

Creating a Jewish Security Plan in Modern Times: Achieving a Warm Welcoming Secure Mishkan



Thesis for Fellow in Temple Administration

Jennifer Levin-Tavares
Executive Director
Congregation Mishkan Israel
Hamden, CT

September 2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
CREATING A HOLY SPACE: THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY IN THE MAKING OF A MISHKAN	5
THE IMPORTANCE OF WELCOMING	8
JEWISH LAWS REGARDING SECURITY	12
BALANCING THE GOALS OF WARMTH AND WELCOMING WITH SECURITY	16
CONCLUSION	25
END NOTES	27
BIBLIOGRAPHY	29
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES CONSULTED	31
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	33

INTRODUCTION

Every synagogue has a mission statement and its own distinct approach for fulfilling that mission. While the styles and culture may vary, at the root, there is the commonality of providing a sacred holy space where God may dwell among us – a mishkan.

When one thinks of a mishkan, the first thought tends to be of the physical space of the synagogue where people can gather together to create a community. To have a mishkan, you need a synagogue that is more than just bricks and mortar. A mishkan and a synagogue are as much about the emotional as they are about the physical. We are reminded of the Yiddish expression “*Az du kenst veinen dort*” -- you know you are in a holy space when you can cry there. To attain that sense of holiness, you need a community – you need people who care for each other and share the common mission. As a synagogue, we strive to be a warm welcoming congregation, where all are embraced regardless of background and resources. Being a true community – more than a place – is a fundamental principle of Judaism and an essential part of any synagogue.

In today's environment, where there is so much unrest in the world, so many acts of violence, creating and maintaining that sense of warmth is an increasing challenge. Events like September 11 and the shootings in Newtown, CT, as well as uprisings in Europe and the Middle East, are reminders of the importance of providing a secure environment in which all feel safe – physically and emotionally. At first blush, it can seem as if the notion of providing more, visible and stricter security (both to the physical space and by procedures) may detract from the mission of providing a warm welcoming environment in which all feel comfortable. In actuality, the two are or can be complimentary vs. antithetical.

There is no one way to determine the right balance that enables a synagogue to create warmth and security at the same time. There are many factors to be considered, including location, culture, congregational size, historical experience, perceived/actual threat, size and architecture of physical space, financial and human resources. As a synagogue, we also have the responsibility to use Jewish principles to guide our decisionmaking.

This thesis covers the core elements of holiness, welcoming, community and security, and how synagogues can successfully find the balance to achieve a warm welcoming congregation that is both open and safe. The focus is not the end product – each synagogue's plan will be unique to its institution's needs and culture. Rather, the focus is on the conceptual process, with a heavy emphasis on Jewish texts that can inform our decisions and help us distinguish ourselves as a Jewish institution from other types of entities. To help colleagues understand the application of these concepts, there are examples provided from a variety of congregations across the country.

The initial data come from conversations with colleagues over the years, collecting sample security plans from various congregations, and researching the archives available through NATA, the URJ, and other sources. Sandy Hook was a pivotal moment for many congregations and precipitated a major review of security systems and protocols in most of our institutions. Recent incidents in communities across the US also have influenced synagogues' decisions to re-evaluate their systems. As a result, many of the manuals and procedures created prior to 2013 were no longer sufficient.

In order to provide the most current thinking among Executive Directors, rather than conduct a generic survey, I chose to conduct in-depth interviews with select colleagues across the country, most of whom

were in communities where there had been some kind of incident in recent years that would affect security. These interviews allowed conversations to go beyond the surface, into the details of their plans and synagogue's thought processes. These interviewees were chosen intentionally so as to represent diversity in sizes, geographical location, as well as urban and suburban settings. So as not to compromise any synagogue's security protocol, the identities of synagogues has been omitted purposefully.

CREATING A HOLY SPACE: THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY IN THE MAKING OF A MISHKAN

Making the Mishkan

The first key element for a congregation to be one that is warm and welcoming is the creation of a holy space – the mishkan. The concept is introduced and the requirements for construction are described in parshiot Terumah, Vayak'heil and Pekudei.

In Parashah Terumah (Ex. 25:1-27:19), God instructs Moses on the building of the mishkan. "The Eternal One spoke to Moses, saying: Tell the Israelite people to bring Me gifts; you shall accept gifts for Me from every person whose heart is so moved...And let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them." (Ex. 25:1-8)¹ The balance of that parashah is God describing to Moses the explicit materials, dimensions, etc. for the construction of the physical structure.

Several chapters later, in parashah Vayak'heil (Ex. 35:1-38:20), Moses fulfills God's instructions by assembling the children of Israel and relaying God's commandment. He tells them what gifts to bring and invites "all among you who are skilled come and make all that the Eternal has commanded." (Ex. 35:10)² The children of Israel go out and gather the proscribed items. "Thus the Israelites, all the men and women whose hearts moved them to bring anything for the work that the Eternal, through Moses, had commanded to be done, brought it as a freewill offering to the Lord." (Ex. 35:29)³ Ex. 36:1 and the rest of that parashah describe how the men, whose "hearts are stirred," come to do the work of building.

In Pekudei (Ex. 38:21-40:38), the work is finished "Thus was completed all the work of the Tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting. The Israelites did so; just as the Eternal had commanded Moses, so did they." (Ex. 39:32)⁴ Once the work is finished "The cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the Presence of the Lord filled the Tabernacle." (Ex. 40:34)⁵

So what is the importance of the mishkan? At first glance, one can read these parshiot and think that the importance of the mishkan is the actual physical space – that it must be a certain size, or be made with certain materials, or be of a certain quality. Why else would there be such incredible detail about every facet of the materials and construction? Though the rationales above may differ, the commonality is: 1) having a visible reminder of God's presence and 2) the Israelites' role in creating that place. Both need to exist.

Rabbi Philip Cohen, in his D'var Torah, *The Heartbeat of the World*, explains the importance of the first element: "Without a house, without a place into which all the gifts from Sinai can be placed, without a place for the people to gather and be reminded of what they already know, they are in danger of losing it all. So in the concluding chapters of the Book of Exodus, we occupy ourselves obsessively with the *Mishkan*, the house that will serve as the center of the Jewish ethos. ... In today's world, we have the synagogue."⁶

The second element, that of community involvement, is explained well by Bonnie Roche in her work, *The Mishkan as Metaphor – Form and Function*. "God created this physical world as a dwelling place for man. And in turn, man created the Mishkan as a dwelling place for God. Just as the world that God created needed man to complete it, the dwelling place that man created was not complete without God. This reciprocal act of 'making' signifies the partnership established between God and man...Even in

our dwelling place there is always the reminder that the ‘holiness’ was in the act and not in the thing.... what we see described as the agent of the building is not individual builders but the community.”⁷

The Importance of Community

Certainly, not every congregation has its own building. Some have to rent churches or other facilities. In such instances, how much more challenging it can be to feel a sense of the holy.

Congregation Aleph is in a small town. Their facility was once a church. The congregation is small and haimash, comprised predominantly of people from that town. They all know each other. The kids all go to school together. So how is it that, in what is clearly a former church, they can feel the holiness of Judaism? They (their forebears) built the congregation together in an intentional act with a common vision and sense of purpose.

Though the size of the congregation has not changed, in 2013 the leadership decided that, since their sanctuary could not hold everyone to attend High Holy Day services together, they would rent another facility for the occasion. While everyone could all fit in the one facility at the same time, congregants who attended services missed their familiar surroundings. The services in a neutral facility felt cold. The essence of the mishkan was missing.

To create a space on Earth for holiness and divinity to have a place...“people need to build a sanctuary so that God may dwell with the people.”⁸ It is people who create the opportunity for holiness, not God. It is not one person alone who can create a holy space. It is a whole group of people acting together. In the example above, the congregation did not participate in the creation of the alternative location for services. While the intent was to provide a space where all could be together, the piece that was missing was that there did not appear to be a conscious effort to create a familiar sense of community in the temporary space and thus the heart of the community was missing. It is a reminder that a group of people in a single space does not, in itself, make a community.

“Do not separate yourself from the community” (Pirkei Avot 2:5)

Congregation Bet, a medium sized congregation in a suburban area outside of a large metropolitan area, is an example of involving the community in the creation of their mishkan. They are embarking on a capital campaign to renovate their building. Their Executive Director explained that their physical space is unwieldy. There are lots of entry and exit points. The office staff cannot welcome people as they arrive. Essentially, there is the sense that the building is “an albatross. “ The capital campaign is designed to remedy some of those situations (e.g., the plans call for a single entry with a greeting reception station).

The campaign has been dubbed the "Mikdash" ("Sacred Space / Building") Project. Since their founding 60 years ago, the congregation has grown, there are changing needs, as well as natural deterioration of the existing building. They have concluded that the need to assess “how we are living in our space – and to plan for our future - is great.” Their messaging also makes clear that the name of the project was chosen purposefully. “We have chosen to call our project ‘*Mikdash*’ after the language used in the Torah to describe the ‘sacred space’ created by the Children of Israel during their wilderness wanderings (see **Exodus 25:8**). By using this Hebrew term we are grounding this project in our core values as a Jewish community. The space that we will create together is not simply ‘bricks and mortar.’ This is our home – a place where relationships are nurtured, tradition is handed down from one generation to the next, celebrations are shared, and where we are invited to experience holiness as a community.”

It is interesting to note that the leadership has expressly incorporated Jewish texts into their efforts. They are explicit in modeling the lessons from the Exodus parshiot cited at the beginning of this chapter by making a concerted effort to invite the congregation to help in the building of their Mikdash. That is evident not just in their words but by their actions. For instance, they scheduled a specific time for members to meet the architects and project managers, see the plans, etc. But they did not stop there. They went beyond by creating a special video invitation featuring their rabbis so it is not just an effort by the business leaders of the congregation but also by the spiritual leaders. The theme is carried out in their website, social media, online and hard copy newsletters, and other messaging systems. The intentionality is evident and in that intentionality are the seeds of a successful Jewish community.

THE IMPORTANCE OF WELCOMING

“He who welcomes his fellow-man is as one who welcomes the Shekinah.” (Y. Erubin, 5, 1)

In the chapter above, we explored the creation of a holy space and the importance of community in making that happen. A core element of creating the community necessary for the building of a mishkan is the attribute of being welcoming, known as "hachnasat orchim." As Ron Wolfson explains in his popular book *The Spirituality of Welcoming* "the mitzvah of hachnasat orchim, the welcoming of guests, is ranked among the most important spiritual imperatives in Judaism."⁹

Abraham – the Model of Hospitality

Probably the most well known figure of hospitality is Abraham and the best known parashah comes from Vayeira (Gen. 18:1-22:24). Abraham is 99 years old. He has just become the first Jew. He is in his tent, in the heat of the desert, recovering from circumcision.

“The Eternal appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre as he was sitting at the entrance of the tent at about the hottest time of the day. Looking up, he saw: lo - three men standing opposite him! Seeing [them], he ran from the entrance of the tent to meet them, and, bowing down to the ground, he said, ‘My lords, if I have found favor in your sight, please do not pass your servant by. Let a little water be brought; then wash your feet and recline under a tree, and let me bring a bit of bread and you can restore yourselves. Then you can go on – now that you have come across your servant.’” (Genesis 18:1-8)¹⁰

And what is the result of this kindness to strangers? Abraham is blessed. He is married to Sarah, who is barren and long past the age of childbearing. But God appears to them, announcing that Sarah will indeed bear a son. And, miraculously, this comes to pass.¹¹

General Considerations for Welcoming

Much of Wolfson’s book is describing his visits to different synagogues (and other types of institutions) and his observations about how (and how well) each place engages in the act welcoming. Many congregations pride themselves on saying they are “warm and welcoming” but the experience does not always match the words. Being welcoming is not about a moment in time, it is about a range of things that makes someone feel comfortable or not comfortable in their surroundings. For instance, synagogues built in the early twentieth century still reflect the church architecture, which many of this generation find off-putting and unwelcoming.¹² Other synagogues have undergone renovations and/or have changed substantially since their original construction. Due to changes in how buildings are used, there is now often more than one entryway. Members and frequent visitors may know how to navigate the building (though not necessarily), but first-time or infrequent visitors often do not. They may not even know which door they are to use for entry.

Congregation Gimmel, a medium sized congregation in a residential area, built their current facility in the late 1950's. The original focus of the building was intended to be the religious school and so the layout of the building reflects that. What were to be the "main doors" face the front street and lead into the classroom wings. The synagogue office also is immediately off those front doors. The main restrooms are in the classroom corridors. The sanctuary, chapel, library, lounge and social halls are on a separate hallway. There are small single restrooms at the end of that hallway. There is a bank of entry doors at the end of that hallway right outside the worship spaces. Those entry doors are the actual main doors for the majority of activities, including Shabbat services, meetings, and religious school. It

also is how visitors access the main parking lot. The original "main doors" are rarely utilized. The Ritual Committee Chair, who has been a member for eight years and who helped start their greeter team, only recently realized there were other restrooms besides the ones by the sanctuary and chapel because there were no signs, and she had never had any reason to enter the classroom wing. It was an important lesson for the congregation, who had never given any thought to this previously.

The Importance of First Impressions

Despite the challenges of architecture, geography, financial resources, depth of security, every congregation can create a sense of warmth and welcome. Welcoming requires attention to details and to full community involvement. There are some things, like location or physical structure, that congregations cannot do anything about at all (or not easily) so it is important to pay special attention to things that can be managed.

The first key is in the greeting people receive at their initial point of contact. An obvious example is what happens when someone calls the synagogue during normal business hours. Do they get a person or do they get a machine? Talking to someone provides an opportunity for engagement and warmth. It is an entry that can largely be controlled because staff can be trained on how to greet people whether they are talking with them on the phone, in person, or through an intercom.

Because of the acts of terrorism and spate of shootings in the last 14 years, many synagogues that once had open doors all of the time have begun locking them all or some of the time – especially if they have a school. In instances where a visitor is going to encounter a locked door, staff has to convey that sense of greeting through the intercom and then make sure that the greeting continues once inside the building. A common practice is to make sure that a staff person is present to greet people once they come inside.

In many urban areas, synagogues have had to utilize guard stations so that is a person's first impression. Synagogue Dalet, a medium sized congregation located in an urban setting, utilizes a guard station at their entryway. That potentially cold first impression is immediately countered by the fact that there is a welcome center right inside the front door. They have a reception desk, couches, chairs, and tables. The gift shop, which is right off this central lobby, has an espresso bar. Their Executive Director explains that during the day, you will find a lot of the preschool parents sitting with their laptop and using wifi. This environment is very inviting and succeeds in creating a sense of warmth and comfort. "We clear who gets in but once in, there is a warm inviting place."

Congregations may have an easier time controlling the greeting people get when they call or visit the synagogue during normal business hours since staff can be trained on how it should be done and the feeling to be expressed. A greater challenge is how to welcome people at other times, most especially for Shabbat, because that is when people come who are unfamiliar with the synagogue.

"Welcoming a wayfarer is an essential part of hospitality" (Zohar Hadash, I, 25a)

A number of congregations have tried to create some kind of formalized greeting program for Shabbat Services. In some, the role falls to staff; in others it is principally congregants and lay leaders and in some, it is a blend.

Executive Directors who attend services on a fairly regular basis tend to enjoy greeting because they like the opportunity to see and schmooze with members, and ensure that congregants and guests are

properly welcomed. They are the ones who are most likely to know the majority of people and be prepared to handle any situation that arises.

At Congregation Hey, the staff is large enough that they can take turns covering services. Their Executive Director reports that the importance of welcoming is taken seriously. He has 8-9 office staff and they all are scheduled to do 2-3 services; there are maintenance staff for back-up.

While they have greeters, they are limited because they are great at greeting and schmoozing but are reluctant to handle controversy. For services, the doors are locked. The Executive Director and a guard stand at the front 15 minutes ahead of time to let people in, after which they re-lock the doors and staff sit in front to assist late arrivals. Volunteers are not used because they would let everyone in rather than use the intercom and question the person if they do not recognize them.

The Executive Director of Congregation Dalet had a similar experience. He wanted to train the greeters on the use of an AED, etc. but he got pushback from the ushers. They just wanted to “usher” – which was to be social and schmooze.

Our colleague Larry Glickman, in his FTA Thesis, *Administering Spirituality* also found examples of this. At a large congregation he interviewed, b'nai mitzvah families are required to serve as greeters the weekend before their own family's simcha. The Executive Director feels their overall welcoming program is not successful. Although the families show up at their appointed date, they are likely to be people who are not strongly engaged in the congregation and are unfamiliar with much of what happens so cannot be effective in welcoming and often cannot help when issues arise.

On the other hand, where volunteers sign up and coordinate the program, staff's presence is less critical because the congregants themselves are fulfilling their roles.¹³ Just like in the building of the mishkan, where the community is involved and accepts the responsibility and takes it on willingly, the program can be successful.

Beyond First Impressions – the Minhag of Welcoming All

Besides paying attention to first impressions, the other key element to creating that sense of warmth is how people are treated once inside. Judaism teaches that we have an obligation to love all people and to welcome all people, regardless of any characteristic. Wolfson describes this as a "synagogue of relationships."¹⁴

This imperative is rooted in parashah Ekev: "You too must befriend the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." (Deut. 10:19)¹⁵

Rabbi Henry Jay Karp, does a particularly beautiful job of explaining the concept in his blog *Hachnasat Orchim: Welcoming the Stranger as a Jewish Virtue*. "The Torah is constantly concerned about the well being of the stranger...That concern is based upon the fact that of all people, we as Jews should know what it feels like, and what it means, to be a stranger. We know what it is like to be on the outside, looking in. We know what it is like to sometimes feel excluded or ignored or even worse, and we do not like it. If we do not like being the stranger – if we do not like being treated that way; as somehow less than others – then from our unpleasant experiences we should learn to do better and to be better when we find the tables reversed; when we are the hosts and others are the strangers. If we do not like to be made to feel unwelcome, then it is incumbent upon us to go out of our way to welcome others. And, as the midrash about the old man instructs, it should not matter whether or not we agree with those

others. It should not matter whether or not they are like us or dramatically different from us. For in the end, as different as we may be, they, like us, are still God's children and should be treated accordingly... As Abraham's home was welcoming to strangers, so should every Jewish home be welcoming to strangers. As we welcome strangers into our homes, so should we, as Jews, welcome strangers into our synagogues."¹⁶

Our relationships with those outside the synagogue, especially those from other faith traditions, can become extremely important in helping to ensure the safety of those inside the synagogue.

This principle is highly evident for those synagogues that house schools which are open to the community and include a non-Jewish student body. Congregation Vav is a small synagogue in a residential setting outside a large metropolitan area. They began renting a portion of their building to a Christian Academy three years ago. Although there were some Muslim and other families who would not send their child to the Academy because it was located in a synagogue, their Executive Director reports that, overall, the arrangement helped things be better community-wise because the synagogue was less foreign to the non-Jewish community.

While our programs and tactics may change over the years, and the leadership may be more welcoming at some periods than others, it is a fundamental principle that governs how synagogues must operate today. It is in this framework that we approach the challenge of security.

JEWISH LAWS REGARDING SECURITY

“Seek peace, and pursue it.” (Psalms 34:15)

“When one destroys a single individual, it is as if that person destroyed the whole world.” (Sanhedrin 4:5)

The Danger of Complacency

In Judges, we find the story of Dan. The tribe was seeking a territory in which to settle, so they send five of the men to spy on the land. The spies come to Laish and there they observe “the people in it dwelling carefree, after the manner of the Sidonians, a tranquil and unsuspecting people.” The spies return and announce “Let us go at once and attack them! For we found that the land was very good, and you are sitting idle! Don’t delay; go and invade the land and take possession of it, for God has delivered it into your hand. When you come, you will come to an unsuspecting people.” (Judges 18:7-10)

“If we are able to interevene, but remain indifferent, we are responsible for the consequences.” (Tanna de-Be Eliyahu Rabbah, 11)

The lesson we draw from this story and the Talmudic quotation is that we cannot be complacent. In today's society, there are an increasing number of terrorist threats and episodes of violence. While the environment may be more extreme today than it once was, the Torah recognizes there are times when we will face situations where there is a potential for harm. So how does one fulfill the Jewish mandate to pursue peace and to save a life? The answer is in taking affirmative steps to protect human life, using, first and foremost, peaceful means to do so.

The Obligation to Protect People and Property

In Ki Tetze, we are taught: “When you build a new house, you should make a parapet for your roof, so that you do not bring bloodguilt on your house if anyone should fall from it.” (Deut. 22:8)¹⁷ This commandment is understood by the Talmud as a general directive to remove any safety hazard (Bava Kamma 15b; Shulchan Aruch CM 427:8) The Talmud in Bava Kama 46a makes the following comment, “Rav Natan says, ‘From where do we know that you cannot raise a ferocious dog in your home or leave a broken ladder in your home? From the verse in Deut. 22:8 – ‘So that you will not come to bring blood upon your household.’” From these passages, we can understand that we have a responsibility to ensure our homes (including our synagogue home) are safe.¹⁸ In general, safety regulations are treated with far greater stringency than any other section of halacha (YD 116:7).

“He who raises his hand against a fellow-man, even though he does not smite him, is called a man of wickedness.” (Sanhedrin, 58)

While we are obligated to take prudent steps to protect property and people, we are also cautioned not to exceed reasonable measures given the circumstances. Synagogues located in large metropolitan areas, that have high profile residents who live in close proximity, and where incidents have occurred tend to have elaborate security because they are at elevated risk.

For instance, there are numerous congregations that have armed individuals in and around their synagogue because that is appropriate for their environment. In his thesis, Larry Glickman describes his visit to a synagogue that is located directly across the street from President Barack Obama’s house.

Secret Service were present to make sure that certain spaces outside were not entered and visitors were redirected to correct entry points.¹⁹

Congregation Zayin has two campuses - a large one in a urban setting and the other in a bedroom community (where a high profile celebrity lives). The Jewish community there is especially tight since there was a shooting at their local Jewish Federation office. Because of their environment, the synagogue has extensive security, including fences, gates, cameras, key fobs and key cards for monitored access. Building access is heavily controlled. Private security and off duty police and state troopers also are utilized. Whenever an event will be attended by kids or a large crowd, a guard service is used. Guards are armed, licensed, trained and bonded. The Preschool has its own armed guard and a fenced and gated parking lot.

Both police jurisdictions have used the synagogue's campuses for training their SWAT and watch teams. They have done simulated nighttime searches with their dogs so that in the unlikely event that they ever had to respond, they would know what they are looking for and how to find it. They also have maps of and information about the campuses. The Executive Director makes it a point to keep a close relationship with both departments. They have brought in several of the ranking officers and street policemen to speak to staff and have conducted many trainings, including one on what to do in case of an active shooter. "I encourage all my colleagues to get to know their local police departments really well. As we see all too often, the world is a dangerous place."

Congregation Hey is located in a very upscale neighborhood a few miles from the downtown of a large city. The synagogue is housed in a large building, situated off of a major street. The areas where there are children (i.e., classrooms, playground) are surrounded by a solid block wall. The preschool has a separate entrance from the main synagogue entrance. They have staff and a security guard at each of those doors. The doors are locked and people get buzzed in during the day. If someone said they were visiting from another synagogue but did not "look right," staff would tell them to have their synagogue call and make arrangements because they are "cautious." They do not ask to see ID because the feeling is that is useless.

The leadership has been very concerned about security because of an international story involving a Muslim who lives in the area. There is a big Muslim community and the synagogue, which includes a large preschool, is one of the largest Jewish institutions in that region. Their leadership has gone back and forth about what is too much. They have had security professionals and the police conduct evaluations. The security committee has looked at the reports. Some say they need to increase, others do not. Some say they need more guards. There has been a similar debate over whether to have armed vs. unarmed guards. The security committee met multiple times and decided what is right for them. Their Executive Director explains "We want to be safe but not push non-Jewish families away. We don't want to scare people." So they work to find the balance. The current decision is to put an emphasis on visual deterrence. They have unarmed guards in uniform walk the campus all day -- one at the preschool entrance and one at the synagogue entrance. If anything is going on in the community that might pose an increased security risk, they get local police to be a visible deterrent. Given the volatile environment, they assess their system on a weekly basis.

Synagogue Dalet is a medium sized congregation in an urban area. Their facility is surrounded by a wall. There is a single entry at which there is a guard station, providing visible deterrence. Guests are required to present ID and are given a sticker. The guard logs who the person is seeing, time, etc. If staff knows someone is coming, they notify the guard. If someone presents that is not expected, the

guard will check with staff before allowing entrance. They have had homeland security and the local police evaluate the property. The reports have found they are in better shape than the vast majority of places.

The Congregation did make a change in their security staffing last year. They have had one guard for a long time and, in early 2013, the Board decided to add a second one. The primary questions were whether or not to arm the person and whether or not to use an off duty police officer. The security committee (which includes law enforcement and a police officer) made the unanimous decision that the person should be armed. It went to the Board and they rejected the recommendation, by a small margin. The current Executive Director was not present at the time so does not have firsthand knowledge of the rationale. What is still evident is that it was one of the most uncomfortable times for the Board. After the killing of a rabbi in their community, when the question was posed whether they should revisit the armed vs. unarmed issue, the feeling was that it has not been long enough and they do not want to reopen the wound.

There was a similar debate at Congregation Gimmel about whether to require the use of metal detectors at the High Holy Days. The medium sized congregation is in a residential setting. The question arose at a Board meeting in 2013 when they were discussing the planned new security protocol for the holidays. A Board member had returned from spending a year in Washington, DC. When she and her family had attended the holidays at a synagogue in DC, she found everyone was required to go through a metal detector. As with the question of armed guards above, the decision was made that the use of metal detectors was not appropriate at the synagogue at this time. At the same time, there was recognition that, given what is happening in the world, it was not inconceivable that in the future, the leadership may reach a different conclusion.

Different Forms of Self Defense

“There is a time for war and a time for peace.” (Ecclesiastes 3:8b)

“Thine own life comes before the life of thy fellows.” (Baba Metzia, 62)

Only when peaceful solutions are not possible, then Judaism allows for war. When Jews collectively are threatened, we are required to engage in self-defense, also known as an "Obligatory War (*Milhemet Mitzvah*).”

As Rabbi Chaim Steinmetz explains in *Jewish Reflections on War and Peace*: "In the Jewish tradition, self defense is a moral obligation. The Torah allows people to defend their property from a thief even if this will cause the conflict to escalate into a physical battle. If there is reason to assume that the thief will use lethal force to seize the property, the owner may use physical force, and even kill the thief if necessary to protect himself (Exodus 22:1, Sanhedrin 72a). There are two rationales for allowing self defense. The first is practical; without the ability to use lethal force to stop the actions of aggressors, anarchy would reign (Chinnuch 600). The second rationale challenges the moral assumptions of nonviolence. It asserts that it is impossible to equate the lives of the aggressor and the victim; we have as a rule 'that God's quest is the interests of the hunted' (Ecclesiastes 3:15). The life of the aggressor and the victim are not of equal value; if only one will survive, it is our obligation to make certain that it is the innocent person, the victim, who will survive (Cf. Rashi to Exodus 22:1). For this reason, the Jewish tradition considers pacifism in the face of aggression to be immoral. Refusing to fight evil is to be party

to evil.... if you don't help the victim, you are an ally of the aggressor. If a person refuses to defend himself, he allows evil to triumph."²⁰

When engaged in war, Jewish ethics requires us to balance the value of maintaining human life with the necessity of fighting a war. In *The Internal Enemy on 9/11*, Rabbi Laura Geller provides insight into this balance: "Rashi explains that war often leads a soldier to want to take a woman captive. The Torah is warning us: this will lead to having a hated wife and that will lead to having a rebellious child. The warning seems to be: Don't go out to war unless there is no other alternative, because war leads to personal and communal disruption and unpredictable and costly collateral damage....These verses force us to focus on what war does to us. It cautions us to not respond quickly to any given stimulus, but to take time, be deliberative and understand there are lifelong consequences to actions that occur during war."²¹

Self defense can take many different forms. There are obvious ones like the use of armed security, and the practice of locking entry doors and requiring people to be screened and buzzed in. Many preschools and day schools use some form of key code for parents to gain access. There can be other more subtle forms of self-defense. The use of tickets, passes, name badges or some other form of pre-approval at the High Holy Days, is a common form of self-defense. Not allowing backpacks or tote bags into the building or requiring searches is another form of self defense. As is having to turn people away when their motives and/or presentation are questionable and cannot be verified.

BALANCING THE GOALS OF WARMTH AND WELCOMING WITH SECURITY

Being Prepared

“Rabbi Yannai would not board a ferry until he had examined it as to its safety.

“Rabbi Zeira would not pass between trees on a windy day.

“Rab and Samuel would not use a short-cut as they had to pass a ruined wall, even though it had stood for many years.

“Rabbi Yannai said: ‘A person should never take chances in a place of danger and depend upon rescue by a miracle. Even if a miracle does occur, his reward in the World-to-Come is thereby lessened.’”

(Shabbat, 32)

In the wake of national and recurring world events these last few years, congregations have realized the need to do something. We cannot ignore the fact that the environment has become more violent and attacks are more frequent. We need to be prepared.

To minimize the effects of physical environments, leadership first needs to be aware of limitations and opportunities for improvement. Having security professionals (e.g., FBI and local law enforcement) conduct a walk-through (audit) of one’s facility, review systems and structure, and make recommendations for improvement, is a great first step.

Common recommendations (many of which have been given in the examples above) include:

- Have uniform police or security guards at appointed times
- Keep the building and parking lots well lit at all times
- Keep a buffer zone around the facility
- Install motion sensors around the perimeter of the building as well as inside
- Have cameras monitor the parking lots, playground, as well as interior spaces
- Install a gate or wall around the facility.
- Barricade playgrounds with concrete planters and/or install a stockade fence to screen
- Use metal detectors
- Replace doors with tempered glass or wire mesh glass
- Install glass break alarms
- Lock doors to classrooms and offices
- Have the shades down in all occupied rooms so someone cannot see in from outside
- Identify hardened rooms where people can go to be locked in
- Do not allow anyone to come in that you cannot clear
- Require everyone to wear a badge or some form of visible ID
- Create layers of security

The list truly is endless. The question becomes what should leadership do with the list of possibilities.

In the URJ’s “Making Congregants Feel Safe and Secure While Participating in Congregational Life” the general recommendation is as follows: “When congregational leaders consider how to respond to any real or perceived external threat, it is important to be clear about the motivation for that decision, as well as the desired outcome, and the financial, physical, and emotional impact of that decision. Rather than being driven by fear, media-hype, our societal desire for instant gratification or 'sound-bite

solutions', we must remember that our task is to respond rationally to irrational acts, that hysteria does not equal vigilance, and that realistically, what we are best able to provide is a sense of security."²²

They recognized that congregational responses to events vary widely. "Clearly no one plan is right for every congregation. What is critical is that congregational leaders make decisions that are informed by rational thinking, and Jewish values; decisions that are prudent, and not reactive, and decisions that do not place an insurmountable financial burden on the congregation, while providing only the illusion of safety and security. The Talmud reminds us that 'an emergency situation does not constitute proof' (Sukkah 31a-b), so we should not allow exceptions for extraordinary circumstances to set precedents for ordinary occasions."²³ The advice for congregational leaders is to consider 3 primary questions:

- Are our decisions consistent with the goals, mission and vision of the congregation?
- Have we ensured that our decisions do not create prejudice or reinforce negative stereotypes?
- Do our decisions reflect our congregational values and help to strengthen a well-run, spiritually fulfilling, sacred congregational community

The Executive Director in the community where the rabbi was killed notes: "All decisions have a business aspect and a Jewish ethics side. Security is more business. The Jewish part comes in the responsibility to take care of our families. Because of the times, we have to be prudent because we are Jewish and we have to be more vigilant on the security side. The killing of the Rabbi recently was just 10 minutes away. So people felt we have a problem. It was a knee jerk reaction. Security decisions can't be knee jerk. It requires educating people. We need to be prudent and to be secure but there is a limit."

As the ADL notes in its publication *Can Jewish Institutions Be Secure and Welcoming at the Same Time?* enhanced security does not have to come at the expense of an open and welcoming environment. Nor does it have to come at the expense of a balanced budget. They suggest that creating a secure environment is a three-step process: Assessment. Planning. Implementation. "It is a process that involves every member of the community. Everyone, from leaders to congregants, must learn to think security."²⁴

The Role of Community

"All Israelites are mutually accountable to each other." (Shebuot, 39a)

As we know from Israel, we cannot rely on law enforcement alone or make our synagogues into prisons. Rather, we need to make our congregations aware of the need for security and teach our staff and congregants that each and every one has a role to play. As noted above, we are all responsible for each other. Or as we hear in the media from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security "If you see something, say something."

Rabbi Zauderer in his D'var Torah *The Torah Army* makes a critical point: "We need an army to protect us...since we are not allowed to rely on miracles. But let's not forget that...there are many different jobs in the army, some of which are very dangerous...and some of which are not dangerous...but all of which are necessary and vital in maintaining...security."²⁵

In 2013, part of increasing security for the holidays at Congregation Gimmel involved nearly tripling the number of greeters. In addition to uniformed police outside, the number of volunteers stationed outside to welcome people was increased. More volunteers were engaged to check tickets and those

working in more remote areas were given additional security tools to ensure they could summon help if they needed. The number of people who sit at the entry doors into the worship space were doubled and greeters were added at the less-attended services on Yom Kippur afternoon and evening. There were new positions created of "in-charges", "docs on call" and "precinct captains" who were stationed strategically throughout the entire worship space and for every service to ensure there were people whose responsibility it was to look out for anything that needed attention and to be a first responder. A person was added to the "will call" station. There were greeters whose sole responsibility was to encourage people to attend the Rosh Hashanah kiddushes, and to the break fast at the end of Yom Kippur. There were people assigned to oversee the borrowing of prayerbooks, tallitot and assisted listening devices. No matter their station, EVERYONE's role was twofold: security and welcoming.

The success of their endeavor was highly rooted in the fact that volunteers were told that there were lots of roles to play where they could be helpful and they were not going to be assigned a role for which they were uncomfortable. There were so many new roles to play and opportunities to volunteer, that everyone could find a job for which they felt comfortable and that was a contribution. While there were different functions, all were considered "greeters." Everyone understanding the grand scheme helped them to understand that each is functioning as both security and welcoming, and that the two aspects complement each other. At a training to go over the new roles and systems, the Rabbi also made the point that serving as a greeter was a form of prayer.

While the Board had expected pushback from the congregation, they were pleasantly surprised by the opposite feedback. They got more calls and emails about the program than ever before and the consistent message from congregants was the sense of amazement, warmth and comfort they felt coming into the building and seeing a sea of greeters at every door all the way down the long corridor and throughout the worship space.

That being said, the system was not without criticism. A congregant wrote to the President complaining that she had wanted to bring a friend, who she categorized as a prospective member, to one of the main services. She had called the office and asked if she could use her husband's ticket for the one service, since he was not planning to attend. She was told that tickets are not transferrable and that she (or her friend) needed to arrange for a ticket. When she questioned this further, she was told that it was for security reasons. In her letter to the President, she questioned how purchasing a ticket was in response to security. The money for the ticket was not a security assessment. Her friend was willing to make a contribution. The President read the letter at the next Board meeting. There was a healthy conversation about the institution's ticket policy, and what had happened in this particular instance. As is often the case in synagogue matters, there were more material facts than were initially apparent. Ultimately, the Board concluded that the existing policy and procedures were correct. It was a lesson not to be too hasty to jump to conclusions. It is important to get all the material facts first. And it is healthy for the Board to re-evaluate the policies and procedures it establishes from time to time and confirm (or not) that they are correct.

Dispelling Fear

"Do not inspire overmuch fear among the members of thy household." (Gittin, 6)

Once leadership makes the decision to increase security, one of the biggest challenges is how to communicate to staff, the congregation and our various constituencies (e.g., preschool parents) about increased security measures without invoking fear.

A Facility Manager at Congregation Het found that training became a critical piece for dispelling fear among their staff. When Sandy Hook occurred, the leadership was already in the process of redoing their security. In the summer of 2013, they finished their plan, which covers a broad range of emergency situations (e.g., security, active shooter, chemical spills, etc.) and they began implementation that November. Prior to this, they had no formal plan – there were no details on how to respond nor rehearsals, other than the monthly fire drills, tornado, etc. required for school. In the first 6 months of 2014, they conducted training for staff on every piece so all know the procedures. The Manager did the first training for regular staff in the spring on code words and evacuation procedures. There was training on responsibilities for fire/tornado drills, the location of panic buttons, what to do in case of emergency. Another training was done by police on active shooter situations. This was a community training done for several area congregations and schools. There are plans to repeat that training on a regular basis.

The Executive Director at Congregation Hey has weekly meetings with the President to assess security and decide on whether changes are warranted. At his staff meetings, he shares these security reports. On a quarterly basis, they go through role plays. On a regular basis, they go over the drills so they become routine. When there is increased tension locally, nationally or internationally, they talk security every other day. The feeling is that they need to be on their toes all the time because they have an obligation to protect anyone in the building.

When this same synagogue first started with police on site, there were some non-Jewish preschool parents who were concerned. The Executive Director and Preschool Director met with parents and described the situation and said it was not because of a specific concern. "They take security as their utmost concern and want to ensure the children are protected." They then had a security fair and had the police and fire department bring vehicles so everyone could climb on and in them. That made the parents feel more comfortable. In this instance, the leadership reacted to parent concerns but did not change what they did.

At Congregation Gimmel, when staff first started preparing for the High Holy Days and determined that additional security precautions were necessary and thus, as described above, the decision was made to triple the number of greeters, the challenge was daunting. One of the biggest concerns was how to communicate to both the congregation as a whole as well as the greeters about the increased security measures without invoking fear.

"A man should be prudent in fear, and should remember that a soft answer turns away wrath and increases peace." (Berakot, 17)

The best advice for allaying that fear came from one of the trainers, a retired police officer who also is a congregant. He taught that how you say something, makes all the difference. He gave as an example, when a greeter was facing a potentially awkward situation (e.g., having to ask to look into a backpack), say the message with a smile. More often than not, it will disarm the person.

That advice is consistent with LAPD Officer Bob Rothman's recommendation in *Partnering with Government and Law Enforcement: A Professional's Point of View*. "Security and customer service should go hand-in-hand. Yet security must be competent and professional and often pick up on things that most people wouldn't notice. ..People need to be aware of what's going on around them at all times and also be aware of what's happening around the world. I always suggest using the Four Seasons Hotel model. Security is enhanced by challenging people in a friendly manner. For instance, ask if

people need directions or where they are headed, and who they are there to see. There are many ways to be effective in a customer service-like manner."²⁶

The Executive Director of Congregation Dalet spoke about how this concept relates to a recent change in their security staffing. They had a long time person that everyone knows and loves. After much deliberation, the Board decided to add a second person. They ended up hiring a person from a security company that the Executive Director categorized as "fine" but he did not find that acceptable. The Director wanted "exceptional" -- "Someone with a more customer service vs. security mindset." He ended up hiring a congregant who was a greeter, and Board member and it ended up being an "unbelievably right fit."

"They shall sit every person under their vine and under their fig tree, and none shall make them afraid."
(Micah 4.4)

As the ADL in the publication *Protecting Your Jewish Institution: Security Strategies for Today's Dangerous World* suggests: "In order to prevent resistance to or misunderstanding of security measures taken or not taken by your institution, such decisions must include input from management, lay leadership, staff and other constituents. Information-sharing and participation are vital components to building consensus. When people understand the justification behind increased security measures, they are more likely to be supportive, active participants and, perhaps most importantly, less fearful. Such support and participation from the members of your institution is critical to the success of a security initiative."²⁷

The Executive Director of Congregation Bet reports they used to have an open facility. Security ideas would come from the security chair and many of those suggestions were overturned. Following Sandy Hook, the full Board got involved in the discussion. The congregation was invited to give feedback to the Board. It was in that context that changes were made.

The leadership decided that they needed to create a more impenetrable facility, especially in light of the fact that they have a children's center. Ultimately, the decision was made to lock the doors and require visitors to ring a bell and use visual recognition before entry for the main synagogue and use a key fob system for the school. The preschool has someone stationed at the doors to greet families as they arrive; the religious school also follows that model. They added other traditional forms of security as well (e.g., cameras). In the process, there was a conscious effort to achieve the balance of presenting an open and welcoming environment and, at the same time, having locked doors. Budgets and financial resources were and are restricting. They found the key to their success in messaging. Using their bulletin and e-news, they communicated to the congregation that they are locking doors and it was talked about in light of Sandy Hook.

Their inspiration came from Pirke Avot:

"If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, who am I? If not now, when?"
(Ethics of the Fathers, 1:14)

The Executive Director explains "All take seriously the responsibility to our own safety. We need to make sure people are not put in harm's way and that we don't block some who want to enter. We're not just the school – we're a school and community."

Here is one of the notices they sent:

“Over the past few weeks, like many other schools and religious institutions across the country, we have been re-examining and refining our security protocols, with a focus on how we manage and monitor access to our building. For reasons we hope are obvious, and necessary, perimeter security will be enhanced in the near future. While this is a work in process, the need to identify and/or monitor who enters the building or not, has become more paramount. We hope you will join us in both recognizing this need, and supporting the solutions to achieve new goals.... As we make these enhancements, we ask your patience. We will be sending another email with information on entrance procedures once our hardware and policies are in place. In the meantime, if you come to the Temple during a non-peak time you may find the main Temple door locked; in this case, please ring the buzzer and we will come to the door to greet you and let you in. Thank you for your understanding and assistance as we strive to provide an environment that is both safe and welcoming for our entire community.”

Increasing security for the High Holy Days is fairly standard protocol among synagogues. It is not uncommon to include notices with their high holy day mailing so congregants know what to expect. A sample from Congregation Tet says:

PLEASE NOTE – FOR YOUR SAFETY DURING THE HIGH HOLY DAYS:

- We will have heightened security, including extra security personnel
- Allow extra time to pass through security
- Do not bring backpacks, knives of any size, tear gas or mace
- There will be random ID checks (passes are not transferable)
- Food collection bins for the Food Bank will be located on the sidewalk and manned by security personnel
- Check our website for updates

In the example above from our colleague Larry’s experience visiting the synagogue located across from the President’s house where there were Secret Service, that might have seemed to be an intimidating place to be. It was not, because once inside, there was someone to welcome everyone. As he points out “even in such a high security environment, members of the congregation were used to the extra level of security and guests actually found the entire experience very comfortable and reassuring. It illustrates how a community can find a way to be warm and welcoming, even when there are armed guards in bullet proof vests surrounding your building.”²⁸ Anyone who has visited Israel, where police openly walk around with guns, can completely understand this point.

The synagogue above was not the only one successful in marrying security and welcoming. At the synagogue where there is a security person behind a desk in the lobby, their Executive Director noted it was a priority of the leadership that “their security person was a ‘consistent presence’ whom everyone would know.”²⁹ The key is in making the congregation aware of the security and helping them understand that it is for them to feel safe. Being able to say we want you to feel safe actually supports the idea of providing community and warmth.

Minhag Hamakom: The Essential Factor in Balancing The Options

Following an audit, leadership certainly would consider financial resources in trying to determine how far to go with capital expenses. Those would be prioritized and become part of an ongoing work in progress. Many of the things leadership initially may choose to do might cost no or little money (e.g., training staff to be conscious to certain situations and how to respond, changing the process for handling guests and contractors, making available additional ways for staff and congregants to call for emergency help). Other recommendations, though they may not cost any money, leadership may decide not to do because it is not in keeping with that congregation's culture (e.g., pulling shades on all windows where people are, locking certain spaces in use).

Probably the most important component is that the leadership needs to make their own decisions as to what is right for that particular congregation. Each type of institution and each congregation has its own minhag hamakom (custom of the place) (Baba Metziah 59a-b). What is right for a public school may not be right for a religious school. What is appropriate for a government or office building is not appropriate for a religious institution. What is best for one synagogue will not be for another.

The Executive Director of Congregation Hey explains that, to help them find the balance between security and welcoming, they talk a lot about Jewish principles – how to differentiate themselves from a government building, for instance. Their number one priority is the safety of people. "We're a Jewish institution and so we must be welcoming and open. We don't want people to feel they're in a bank vault. We talk about those two things constantly. Because a lot of their preschool parents are not Jewish, if they see more police, they think something's wrong. Our culture is open and inviting and yet it's in contradiction to what the security reports would tell them. They need to remain consistent with their culture."

The Executive Director believes it is hard to provide the right balance. One tactic they follow is to ensure that anyone serving in a security capacity for them is trained on their synagogue's culture. He will train them on what they are looking for, and watch the person for a period. If someone is not a good fit, they will tell the company the person does not fit their culture. When they need to use police as part of their protocol, they use the same exact people so the individual officers know the congregation. Congregants then find the presence of police comforting rather than scary. The Executive Director says "He has a list of police that are regulars and they get to know each other. If someone is new, he wants them to come and work with someone that's been there. People feel comfortable because they see the same faces all the time."

Congregation Tet is a large congregation located in the heart of a metropolitan area, in a high risk environment and so they are on elevated alert all the time and have an extensive security plan. They have a Security Director and always have two security guards. There are bollards on the sidewalks to prevent vehicles from getting close to the building. Everyone is stopped at the gate and has to go through a metal detector. During office hours, the guard questions visitors why they are there. The guards have access to the appointment calendar so they know who is an expected guest, and also can check the membership list. Prospective members make appointments, which are put on the calendar for the guard to see. If someone drops by without appointment, the guard calls the front desk to confirm staff availability. Staff always wears badges. Guests are given a dated badge to wear. Even preschool parents are given badges. All staff is instructed to wear their own badge and to stop anyone who is not wearing one. That being said, local and world events affect their security, so, for instance, after a shooting at a local Jewish institution, they increased their security.

Their Membership Director states that their security guards have to be able to properly greet people as well as perform security. They have clear expectations about that and choose their security personnel carefully. They had a security guard who the Director felt did not handle guests in a welcoming way so was removed. "Security is important but so is welcoming people."

Other synagogues may have guards but have expressly chosen not to have such personnel on a daily basis (though might on the High Holy Days) because given their circumstances and minhag, that is felt to be excessive.

At Congregation Yod, a medium sized congregation just 20 miles away from the one above, located in a suburban area, the leadership expressly decided not to have a similar system. Their Executive Director explains that their local Jewish Community Relations Council has a security expert who recommended the facility be behind a fence and gate –but they decided not to do that because it was deemed excessive. They use a system common in many synagogues of buzzers, cameras, monitored access. There are specific times that doors are unlocked. Guards and police are utilized for certain occasions but not on a daily basis. After Sandy Hook, they had the FBI and police conduct security audits and they did consider additional security measures but ultimately decided against material changes. The feeling by the leadership there echoes what many leaders have concluded: "Sandy Hook was a secure building and someone shot their way in so if someone wants to do that, you cannot stop them." The leadership felt that the systems in place reflected their value systems and were appropriate for their situation at that time – more was deemed excessive.

The leadership at small Congregation Vov , although located in an area in decline, came to the same conclusion as Congregation Yod. Even after Sandy Hook, they chose not to make substantial changes in their security system. Their current set-up, which includes cameras, panic hardware, and a buzzer system, is the type that is common in many synagogues. The Executive Director, other staff and lay leadership, looked at what they are not doing (e.g., armed guard, police presence at times other than High Holy Days) and felt changes were not warranted. Again, the sense was that if somebody wants to shoot their way in, there is nothing to prevent that. The systems they have in place are what is warranted for that them at that time.

The Importance of Jewish Principles in Decisionmaking

All of the congregations above used Jewish principles in some aspect of defining their congregational approach to security – some expressly and more deeply than others. In reviewing security manuals from a variety of congregations, of different sizes and geographical areas, including some from the synagogues above, it was surprising how many did not expressly incorporate Jewish principles or texts, not even in an introduction, so that the manuals of these synagogues could not be distinguished from one that might be in place at a school or some other institution.

The one notable exception comes from Temple Beth El in Providence, Rhode Island. Their Executive Director, Judy Moseley, spearheaded their congregation's effort to overhaul their security systems. The end result was an extraordinary manual, which Judy submitted in fulfillment of her FTA in 2013. As evidenced by their Emergency Manual, Jewish texts played an important part in the process. "Safety is a fundamental human desire. We spend a lot of time, energy, and money seeking to ensure that we and our loved ones may live with a sense of peace and security. It doesn't seem that long ago that safety was something many of us took for granted. Yet now many neighborhoods, which at one time were thought of as safe, no longer are. Everywhere we go there is a need for increased security....But safety is

a Torah promise. When God, many years ago, established his covenant with the people of Israel, he promised us safety. If we would live life as God directed, we would have no reason to be afraid.”³⁰

CONCLUSION

Abraham Joshua Heschel instructs: "The teaching of Judaism is the theology of the common deed....The Bible insists that God is concerned with everydayness, with the trivialities of life...The great challenge does not lie in organizing solemn demonstrations, but in how we manage the commonplace."³¹

As Jewish professionals, we understand that (increased) security must be an integral part of our daily existence – our common deed. As noted in earlier chapters, how a congregation achieves that sense of warmth and security at the same time depends on two critical factors: community and welcoming.

“Let all who work for the community, the people, work with them for the sake of heaven, for then the merit of their fathers sustains them, and their righteousness endures forever.” (Pirke Avot 2:2)

“Let your house be open wide and let the poor be members of your household.” (Pirke Avot 1:5)

Developing a security plan that incorporates community and welcoming takes the following elements:

- Input from security professionals
- Education of the congregation
- Opportunities for congregational input and participation
- Training of key personnel
- Modification based on feedback (fluidity of process)
- Policies and procedures based on minhag hamakom
- Guidance from Jewish texts

It is the synagogue leadership’s role and responsibility to ultimately determine what the security and emergency protocols and systems will be at that synagogue. There is no shortage of resource materials to consult. Readers can find a large list in the Bibliography that follows.

There are organizations that deal with general conditions, like Federal Emergency Management Association, and the U.S., Department of Homeland Security. There are additional sources specific to schools, I Love U Guys Foundation, National Association of Independent Schools, U.S. Department of Education. There are agencies that publish materials specific to Jewish institutions: Anti-Defamation League, Secure Community Network, Union for Reform Judaism. There are local and national law enforcement agencies: Federal Bureau of Investigation, local and state police.

NATA also has a boundless supply of resources. Members have shared their security plans. The NATA Spring Journal 2013 was devoted to Security. In it, Executive Director Renee Higer of Temple Emanu-El, Orange Village, OH provided colleagues with an excellent guide for how to develop a plan, which she details in her article, *Today’s Synagogue: Warding Off the Threat Utilizing an Updated Emergency Procedures Manual*. Elyse Hyman, Temple Director of Beth Avodah in Newton Centre, MA, in her article *Training Staff for Crisis Situation* takes colleagues through the steps of preparing staff for emergency preparedness.

Once leadership has determined what protocols are to be followed or systems are to be put in place based on the culture of that synagogue, involving the entire synagogue community is critical. Undoubtedly there will be skeptics and resisters. Some mindsets may need to be changed. Education

through communication is an imperative. The message and how it is said are important. The most important messages we have to give our congregational families are "We are doing this because we want you to be safe." "Everyone has a role to play." That message should come from the top. It should be repeated. And it should be said with a smile.

Just as in the building of the mishkan, it is important to involve as many people from the community as possible in as many different ways as possible. It may mean creating roles that have not existed before. As Executive Directors, we should consider it an opportunity to recruit a wide array of people and involve people in the life of the congregation who are not otherwise involved. Members can be given an opportunity to help and allow them to choose what role and responsibility they are comfortable having and what they are not. In so doing, they become invested in the synagogue beyond this one particular way.

Training and re-training affords everyone the opportunity to understand the master scheme, to learn how their particular role contributes to the whole, and gives them the confidence to do their chosen task.

No system is perfect. Constructive criticism should be embraced as much as positive feedback. They can be used as learning opportunities and for the Board to re-evaluate their policies and procedures. Just because someone may complain, does not mean the systems are incorrect. On the other hand, if the opinion merits a change, be appreciative of the feedback.

The last element of a successful program is to remember that Jews are a people of the Book. As synagogue professionals, we have an obligation to consider Jewish principles in everything we do – even, or perhaps most especially, when deciding questions of security.

Summary

There are no clear cut guidelines for what security procedures and systems to use. Each synagogue is unique. Only through experience, being attuned to the minhag hamakom (culture of the synagogue), appreciating the general threat level of a synagogue's surroundings, can a congregation determine for itself what type of security is necessary and when. The goal is to ensure a sense of warmth and welcome regardless of the system. Security personnel might make people feel safe; they might not make people feel welcome. That is the role of the congregational community.

Everyone participates in the work of the congregation. Some may have more financial resources. Some may have special talents. Some may be outgoing while others are shy. Some are conventional and others non-traditional. Our role as leadership is to celebrate the unique gifts that each individual has to offer and provide them the opportunity to contribute them for the benefit of the congregation. In so doing, we create a holy space where God can dwell.

"Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: What is the meaning of the passage, 'Our feet stood inside your gates, O Jerusalem' (Psalms 122:2)? It means: How were we able to withstand our enemies in war? Because within the gates of Jerusalem the scholars were engaged in Torah study." (Makkos 10a)

Welcoming and community are the necessary partners for a successful security program. And for a synagogue, it must be done through the context of Jewish texts.

END NOTES

¹ *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, Revised Edition, General Editor W. Gunther Plaut. ©2005, 2006 by URJ Press, p.545

² Ibid, p.612

³ Ibid, pp.613–614

⁴ Ibid, p.631

⁵ Ibid p.634

⁶ Cohen, Rabbi Philip, *The Heartbeat of the World, Vayak'heil/P'kudei, Exodus 35:1–40:38* URJ Reform Voices of Torah, March 21, 2009

⁷ Roche, Bonnie, *The Mishkan as Metaphor —Form and Function: On the Transformation of Urban Space*, Cross Currents, Fall 2002, Vol. 52, No 3

⁸ Jewish Meditation Center of Brooklyn, Blog, *Open Your Heart and Build a Mishkan – Parsha Terumah*, February 2011

⁹ Wolfson, Ron. *The Spirituality of Welcoming, How to Transform Your Congregation into a Sacred Community*, Jewish Lights Publishing, 2006 p.45

¹⁰ *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, p. 123

¹¹ Sarason, Richard S., *How Strange the Way of Providence, Vayeira*, Genesis 18:1–22:24, Reform Judaism.org

¹² Wolfson, p. 18-19

¹³ Glickman, Larry, *Administering Spirituality: Through the Lens of Shabbat*, Thesis for Fellow in Temple Administration, 2011, p. 13

¹⁴ Wolfson p. 50

¹⁵ *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, p. 1237

¹⁶ Karp, Rabbi Henry Jay, *HACHNASAT ORCHIM: Welcoming the Stranger as a Jewish Virtue*; blog October 28, 2010

¹⁷ *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, p. 1324

¹⁸ Topolosky Rabbi Uri, *A Taste of Newtown for Shabbat*, Congregation Beth Israel (New Orleans, LA) December 21, 2012.

¹⁹ Glickman, pp. 10-11

²⁰Steinmetz, Rabbi Chaim, *Jewish Reflections on War and Peace*, Jewish Law Commentary, ©2010

²¹Geller, Laura. *The Internal Enemy on 9/11*, Temple Emanuel, (Beverly Hills, CA), reposted September 11, 2012

²² Union for Reform Judaism, *Making Congregants Feel Safe and Secure While Participating in Congregational Life* 2010

²³Ibid.

²⁴Anti-Defamation League, *Can Jewish Institutions Be Secure and Welcoming at the Same Time?* (undated)

²⁵Zauderer, David. *Parshas Terumah (5773) The Torah Army*, Connecting Jews and Judaism ©2013

²⁶Rothman, Bob, *Partnering with Government and Law Enforcement: A Professional's Point of View* NATA Journal Spring 2013

²⁷Anti-Defamation League *Protecting Your Jewish Institution: Security Strategies for Today's Dangerous World* (2005)

²⁸Glickman, p. 11

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Temple Beth El Providence Emergency Manual 2013

³¹ Heschel, Rabbi Abraham Joshua. *I Asked for Wonder*, Crossroads Publishing Co., NY 2007, p. 117

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anti-Defamation League. *Can Jewish Institutions Be Secure & Welcoming at the Same Time?* (no date)
- Anti-Defamation League. *Protecting Your Jewish Institution: Security Strategies for Today's Dangerous World*, 2005
- Cohen, Rabbi Philip Cohen, *The Heartbeat of the World Vayak'heil/P'kudei, Exodus 35:1–40:38* URJ Reform Voices of Torah, March 21, 2009.
- Geller, Laura. *The Internal Enemy on 9/11*, Temple Emanuel, (Beverly Hills, CA), reposted September 11, 2012
- Glickman, Larry, *Administering Spirituality: Through the Lens of Shabbat*, Thesis for Fellow in Temple Administration, 2011
- Heschel, Rabbi Abraham Joshua. *I Asked for Wonder*, Crossroads Publishing Co., NY 1983
- Jewish Meditation Center of Brooklyn, Blog, *Open Your Heart and Build a Mishkan – Parsha Terumah*, February 2011
- Karp, Rabbi Henry Jay, *HACHNASAT ORCHIM: Welcoming the Stranger as a Jewish Virtue*; blog October 28, 2010
- Roche, Bonnie, *The Mishkan as Metaphor —Form and Function: On the Transformation of Urban Space*, Cross Currents, Fall 2002, Vol. 52, No 3
- Rothman, Bob, *Partnering with Government and Law Enforcement: A Professional's Point of View* NATA Journal Spring 2013
- Sarason, Richard S., *How Strange the Way of Providence*, Vayeira, Genesis 18:1–22:24, Reform Judaism.org
- Steinmetz, Chaim, *Jewish Reflections on War and Peace*, Jewish Law Commentary, ©2010
- Temple Beth El Providence Emergency Manual 2013
- The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, P'kudei, Exodus 38:21–40:38, Revised Edition, pp.627–636 General Editor W. Gunther Plaut. ©2005, 2006 by URJ Press
- The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, T'rumah, Exodus 25:1–27:19, Revised Edition, pp.543–558 General Editor W. Gunther Plaut. ©2005, 2006 by URJ Press
- The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, Vayak'heil, Exodus 35:1–38:20, Revised Edition, pp.611–626 General Editor W. Gunther Plaut. ©2005, 2006 by URJ Press

Topolosky, Rabbi Uri, *A Taste of Newtown for Shabbat*, Congregation Beth Israel (New Orleans, LA) December 21, 2012

Union for Reform Judaism. *Making Congregants Feel Safe and Secure While Participating in Congregational Life*, 2010

Wolfson, Ron. *The Spirituality of Welcoming, How to Transform Your Congregation into a Sacred Community*, Jewish Lights Publishing, 2006

Zauderer, David. *Parshas Terumah (5773) The Torah Army*, Torch Connecting Jews and Judaism ©2013

Talmudic citations

Baba Metzia 59a-b

Baba Metzia, 62

Bava Kamma 15b; Shulchan Aruch CM 427:8

Berakot, 17

Ecclesiastes 3:8b

Gittin, 6

Makkos 10a

Micah 4:4

Pirke Avot 1:5

Pirke Avot 1:14

Pirke Avot 2:2

Pirkei Avot 2:5

Sanhedrin 4:5

Sanhedrin, 58

Shabbat, 32

Shevuot, 39a

Tanna de-Be Eliyahu Rabbah, 11

YD 116:7

Y. Erubin, 5, 1

Zohar Hadash, I, 25a

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES CONSULTED

A Jewish Perspective on Newtown, Congregation Beth Torah Blogspot (Overland Park, KS), December 2012

About.Com Judaism, *The Jewish Way to Wage War*, 2013.

Anti-Defamation League. *Start with Leadership* (no date)

Anti-Defamation League. *What Every Congregant Should Know about Security*, (no date)

Blake, Jonathan, *What Is the Purpose of the Synagogue? P'kudei, Exodus 38:21-40:38*, URJ Reform Voices of Torah, March 8, 2008

Blake, Jonathan, *How Our Spending Reflects Our Values T'rumah, Exodus 25:1-27:19*, URJ Reform Voices of Torah, February 9, 2008

CAIS. *Emergency Planning & Training* (no date)

Congregation Emanu-El Emergency Procedure Manual (San Francisco, CA) 2014

Congregation Mishkan Israel. *Emergency Procedures*, July 2002

FEMA. *Preparedness Planning for Your Business*, (no date)

Higer, Renee, *Today's Synagogue: Warding Off the Threat Utilizing an Updated Emergency Procedures Manual*, NATA Spring Journal 2013

Hulbert, Jane. *Communicating in a Crisis* (no date)

Hulbert, Jane, McGovern, Myra. *In a Crisis, Time Is the Enemy*, January 2013.

Hyman, Elyse, *Training Staff for Crisis Situation*, NATA Journal Spring 2013

Keehan, Alyssa. *Threat Assessment: A Strategy for Understanding & Managing the Risks of School Shootings*, CAIS Summit, January 2013

Klein, Richard. *Avodah: A Task for All*, URJ Reform Voices of Torah, T'rumah, Exodus 25:1–27:1, URJ Reform Voices of Torah, February 20, 2010

Mikeb302000 Blogspot, *Gun Control in the Talmud*, October 24, 2011

Milder, Laurence Elder, *Better Homes and Temples: Shabbat T'rumah, T'rumah*, Exodus 25:1–27:19, URJ Reform Voices of Torah, February 9, 2008

Reddy, Marisa, Borum, Randy, Beglund, John, Vossakuil, Bryan, Fein, Robert, Modzeleski, William. *Evaluating Risk for Targeted Violence in Schools: Comparing Risk Assessment, Threat Assessment, and Other Approaches*, Psychology in the Schools, Vol. 38/2 (2001)

Rossel, Seymour with Hyman Chanover and Chaim Stern, *When A Jew Seeks Wisdom: The Sayings of the Fathers*, Behrman House, Inc. 1975

Temple Emanu El-Orange Valley OH Emergency Procedures Manual 2013

Temple Israel. *Emergency Preparation Plan* (Minneapolis, MN) January 2009

Temple Israel. *Safety & Emergency Procedures Manual* (Columbus, OH) February 2013

Temple Shalom *Security Recommendations* (Norwalk, CT) January 2013

Union for Reform Judaism. *None Shall Make Them Afraid: Thinking about Congregational Security*, 2003

U.S. Department of Education. *Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities*, US Dept of Ed (no date)

U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *Active Shooter: How to Respond*, October 2008

U.S. Secret Service & U.S. Department of Education. *The Final Report & Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States*, May 2002

West End Synagogue. *Emergency Response Procedures* (New York, NY) August 2002

Zeplovitz, Irwin A. *A Never-Ending Story Vayak'heil/P'kudei, Exodus 35:1–40:38* URJ Reform Voices of Torah, March 21, 2009.

www.fema.gov

www.scnus.org

www.margolishealy.com/resources

<http://iluvuguys.org/>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the leadership of CMI, who when I told them that I was pursuing my FTA, were so supportive and excited for me. Thank you to Rabbi Herb Brockman, whose guidance, assistance and countless hours helping me find Jewish texts for this process were invaluable. To my colleagues and the rest of the CMI family, who show day in and day out what a special congregation this is and who live up to our motto – “More than a place. We’re a community.”

Thank you to the NATA Institute leadership of Susie Amster, Aliza Goland, Ellen Franklin, and Larry Glickman, and to my Institute classmates for making Institute a truly incredible experience.

Thank you to my SATES and NATA colleagues who graciously shared their security and emergency manuals, procedures, communication pieces, and stories with me.

Last, but not least, thank you to my family, who have supported me in this profession and put up with the long hours and crazy schedules. I had no idea when I first came to Mishkan Israel where the path would take me but I feel blessed to have found this wonderful home and community of people who make me want to come to work every day.