, to remind the world of the lessons of Amalek, At AIPAC will be the leaders and potential leaders of the American future---Vice President Biden, Hillary Clinton, Donald Trump, Ted Cruz, and Governor Kaisich...what an opportunity we have to be the REMINDERS to all of these leaders and potential leaders of the world we live in, the world Israel lives in, the world the Jewish people live in, and to ask all of them to join in the fight against Amalek.

When Ehud Olmert was Prime Minister of Israel he once said, “We can not become tired of fighting, we can become tired of being courageous, we can not become tired of winning, we can not become tired of defeating our enemies.” When we remind ourselves and then when we remind the world of the lessons of Amalek, then we will have the opportunity to celebrate Purim as we read in the Megillah : “*La-yehudim hayata orah v’simchah* – and for the Jews there was light and joy... kein tihyeh lonu – so shall it be for us.”

Shabbat shalom