

April 17, 2007

Dear Friends,

Today is a difficult day for our country. As we allow ourselves to think past the immediate problems of flooded basements and impossible roads, we feel a deep sadness about the horrific shooting spree that has taken the lives of 32 people at Virginia Tech. The impact of such a horrendous act of violence is sure to be profound. One can't imagine the terrible grief of a parent whose child was brutally murdered. We should think of them in our prayers.

It is a fallacy to think that there is something "to do" when a tragedy touches us in some way. Judaism has no secret incantation or ritual that will make the grief turn into joy. What we can do is allow ourselves to sit with the sadness that we feel; it is important to acknowledge the melancholy that our nation is feeling and not try to cut ourselves off from it. Such sorrow should not be immediately extinguished by the zeal for "learning the lessons" that we will no doubt have the opportunity to discover, again. For now, we focus on the deep sadness that we feel when such young, vibrant, innocent lives were taken from this world and from their parents, families, and friends.

When words are of little comfort, Jews recite Psalms. When we don't know what to say, we turn to the pleas and hopes that the Psalmist(s) recorded thousands of years before us. This is an acknowledgment that sorrow, distress, and pain are not new, and our struggle to sit with these feelings is best couched in the experience of those who came before us. Reciting the Psalms is at once a meditation, a prayer, a release of anger and doubt, and a hope that faith in the goodness of humanity and God's justice can be restored. Psalm 130 urges us to call out to God from the depths of our sorrow:

"Out of the depths I call You, O Lord. O lord, listen to my cry; let your ears be attentive to my plea for mercy...I look to the Lord. I

look to Him. I await His word. I am more eager for the Lord than
the watchman for the morning, watchmen for the morning.”

May the families who have lost their children learn to find their way back to life.
We can not imagine their grief, but our hope for their wholeness is strong. May
God bring them healing.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David A. Schuck". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of the typed name below it.

Rabbi David A. Schuck