

Rosh Hashanah Day 5777 - 2016

The world is at a tipping point. It is at a technological age where we are about to eradicate many illnesses and world problems. It also stands at its worst point in human behavior in years. Anti-Semitism is running rampant throughout our college campuses as well as throughout the world. We are further away from peace between Israel and Palestine than we ever have been. Wars continue to rage on in Syria, Afghanistan, and Africa and in many other places throughout the world. Violence rages in our states, in our cities, in our streets and innocents die in the crossfire.

The Bulletin for Atomic Scientists have maintained what is known as the Doomsday Clock since 1947. This clock represents how close these scientists believe we are to Doomsday or ruining the world as we know it. In January of 2015 they moved the Doomsday clock to 3 minutes until midnight. The clock hasn't been this close to midnight since 1953 when it stood at two minutes to midnight due to the cold war when the United States and the Soviet Union tested thermonuclear devices within nine months of one another. Now we have North Korea running nuclear bomb testing underground and the United States Air Force is doing fly bys. Iran is parading missiles painted with the phrase "Turn Tel Aviv and Haifa into

Dust.” on them. For some good news, Keeping up with the Kardashians returns October 23rd at 9pm for another fun filled and family wholesome season.

The Doomsday scientists noted “that nuclear trends are moving backwards. The Science and Security Board's Sharon Squassoni pointed out that weapons modernization programs and disarmament have "ground to a halt." and "Efforts at reducing global emissions of heat-trapping gases have so far been entirely insufficient to prevent unacceptable climate disruption," said the Bulletin's Richard Somerville. "We all need to respond now, while there is still time."

[\(http://www.cnn.com/2015/01/23/us/feat-doomsday-clock-three-minutes-midnight/\)](http://www.cnn.com/2015/01/23/us/feat-doomsday-clock-three-minutes-midnight/).

None of this bodes well for the Jews let alone the rest of the world. For some reason the Jews have been made to be the scapegoat for all of history. The existence of Israel and the state of the Palestinian Conflict is too often blamed for everything that goes wrong within our modern world. Palestinian Conflict? - All Israel's fault because they won't negotiate for peace by agreeing to cease to exist.

Strife in the Middle East? - If Israel and the Jews didn't exist then all the Arab world would live peacefully with the rest of the world.

Black Lives Matter? - It is all Israel's fault because they oppress our Palestinian siblings. The fact that leading rabbis and numerous Jews marched with Martin Luther King Jr. during the civil rights movement and fought for desegregation and equality in America doesn't seem to ring a bell with these modern day racists trying to fight racism.

The banning of the bikini in France? - All Israel's fault, if Israel didn't exist we would have bathing suit freedom for all and have zero terrorism in Europe.

Global warming - liberal Jewish conspiracy, Ok, maybe that is a little far fetched since they don't blame global warming entirely on the Jews. Of course they don't really believe in science or empirical data. They refute massive shifts in weather patterns or an increase in flooding of the coastal plains. The Creation Museum of Petersburg, Kentucky gives me warm goose bumps every time they show me how Adam and Eve romped around with their pet dinosaurs during the same period in biblical history. It is almost as if they view the tv show The Flintstones as historically accurate.

I attended two schools in the south, the University of Florida and the University of Kentucky and never experienced anti-semitism in the six years I attended classes. Nowadays our college Freshman must all be prepared for the anti-Semitism and anti-Israel rhetoric they face on campus, experiences that would have been unheard of even ten years ago. Nowadays we can see, hear or read about Anti-Semitism in the news, on facebook, on television throughout the world and almost nothing we say or do is going to change the minds of those who view Jews as a global problem while espousing their hateful and racist ideologies openly.

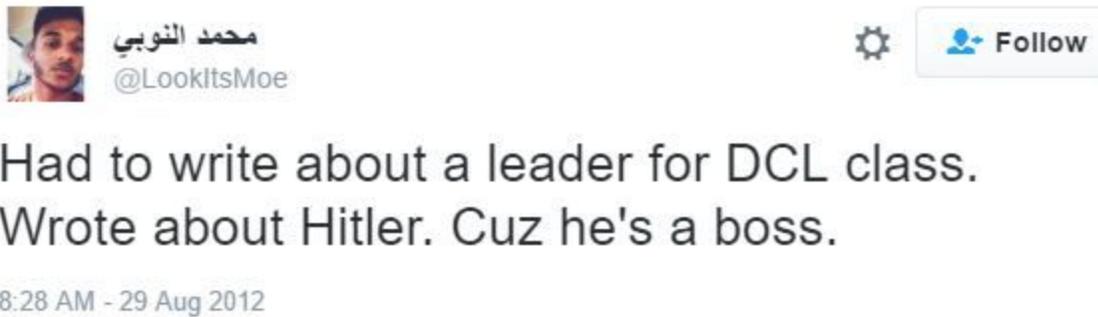
These last few years the Boycott, Divestment and Sanction Movement gained so much traction on too many of our college campuses. Our children have had to face blatant anti-Semitism dressed up as anti-Israel sentiment on a scale they have never experienced in their lives. Brian Gladstone, a junior at Brown University, just published a piece entitled “Dear Incoming Freshman, Brace yourself for an insane Anti-Semitism.”

(<http://forward.com/scribe/348802/dear-incoming-freshman-brace-yourself-for-insane-anti-semitism/>)

Gladstone begins his post “From openly anti-Semitic professors to swastika graffiti, the campus can be a hard place for Jews, and is certainly a hard place

for Zionist Jews.” Such sad but true words about the campus life many of our children face today.

The University of Tennessee Knoxville is dealing with leaders of the Students for a Just Palestine and the Muslim Students Association who repeatedly tweet statements such as SJP student member Mohammed Ali’s tweet



or Heshan Annamer’s tweet



The article talks about this “Cesspool’ of anti-Semitic, anti-Israel, Racist Behavior at U of Tennessee”

as “antisemitism hiding behind a mask of human rights activism, with open Jew-hatred, support for terrorism and homophobic and racist slurs — all-too-common themes, spanning several years, found in the social media postings of key members of UTK’s SJP and MSA groups.”

This is just one more example of what is occurring on college campuses throughout the world, not just throughout the United States. It is as if this past decade has wiped out thirty years of campuses working to become places of tolerance and understanding. The majority of us were raised to be informed and to shed any of our familial prejudices, ignorance and intolerance. I was raised to understand the plight of the Palestinians and Israel’s right to exist. We’ve been raised to abhor terrorism and to believe there is a peaceful way to work towards everyone living in peace with each other. It is a much different world that we live in today where our children are no longer safe going to college where we hoped they would learn how to make the world a better place.

Outside college campuses politicians throughout the world are acting like petulant adolescents owning none of their own ignorance or arrogance and always placing blame on their failures and shortcomings on someone else, especially Israel. It is Israel’s fault, the Jews are to blame, it is the

welfare moms' fault, the immigrants' fault, government's fault, the voters' fault, the system's fault. Everyone else is to blame while no one takes ownership for the ills of our world.

In 2013 Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan blamed Israel for the overthrow of Egypt's Islamist President Mohammed Morsi by the Muslim Brotherhood.

<http://www.clarionproject.org/news/turkish-prime-minister-erdogan-blames-israel-egypt-coup>

In June of this year, a Bangladeshi minister blamed a string of gruesome killings in the country on Israel, as a 70-year-old Hindu priest became the latest murder victim by suspected jihadists.

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/bangladeshi-minister-blames-israel-for-string-of-gruesome-murders/>

In July of this year, Ex-Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney claimed that Israel was to blame for the attacks in Nice and Munich.

<http://www.breitbart.com/jerusalem/2016/07/25/fmr-congresswoman-claims-israel-blame-nice-munich-attacks/>

It is as if there is only one International Super Villain in all the world while Hamas, Iran, North Korea, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Libya and many of the other terrorist supporting countries get a relative free pass. Now I understand that there is news and reporting about these other countries and their wrongdoings, but never on the level that Israel is held up as the cause of all things wrong in the Middle East and in the world. It is as if the

world believes that if they vilify Israel enough no one will remember all the atrocities committed by the actual villainous countries in the world.

In Will Smith's film, *After Earth*, his character talks about fear:

“Fear is not real. The only place that fear can exist is in our thoughts of the future. It is a product of our imagination, causing us to fear things that do not at present and may not ever exist. That is near insanity. Do not misunderstand me danger is very real but fear is a choice.”

As Jews we know too well that the danger is real, but fear is a choice. We know that the danger is real from our experience with the first exile to Assyria in 773 BCE, the second Exile to Babylon in 597 BCE, the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE by the Romans, the defeat of the Bar Kohbah Rebellion by Hadrian in 132 CE, the destruction of Jews and Jewish villages by Christian Crusaders during the Crusades, the expulsion of the Jews from England in 1290, the expulsion of the Jews from Spain by Queen Isabella in 1492. Thousands of years of abuse, destruction, murders and lies all leading up to the Holocaust and the destruction of six million Jews which today many deniers try to minimize and erase as historical fact.

The danger is real. What we do with our fears is up to us.

As Jews and especially during the High Holy Days we fear so many things. We fear whether we will be written in the book of life, and written for a year of health, blessings and peace within ourselves. We fear for ourselves, our kids, our parents, our grandparents, our families and friends. We fear for the existence of Israel and the safety of all Jews throughout the world.

As humans, facing a world that seems to be coming apart at the hinges, we fear the ever looming threat of war, terrorist attack, nuclear proliferation and biological weapons. We fear the election in a few weeks, we fear government, we fear for our communities and the communities of those seen as on the fringe and left behind. We fear the anger revealed by this current election and the amount of ignorance and baseless hatred that has been made publicly acceptable to voice anywhere nowadays. In my lifetime the fringe, after World War II and the Civil Rights Movement has always maintained a quiet murmuring voice hidden away in secret meetings and clubs. Today they all feel emboldened to voice their age old hatreds and prejudices because they feel supported and accepted once again.

Now, I'm no fool. I know that none of these hatreds disappeared after the defeat of Nazi Germany during World War II or after the success of the

civil rights movement. I know that thousands of Nazis were saved, hidden and given safe passage to countries of safe harbor with the help of many people, religious leaders and government heads upon which countless books have been written. Go further back, I know that these hatreds are ancient and have existed between cultures and communities for tens of thousands of years. Humans always feel the need to hate or destroy what they don't like or don't understand. My God is better than your god and I will kill you to prove it. My skin color is better than your skin color and I will enslave you or kill you to prove it. My brain is bigger than yours, my hair is better than yours, my teeth are whiter than yours, my skinny jeans look much better on me than they do on you...you get the idea.

And in this politically correct world we have given space to those who spew vile and hateful lies and distortions of the truth wherever they can. Not only do we give them radio and television shows, but the internet gives them the world wide web to attract all their fellow thinkers and collect them in one big hate filled metaverse.

We cannot allow fear to immobilize us. The danger is very real, but we must put our fears aside and raise our voices. We must contact our alumni associations and make sure they are addressing any hate speech

and hate groups that are abusing their freedom of speech to terrorize other campus groups and students. We must call our political leaders and make sure they are doing everything they can to prevent racist and anti-Semitic groups from gaining a greater voice and more followers. WE must contact the Anti-Defamation league and find out what they need from us and what our role should be in furthering tolerance, education and understanding among all people in our great country.

While we may not agree with the leaders of Israel and the political strife that occurs there we need to always remember the incredible things Israel is accomplishing in technology and development and agriculture that will change the way the world cures diseases and grows our food supply. We must remember that Israel is the only democratic state in the Middle East where all religions and cultures may live freely and safely and have the safe right to vote in democratic elections. Israel believes in peace. Israel shows such great restraint in not causing out and out war with all of its neighbors who have repeatedly attacked them these last 68 years and called for Israel's annihilation and removal from existence. Before the Holocaust there were over 16.6 million Jews in the world. 68 years later we

are only just now nearing 16 million Jews worldwide and yet once again we hear the same old hatreds being spewed once again.

As you act outwardly to fight this modern fear mongering and anti-Semitism I also ask you to look inward and remember why you love your Judaism. I personally don't want to hear about why you don't come to Shabbat services. I'm not that rabbi. I want to hear why you are Jewish. I want to hear about why you've raised your kids as Jews. I want to hear about why you are part of our Har-Shalom family, about where you live your Jewish life in food, in travel, in business, in meditation, in yoga, in prayer. Jewish life was never lived entirely in the synagogue. Most of our greatest rabbi held jobs they worked six days a week to support their families and only lived in the House of Worship and the House of study one day a week. Maimonides, who lived in the 12th century was the doctor to the King of Egypt and all his household. He would walk several hours each day back and forth from his home to the Palace. He would only talk to students or answer any correspondence on Jewish law on Shabbat or just after Shabbat on Saturday evenings. And yet he is one of the most renowned rabbis and scholars within Jewish history. Each of our Judaism is personal, individual, shaped by our experiences and the adults who

surrounded us. For some it was a very positive experience. For others it was often a negative experience, for many of us it was a mixture of both good and bad where we try to live lives recreating the positive experiences of our personal Judaism.

I want you all to send me emails in the next week and I will try to create a collection on our website of all the reason you embrace your Judaism. Rabbi@har-shalom.com

Today the Danger is real, but our voices and the truth are also real. We need to raise our voices, gather with all our tolerant inter-faith friends, educate our children and stand up for the world we want to live in, a world where the real villains are shown for who they are and where those who believe in Peace speak louder than hate and ignorance.

Thank you for celebrating your Judaism with me and as part of Har Shalom. May you all be written for a sweet and healthy new year. May we work to bring more Peace and tolerance in this incredible world of ours.

Cayn yehi ratzon - May this Be God's will.

L'Shannah Tovah!