

Blog Post: Responding to Charlottesville
By Edward Frim

How do we, as Jews, teach our children when we are confronted by intolerance, hatred and bigotry, such as in the events in Charlottesville? Our tradition teaches us that we are all created in the image of God, that we all owe each and every human being respect and consideration. Our tradition also teaches us that it is not enough to simply learn from our Torah and other sacred texts. As our rabbis taught, the study of Torah comes before Action, because the study of Torah leads to Actions.

How can you take what we are taught by our tradition and use it to process recent events, to help our children make sense of it, and to consider concrete actions as we move ahead? Here are some resources to help you and your *kehilla* respond. Special thanks to Janis Knight, Congregation Shirat HaYam, Swampscott, MA for gathering the information contained below relating to responding to the needs of our children and families.

For adults and teens, consider studying together about [Kvod HaBeriyot](#) – the honor and respect that our tradition accords to all people- and apply what you learn to the life of your *kehilla*. Some resources that may be helpful include:

- The USCJ's Conservative Yeshiva has created a study guide on [Human Dignity at a Time of Crisis](#).
- USCJ is a co-sponsor of One Table's Together at the Table Shabbat dinners. They have provided [Conversation Guides](#).

Also for adults and teens, study together about our Jewish American Heritage of opposing bigotry and persecution, beginning with America's founding fathers and our fledgling Jewish community. [To Bigotry No Sanction to Persecution No Assistance](#).

For some great books for kids, the NYT [article](#) by Maria Russo (8/14/17) identifies books on the difficult topics of racism, antisemitism, the Jim Crow era, the Civil Rights Movement and the Holocaust.

Michelle Shapiro Abraham, URJ's Director of Innovation and Learning for Youth, posted a helpful [article](#) on, "After Charlottesville, 5 Ways to Help Jewish Kids Deal" that offers some insights from our tradition on how to handle times like these.

Sonali Kohli of the LA Times also shared some excellent [advice](#) for responding to kids' questions and anxieties.

The Anti-Defamation League provides some [Table Talk](#) resources for a range of difficult topics, including current events, hatred, bigotry, etc. They also have a useful post on: [10 Things You Can Do To Combat Hate](#)

If you would like some more context for the catalyzing decision to remove the Robert E. Lee Monument and the unspoken importance of Confederate monuments, the Southern Poverty Law Center document found [here](#) is helpful. The Southern Poverty Law Center also offers an article on: [Ten Ways to Fight Hate](#)

Regarding Charlottesville's Jewish community, this [link](#) from NBC Nightly News shares what it felt like for them to have armed neo-Nazis patrolling across the street from their synagogue

during services. According to Rabbi Rachel Shmelkin of Congregation Beth Israel, their most immediate need is for security funding. Donations can be made to their GoFundMe [page](#).

Being a critical and questioning consumer of news, especially if you find yourself having a strong emotional reaction to something you read or hear on social media or television, is an important skill to hone in ourselves and to teach our children. [Snopes](#) or [Fact Check](#) are both good non-partisan resource sites to determine whether or not something truly is "fake news" designed to distract, outrage, or manipulate us. This situation has already been prey to a number of false and unverifiable claims. It is important that we "not bear false witness" but instead that we act and are motivated by a commitment to truth and justice.

As you move forward, please feel free to reach out and let us know how we can support you as educators and help you support your families and congregants.