

Pascrell on radicalized hate

The spate of deadly domestic extremist violence against houses of worship and nonprofit institutions is a growing threat to virtually every corner of the United States. It is imperative that elected officials like myself do everything in our power to combat this weaponized hatred whenever it rears its hideous head.

To that end, I recently helped lead bipartisan legislation that would authorize a security grant program for religious institutions and non-profits. I've also worked to increase federal funding for the Federal Non-Profit Security Grant Program from \$13 million to \$60 million, and we are requesting \$75 million in the next budget. Through letters and conversation, I am working closely with my colleagues to fully fund these critical programs so that religious communities can have the security they deserve. As the Old Testament tells us, silence is consent. In the face of this new wave of radicalized hate, I promise that I will never be silent.

Bill Pascrell, Jr., Member of Congress (D – NJ Dist. 9)

Remembering Herman Wouk

My late mother, Shirley Friedberg Neustein, was a childhood friend of Herman Wouk, who attended the boys division of a Zionist camp (Keeyuma/Carmelia) in the 1920s and 30s. The camp was picturesquely situated on Lake Champlain in Milton, Vermont. My mother and Herman kept up with each other until my mother died in 2001.

I gathered bits and pieces of Herman's personal side, his banter, humor, zest for living in spite of personal tragedy, from the anecdotes my mother shared with me. Beginning with the camp days, where the boys and girls who were separated during the week would come together for Friday night Shabbat prayer service, my mother was very much intrigued with Herman, a couple of years her senior. She vividly described how during short breaks in the prayer service he would suddenly lift his head from the siddur, canvassing the room with penetrating eyes. She would often tell me she could see "the wheels of his mind" turning as he scrupulously examined every fellow camper in the prayer hall. They all wore white shorts for the Sabbath, as was required by the camp director. Yet behind the banality of clothing, Herman saw the richness of color in each fellow camper.

He soon became friends with my mother, and when he invented the character "Shirley" in "Marjorie Morningstar" he called my mother to apologize profusely, swearing she was nothing at all like the protagonist in his book! Though he did concede he consciously used her name because of his friendship with my mother, another "Shirley." In May 1962, my mother put together a monumental camp reunion, bringing together the young Zionists who had now become

household names in literary, political, and business circles. Arthur Miller, Norman Lear, Moss Hart, Paul Goodman, Bob Treuhaft, Andrew Goodman (founder of Bergdorf Goodman), to name just a few. Herman was immersed at the time in "Youngblood Hawke," secluding himself in the Virgin Islands so as to devote full concentration to his novel. Unable to appear at the reunion, Herman made a poignant audio-tape recounting his camp memories. My mother brought scissors with her, and out of respect for Herman's sensitivity she cut the cassette tape immediately after it was played. The room stood still, as the former campers listened closely to Herman's reflections on his camp days: stories, commentaries, and humor about life among an oasis of trees for a Jewish boy growing up in the Bronx. Many will say Herman, an extraordinarily gifted Pulitzer Prize winning novelist, was "larger than life." My late mother would say, if she were here today, that Herman was someone who clearly showed signs of "greatness" as a young lad even before he ever took pen to hand to write his first novel!

Amy Neustein, Ph.D., Fort Lee

Trash bin of history

After reading the opinion piece by Rabbi Dr. Fine in the May 10 issue ("Why I am keeping my subscription to the New York Times"), I could understand where the term "off the rails" stems from.

His inclusion and comparison of the Times to the Torah is at best misguided and at worst sickening. What makes it even worse he is a rabbi. I don't care what denomination he belongs to, but his comparisons belong in the trash bin not a Jewish newspaper. I am not even mentioning his defense of the Times history and their apologies towards Israel and Jews. Those apologies had to be squeezed out of the newspaper and are not worthy of serious thought. Proof is that the next day they ran a cartoon of Netanyahu with tablets coming down from a mountain. What religious significance does Bibi and the government have today. None, but the Times thinks that is the thrust of Israel's government. Sad that a rabbi believes their "new approach" and even sadder that he uses the Torah to compare it to.

Marc Aron, Teaneck

Rabbi Goldstein's heroism

Your coverage of the Poway shooting in your May 3rd edition was informative and well done – although I am puzzled why it was relegated to pages 30-32, and needlessly included a photo of a Moslem girl in the crowd of participants in the post-shooting vigil. However, what is more glaring, is the omission in either the May 3rd or May 10th paper of the moving and heartfelt speech of Rabbi Yisroel Goldstein – who lost one of his fingers in protecting other

worshippers at the synagogue shooting – at the National Day of Prayer at the White House on May 2nd. I realize that perhaps your paper was already "at press" and the story took place after printing, but why the pronounced silence and omission in the following week's (May 10) paper? While Rabbi Goldstein was not originally included in the roster of speakers, President Trump, who previously and personally called and spoke with Rabbi Goldstein for 20 minutes, spontaneously called upon him to speak, and share his message of hope, pride and positivism in the face of evil and darkness. Rabbi Goldstein quoted from the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, that the way to react to darkness is with light, and in the early 1980s, shortly after the assassination attempt on President Reagan, the Rebbe urged making a daily moment of silence as a standard practice in public schools. Rabbi Goldstein, in drawing tears from the White House gathering, remarked that the Rebbe taught him, that as a Jew, you are a soldier of God, and you need to stand tall and stand fast, to do what it takes to change the world. These words – urging all to increase in acts of goodness and kindness – visibly touched and drew tears from those at the gathering, with the president thanking the rabbi for his courage, grace and devotion in touching every heart and soul in America. This was truly a "Kiddush Hashem."

William Z. Shulman, Esq., Union City

Anti-Semitism from the left

"Normalization of Bias" (May 10, 2019) speaks of the statistics and insight that show a trend toward increasing anti-Semitism. I disagree with Mr. Abe Foxman when he says: "The good news is that anti-Semitism is latent..." Latent means underdeveloped, hidden, or concealed. It is not. In the article, Mr. Foxman says: "Taboos have been destroyed by Trumpism and by politics." The article speaks about right-wing extremism but stops short and doesn't include the progressive left and the "woke" culture that has brought the mainstreaming of anti-Semitism to the Congressional halls. We are almost deaf to the progressive left assaults after living for years with blatant (not latent) anti-Semitism on the university and college campuses around the country.

For many years there existed a debate as to whether anti-Zionism was really anti-Semitism. At this point in time most Jews would agree that it is, as it has shown itself more openly anti-Jewish. The historian Victor Davis Hanson writes about this topic, most recently in his article "Why Progressive Anti-Semitism – and Why Now?" in the National Review.

American Jews are living in the midst of increased and mainstreaming anti-Semitism. At the very least it behooves our Jewish leaders be more open about all the places it is coming from.

Varda Hager, Teaneck

Sermons FROM PAGE 31

5 December, 1805, a "Day of General Thanksgiving for the success of his majesty's fleet under Lord Nelson, off Trafalgar" was observed throughout both the churches and the synagogues of England. On all such occasions, Jews gathered in their synagogues at the same time that their Christian neighbors assembled in their churches; a special liturgy was followed, and the chief rabbi delivered a sermon explicating the meaning of the events celebrated. On this occasion, Rabbi Solomon Hirschel departs from the general vilification of the enemy found in the sermons of his fellow clergymen, instead devoting considerable attention to whether it is proper to rejoice at the victory of one's own nation when this victory entails suffering and death among the enemy.

I can say from experience that compassion for an enemy in war, when the general tone describes that

enemy as being anything from tyrannical to Amalek, is certain to upset many congregants; still, it is the task of the rabbi to address this spiritual matter that transcends politics. The Rabbis of the Talmud declare God as having compassion on the Egyptians at the splitting of the sea. Can we not manage the same?

Finally, the grimmest task facing any rabbi is to eulogize the death of children, which all soldiers are. How inspirational, therefore, is the sermon Rabbi Ronald B. Gittelson gave at the U.S. Marine Corps cemetery at Iwo Jima in March 1945. In it he pleads that the opportunity presented by the sacrifices of The Great War not be wasted.

I quote from his sermon: "This war, with all its frightful heartache and suffering, is but the beginning of our generation's struggle for democracy. When the last battle has been won, there will be those at home, as there were last time, who will want us to turn our backs in selfish isolation on the rest of organized humanity, and thus to sabotage the very peace for which we fight. We

promise to you who lie here: we will not do that. We will join hands with Britain, China, Russia in peace, even as we have in war, to build the kind of world for which you have died." (It is interesting to note that the last sentence was edited out of the official version on record with the United States Army Chaplain Center and School.)

The upcoming Memorial Day is a time for religion to give honor to the fallen and comfort to the bereaved, and to bring its bright and critical light to bear on all sides of our many conflicts. As our prophets and rabbinic leaders have done for millennia, and as these shining examples from the modern rabbinate have modeled for us, let us remember clearly the tragedy of war, the responsibility to seek universal peace, the ever-present need for a careful and probing examination of the motives towards war on all sides.

This much we owe to the memory of our fallen, to the victims of war – combatants and civilians – and to the dictates not of politics but of our religion.