

Rosh Hashanah 5782 / 09/07/2021

To Hell in a Handbasket

Half of our nation believes that the United States is going to hell in a handbasket. The other half of our nation believes that the United States is going to hell in a handbasket. The only difference is that they believe the other side is causing it, none of it is their fault, and many of us in the middle know that all of us are somehow to blame for this moment in time. Humans are to blame for the hatred in the world. Humans are to blame for the suffering of other humans due to war, disease, famine or poverty. Humans are to blame for the extinction of other species, for climate change, and for pollution throughout the world ruining our natural resources.

Humans are also to blame for creating cures to many diseases and helping to save countless lives. We are to blame for creating sturdier seed stock so that farmers have a better chance at a successful yield year after year. We are to blame for figuring out how to desalinate water for desert countries with little access to clean water or enough annual rainfall.

If we really think that it is about Democrat vs Republican, liberal vs. conservative then we are forgetting that just by sitting here together we represent the “other” so many global citizens fear and hate. We are the stranger, the widow and the orphan they want to keep out of this country and so many others. We are the immigrants they close their borders against or expel just as they turned away the 900 Jews aboard the SS St Louis in 1939, sending them back to Europe where more than 250 of those

passengers were killed by the Nazis. We've been expelled from England, France, Spain, Germany, Iran, Iraq, Egypt among many countries that rid themselves of their Jews. We've even been expelled from "Kentucky, Mississippi and Tennessee during the Civil War, victims of General Orders No. 11, a discriminatory wartime declaration issued by General Ulysses S. Grant." <https://www.history.com/news/ulysses-grant-expulsion-jews-civil-war>

We are the people they think control the media and control their banks and ruin their lives, believing all the lies that have been told to them about who we are for thousands of years.

I recently sat across from a friend of 15 years only weeks ago who began talking about the Zionist Banking Conspiracy theory without any understanding that I am a Zionist or understanding about the history of the antisemitic conspiracy behind that phrase. This is a highly educated individual with advanced degrees in holistic medicine. So ask yourselves why does he accept conspiracies without doing research into the deeper background of those conspiracies and without understanding which of his close friends those conspiracies mean to malign or indict?

Of course as Jews we always know there has always been some kind of conspiracy to eradicate us or forcibly remove us from society. We know because it has been true for over 4000 years. Our celebrations of Chanukah, Purim, Passover and Yom Hashoah remind us annually of that fact.

Of course the media is controlled, but the question is who is it being controlled by and what is their greater intention? Of course our politicians are controlled, but clearly it isn't by the voters or their will. You have never and will never hear me say who to vote for. You will always hear me say, understand what you are voting for and understand what you believe to be true. Live and in Texas right now Women needing abortions and doctors have been criminalized while all the men who impregnate them face no prosecution or blame. If we allow the politicians and the media to divide us then perhaps we are already lost.

The problem is people think we are overreacting, but typically they aren't Jewish and they don't have a history of all of Europe working to destroy the entire Jewish people. 9 million Jews lived in Europe before the Holocaust. 3 million were left after most of Europe allowed Hitler and his willing executioners to murder 6 million innocent lives. Today it is estimated that only 1.4 million Jews remain living in Europe where their safety erodes on a daily basis. As early as 1969, not even after a quarter of a century, the first Holocaust denial literature began being circulated by the very antisemitic Liberty Lobby in the United States.

Today our country is divided like it was during the civil war, like it was during the Civil Rights Movement and like it was during the Vietnam War. We all think we are so right that we can no longer hear what the other is saying, even though as Jews we are the other. We are very much in danger as a nation even as we celebrate our High Holy Days comfortably in the North Shore of Chicago.

In July alone these antisemitic acts were reported throughout the United States.

A swastika was found carved into an elevator at the US State Department.

Source: [Axios](#)

July 24, 2021

Fleischmanns, [New York](#)

Three men were arrested and charged with grand larceny in the third degree as a hate crime after they yelled antisemitic slurs and stole a Jewish man's streimel.

Source: [WBNG](#)

July 21, 2021

Lynnfield, [Massachusetts](#)

Graffiti that included a swastika, "Hitler" and a lewd image was found at Glen Meadow Park.

Source: [Item Live](#)

July 20, 2021

Seattle, [Washington](#)

An unknown person or group distributed antisemitic propaganda at the University of Washington that read: "Remember the slave trade? 78% of slave owners were ethnic Jews. 48% of Jews were slave owners. Dismantle kike supremacy. End white guilt."

Source: Reported to ADL

https://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resource-knowledge-base/adl-tracker-of-antisemitic-incident?s?field_incident_location_state_target_id=All&page=1

A liar will lie about anything. An antisemite lies about Jews with near impunity, making up stories that insure people hate us without knowing history or bothering to learn the truth for themselves. Antisemitic individuals don't even know or care that they've been manipulated into this position, in their thoughts, in their hatred in their rhetoric of lies.

I am angry, but I cannot live my life fueled by my anger. How many of you are angry, tired, scared, worried, overwhelmed? These times trigger our nervous systems and fight or flight response systems in ways we haven't experienced for over 75 years. For the first time in many of our lives our safety actually feels threatened even while we personally live in relative comfort and peace.

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are supposed to be times of peaceful introspection spent surrounded by family and friends as we celebrate the creation of it all and our good fortune. Our divisions demanded that we be remote once again as the Pandemic surges once more while individuals fight for their personal freedom to spread the disease and die or kill their family from Covid-19. Caleb Wallace, the anti-mask organizer of the July 4th "Freedom Rally" in San Angelo Texas, died of Covid-19 after a month of being in the hospital. He was thirty and left behind three children and his pregnant wife.

We are all astoundingly blessed to be right here right now. We are blessed to live in this location, during this moment Our minds feel the suffering of the world, and yet technology allows us to remain comfortably in our homes, surrounded by those we love the most, as safe as we can be, all things considered.

Despite our fears and our history we refuse to live our lives in fear. In 1948, our ancestors knew the odds they were fighting against, and yet founded our beloved Israel despite the odds against, despite the number of enemies who wished to see them fail, to see them all dead.

Even after this last half decade's rise in anti-semitism we still live our best Jewish lives as only we know how. Individually we all make choices of where we actively live as Jews. Praying together today we declare our Judaism, we declare our desire to make the world a better place, we declare that we are here to stay even if we have to fight to show the world what a loving existence filled with tolerance and acceptance looks like. The ancient rabbinic sage, The Baal Shem Tov, teaches that "Fear builds walls to bar the light." While society validates our fears as Jews on a daily basis, media works diligently to use fear to move every faction against the other in the world. Media's existence relies on its ability to influence our emotions in such a way to get us to believe and act in a predictable manner. We know this. We've watched the power of the media time and time again. Our phones tell us exactly how much screen time we've had on a daily basis and we can all tell you what we've been doing with our phones, scrolling, looking, seeing, searching, but we can't necessarily

remember why we feel the need to scroll or what we've seen in the hours spent looking at our black mirrors.

Humanity believes we are better connected, but how have we become more disconnected in a technological world trying to keep us connected twenty four hours a day?

We must not allow our fear to bar the light. We must be the light in our lives, the lives of our family and the lives of our friends. We must find what helps us breathe, helps us heal, helps us stay centered in order to be the positive force we wish to be in the world.

Often for me I listen to powerful music, music that moves me, lifts me, makes me feel stronger and capable. I listen to the songs that fill me with strength and understanding while inspiring me to go out into the world and share my song, share my energy, share my spirit. This year I've been blessed with spending more time with my family. Yes we may have watched every Marvel Movie and television show there is (thank you Netflix and Disney Plus). My daughter may have convinced me to watch every season of the vampire show, The Originals, but when is my teenage daughter going to ask me to do anything with her again if I say no now? [P.S. She's amazing.](#)

I learned to create digital art, painted more, and read as many uplifting fiction and non-fiction books as I could because only I can control how the world makes me feel. It isn't that the world is a safe place, it is just that I choose to be aware that I cannot trust the world while surrounding

myself with all of you, and people I care about the most while working to make the world a better place.

As Jews we've never been able to trust the world. Abraham kept telling everyone that Sarah was his sister because he couldn't trust the rulers in the lands he traveled through. He knew he'd most likely be killed over her beauty. That is the kind of world he lived in. It hasn't changed as much as we think since then, we just live far away from those regions.

As Jews we must stay awake. As Jews we must stand with those who will stand with us to fight for the rights of those who cannot fight for themselves. So much work has been accomplished in the last fifty years and so much more work remains before us whether we like it or not. 75 years ago showed us what happens to those educated and successful Jews complacent in their beliefs that they were fully naturalized citizens and the hate and violence wouldn't dare show up at their doorsteps. Once again we find ourselves successful, comfortable and feeling safe while our nation continues to change in ways that go against the values of this nation and the freedoms meant to be sacred for all of our citizens. As we celebrate the creation of the world we must continue Abraham's journey towards the creation of a just and peaceful society meant for all of humanity.

We must be the light that leads the way.

May you be the light and joy you wish to see in this new year, 5782,
Cayn yehi ratzon - may this be God's will.

