WHEN EVIL DARKENS OUR WORLD

When evil darkens our world, let us be the bearers of light.
When fists are clenched in self-righteous rage, let our hands be open for
the sake of peace.
When injustice slams doors on the ill, the poor, the old, and the stranger,
let us pry the doors open.

Where shelter is lacking, let us be builders.
Where food and clothing are needed, let us be providers.
Where knowledge is denied, let us be champions of learning.

When dissent is stifled, let our voices speak truth to power.
When the earth and its creatures are threatened, let us be their guardians.
When bias, greed, and bigotry erode our country’s values,
let us proclaim liberty throughout the land.

In the places where no one acts like a human being,
let us bring courage;
let us bring compassion;
let us bring humanity.
AFTER NATIONAL OR COMMUNAL TRAGEDIES

We stand in grief
  with the devastated families in our nation/community.
We weep
  over the incomprehensible loss of life.
We cry out
  with shock, confusion and pain.
We mourn together
  over this senseless act of violence and destruction.

Be with us, God, in this time of sorrow and fear.
Help us, God, to offer comfort
  to those whose hearts are shattered.
Rekindle hope and trust and courage within us and them.
Help us, God, to sustain our belief in the promise
  that even in the darkest times —
  even when we feel most discouraged —
  there is reason to trust
  that love is never extinguished
  and that light and spirit will prevail.

Help us, God, to rededicate ourselves
  to building a world that is safer for our children.
Help us, God, to rededicate ourselves
  to building a world that is safer for all people.
During these difficult days and nights, God,
  bring comfort and peace and hope and light
  to broken hearts and a broken world.

Oseh shalom bimromav
bu yaaseh shalom
aleinu v'al kol Yisrael,
v'al kol yoshvei teiveil. V'imru: Amen.

May the One who causes peace to reign in the high heavens,
let peace descend on us, and on all Israel, and on all the world.
Together we say: Amen.

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WE STAND AS ONE

We stand as one on this night of remembrance.
United in grief, united in loss,
united in the power of a promise:
God has made us; God will sustain us.
We give praise to this life
and rise up together to renew our strength.
OUT OF THE DEPTHS

Out of the depths I cry to You, Adonai;
hear my supplication.

A heavy burden has fallen upon us and sorrow has bowed our heads. And now we turn to You, the Source of life, for comfort and help. Give us the eyes to see that pain is not Your will, that somewhere there weeps with us One who feels our trouble and knows the suffering of our souls. We seek the light that will dispel the darkness that has overtaken us. Let us find it in the love of family and friends, in the sources of healing that are implanted within all the living, in the mind that conquers infirmity and trouble. Grant us the strength to endure what is inescapable, the wisdom to accept what cannot be undone, and the courage to go on without bitterness or despair. Amen.

Ner l'ragli d'varecha,
v'or lin'tivati.
B'or'cha nireh or.

Your word, O God, is a lamp to my feet, a light to my path.
By Your light shall we see light. [Psalms 119:105, 36:10]
This acrostic piece that spells out “Tree of Life Pittsburgh Tree of Life.” It is, of course, a response to the shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue this morning. It is meant to be used with two other prayers: “After a Deadly Anti-Semitic Attack” and “Racist Violence against Houses of Worship.”

**Tree of Life**
Tree of Life,
Revive our souls,
Enrich our days,
Entreating Your blessings.
Oh, God of Peace,
Fill our hearts with comfort,
Letting Your Torah shine,
In the fullness of our love.
Faith in You, our God,
Eternal Source of blessings.

Praying for healing
In the depths of despair,
Thanking God for the survivors,
Thanking God for the first responders,
Sorrow crushing our hearts,
Bereaved beyond belief,
United in our love,
Returning to You in faith,
God of Israel,
Healer of generations.

Tree of Life,
Redeemer of Israel,
Enliven this moment with healing,
Enliven this moment with hope.
Oh, Rock of Israel,
Forget not the Jews of Pittsburgh.
Let Your love flow
In the days ahead
For justice and peace
Everlasting.

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WHAT CAN CLERGY DO: GUIDELINES FOR A CONVERSATION

Prepared by Sally Weber, LCSW, Crisis Response Consultant
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1. Understand what you are seeing—if a person has experienced a trauma, know what the syndrome looks like
2. Stay in touch with your own feelings and what may have been uncovered, what scabs may have been knocked off
3. Let the person tell the story and share their fears
4. Listen for the spiritual concerns
5. Don’t rush in too quickly with reassurances, texts, prayers—ask how you can be of help.
6. THEN be prepared to offer spiritual as well as psychological support—normalize what they are feeling, let them know that Judaism has things to offer
7. For groups, children, classrooms, there’s nothing like a ritual (planting garden after child’s death; letters to surviving family members; tzedekah). Help them affirm life, affirm resilience.
8. If appropriate, write personal prayers as well as sharing prayers or psalms—benching Gomel (after returning from a dangerous trip)
9. Use the power of the community when it is a group trauma
10. Use the power of the community when it is an individual or family trauma
11. Refer to mental health professionals when appropriate
12. Take care of YOURSELF.

Sally Weber was the Director of Jewish Community Programs and Special Needs Programs at Jewish Family Service Los Angeles. She was Coordinator of the JFSLA Crisis Response team, which included support to schools, synagogues and families related to shootings, traumatic deaths and natural disasters. She is currently a member of the Jewish Community Crisis Response Team of JFSLA.

She has been Instructor of Pastoral Counseling at the Hebrew Union College-Pacific Institute of Religion Rabbinic School and is a founding Board member of the Kalsman Institute on Judaism and Health at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.
Range of emotional reactions...vary from no reaction to indifference to concern to worry and anxiety.

- Some children will make fun or play act. This is normal
- Your role will vary according to their needs.

Create safe environment where these discussions can occur—but don’t force children to talk until they’re ready

What children want/need:

- To know they’re safe
- To know their parents are safe
- To know their needs will be met
- To know where to turn for comfort

Your role:

- You are a buffer, a protective shield, against unnecessary information, including media, conversations, disagreements.
- You are an interpreter of what children hear or experience outside the home
- You are the source of their security: answer their questions and concerns but avoid imposing blame/guilt on the victims

Tools for helping:

- Start with yourself: how anxious are you? Limit child’s exposure to your anxiety (conversations demanding heightened security at school, for example, should NOT be done in earshot of your children)
- Do not transfer your fears to your child. While it’s important to teach children safety measures, do not make them feel as if they’re under constant threat of danger
- Keep adult conversations among the adults. Young children should not be exposed to adult discourse about (particular crisis) and its risks/consequences. Remember they LISTEN when you’re on the phone!
- Keep everything consistent and predictable. Children need structure. Keep routines, including school.
- Limit TV and other media exposure—for you and your children!
- Acknowledge & validate their feelings
- Let children know how you’re feeling. It both validates their feelings & may explain if you’re upset, worried, inattentive so that they don’t personalize it.
• Assure them of everyone keeping them safe
• Don’t force discussion. But if you feel child is worried, but not talking or denying it, make ‘statement of assumption’: What do you think other kids your age might be worrying about?
• Have faith in your child’s ability to cope: they don’t have same sense of history or future, so imagination won’t take them to the same place. At same time:
  o Be prepared for short term regression: sleep; clinging; toileting
  o Children who have experienced trauma or losses in the past are particularly vulnerable. Watch for physical symptoms, provide extra support and attention. But don’t change routines.

Things you shouldn’t say or do:
1. Don’t say “There’s nothing to worry about. “
2. Don’t be surprised if children make light of or joke about deaths or injuries. Remember this is the age of computer games and graphic movies. OK to say “This isn’t like the games you play or the movies you see” but they may or may not ‘get it,’ depending upon ages
3. Don’t make unrealistic promises, e.g. Promising that no one will get hurt, (DO assure them the you and caring adults around them will do everything possible to keep them—and yourselves—safe)
4. Don’t have discussions about the war, deaths, disaster, crisis or terrorism in front of your young children. This includes talking on the phone while your children are present

Things you can say or do:
1. What have you been hearing about ..(the crisis/disaster)?
2. I’m going to sit with you while you’re watching TV
3. I don’t know what will happen, but I know we’ll be able to handle it.
4. ‘I understand how you could feel that way’: Especially with older children: doesn’t mean you agree, but communicates understanding, respects differences
5. DO know what’s being said in and done in school

If your child is preoccupied with questions about the trauma/crisis, seek evaluation from qualified mental health professional.

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