

**REFLECTIONS**  
**BY RABBI LAURA GELLER**

My husband Richard grew up in Squirrel Hill, about a ten-minute walk from the Tree of Life Synagogue. His first cousins still belong; it is the shul where they raised their kids and celebrated their b'nai mitzvah. This tragedy hit very close to home. Close to home no matter where we live. Because, as our tradition teaches: Kol Yisrael Aravim Zeh la-Zeh. "All Jews are connected to each other." The first instinct is to reach out to those congregants and those congregations, to mourn with the families of those murdered, to send the injured prayers for healing, to remind them all that they are not alone. But we can't stop there. We need each other especially now, we need to come together not only to mourn but also to celebrate that no one can scare us from coming together in joy, to celebrate Shabbat, to be proudly Jewish in public as well as private spaces. Come to synagogue this Shabbat, even if it is not your regular custom. Friday night at 6:15 at Isaiah, or at 8:00 at Emanuel, or Shabbat morning at 10:00 at Emanuel.

And we can't stop there. Not only are all Jews connected, but we are also connected to other people and groups who have also been the victims of hate. And so we can't stop our work with those coalitions and organizations that are working to help our country live up to its highest values. So many of our ancestors came to America with the help of HIAS (which used to be called the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society). We now know that the Tree of Life Synagogue was targeted because of its support of refugees and its work with HIAS. Now is the time to increase our support for immigrants and refugees, to challenge the easy access to guns, and to demand that political rhetoric that sets the tone for acts of violence is no longer tolerated.

We learned in this past week's Torah portion (which those congregants never got to hear) that God chose Abraham "so that he might teach his children and those who come after him to keep the way of God and do what is right and just." (Gen. 18:19) Now is the time to recommit to doing what is right and just...because we are all connected.