

Rabbi's Column – November 11, 2019

Sometimes, antisemitic acts are done because the person who does them knows exactly what the implications are. Sometimes they are done as a general act of vandalism which simply happens to have a victim that is Jewish. Graveyard vandalism is one of the harder things to pinpoint, especially when the destruction is first found. This past weekend there were reports of vandalism (overturned grave monuments in Nebraska and painted monuments in Europe) in Jewish cemeteries. There were other, more specific antisemitic acts over the weekend as well.

Krystallnacht was Saturday. Some could make a connection. I am not sure the perpetrators would have known enough to be able to do so.

I am currently reading Job: A New Translation by Edward L. Greenstein and Creation: The Story of Beginnings by Jonathan Grossman. Both of them have many interesting insights that I will be sharing over time. A tidbit from the book on Job: I tell my classes that each chapter of Psalms is not necessarily connected to the one next to it; that each verse in Proverbs is not necessarily connected to the one next to it; that each word in Job is not necessarily connected to the one next to it.

How that seems to work is like if I were to write a poem or prose piece and integrate, within the same sentence, words or word forms that resonate with the American Declaration of Independence, the movie sequence "Back to the Future", classic Doctor Who, current Doctor Who and both the Infinity Gauntlet used in the Warlock comic books decades ago and the Infinity Gauntlet used in the recent Marvel Comics Universe movies. A meaning could be derived without knowing all of those antecedents, but it would not be the optimum set of meanings.

In terms of the Torah portion - this week we review some familiar territory. The text includes the Torah readings for both days of Rosh HaShanah. Before we get that far, we get the announcement of Sarah's upcoming pregnancy and the announcement of the upcoming destruction of Sodom and the surrounding cities. Then we learn of the actual destruction and the aftermath - after which, we do not hear about Lot and his family until the Israelites leaving Egypt have to skirt their countries because God does not want us to fight our cousins.

May the day come when all of the people realize that we are all cousins, and that hatred and violence for its own sake has no place in our interactions with each other; bugging somebody until they react violently also has no place in our interactions with each other.