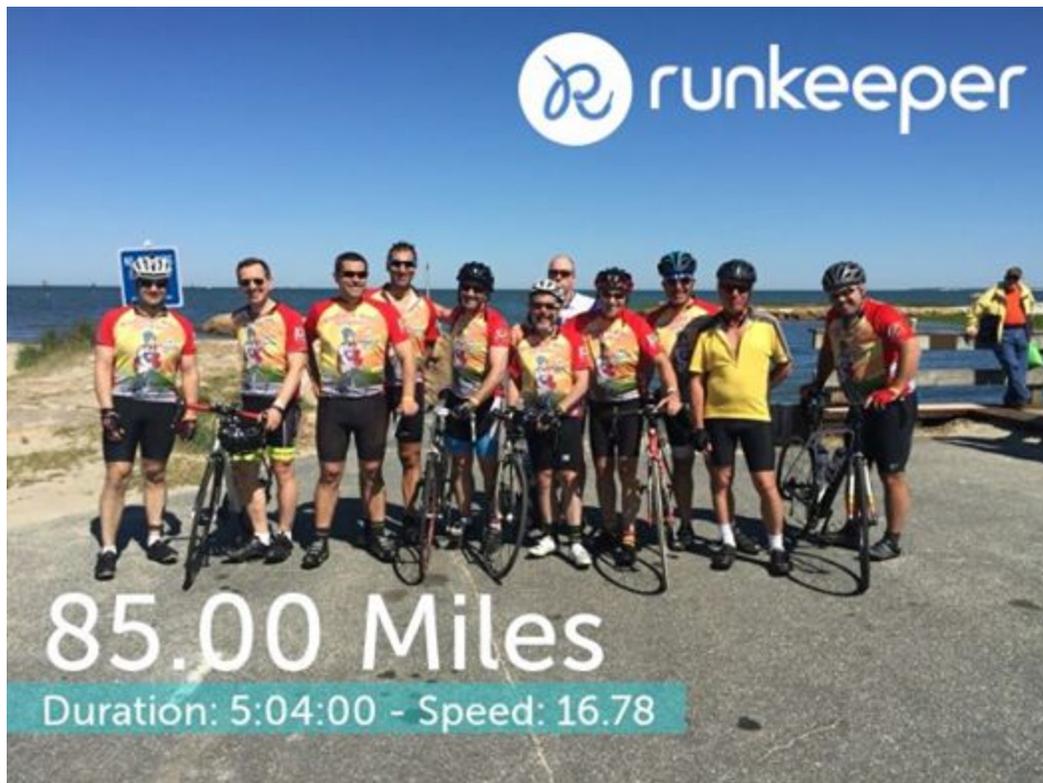


Moving Away From Fear

This week has been a roller-coaster of emotions – moments of sadness and loss and momentous occasions of learning and celebration. In the midst of all of this, I was able to participate in an annual tradition: the P2P bike ride – a cycling adventure on the third Wednesday of June each year riding from Plymouth to Provincetown and then taking a ferry back. It is simply a wonderful ride and a group of our Emunah Minutemen riders goes each year.



This year one of riders increased the degree of difficulty with a “fun” add-on. We were to meet at the Dorchester Mall where a van would take us to Plymouth and we could enjoy more time in Provincetown before taking a ferry back to Boston and then biking back to our cars. It was a great idea, well, except for the 3 AM wake up! That was tough!

When we arrived in P-town, we changed for lunch and I put on this t-shirt from Everytown for Gun Violence which reads on the front: “CHANGE GUN LAWS – OR – CHANGE CONGRESS.”



It was helpful. People stopped me to give a thumbs up. Some of them were in pain so I offered words of support, telling them that our

shul, our community stands with the LGBTQ community during this most difficult time after the shooting in Orlando.

One gay couple, visiting from Florida, suggested that I take out the word “OR” and replace it with “AND.” Change gun laws and change congress!

These two men were clearly in some pain, but they also had strong, stoic attitudes. It almost felt as if I were speaking to an Israeli after a terror attack there; there is the powerful need to move on and not let an attack take over our lives. We must be able to continue to live, not remaining in a place of fear.

Since just days before Orlando there was a terrorist attack in Tel-Aviv, it is important to note the differences. In Israel, the terrorist utilized older guns that did not work well and they jammed – that saved lives. It turns out it is much harder to obtain a gun in Israel than it is in the U.S. Rabbi Daniel Gordis wrote this week that he was not permitted a gun in Israel because it was deemed that he did not need one. In Israel, there are plenty of guns that are held by people who are checked and trained to use them to save lives.

Here, in America, there are plenty of guns used by all sorts of people – many of them never have a background check since they are purchased through gun shows or transferred through another person.

[What percent of people never go through a background check?](#)

40%!

Close to half of all the 300 million guns in our country with no check.

Mind-boggling.

Think of the steps a woman must take to get an abortion in many states. How about that for guns?

What about those who are checked? Well, that simple process that usually takes a few minutes. But it would not have prevented the Orlando murderer from getting a semi-automatic rifle – why?

BECAUSE PEOPLE ON THE TERRORIST WATCH LIST ARE
ALLOWED TO BUY GUNS!

Thank you to the NRA and those in Congress who “shot down” that bill!

Here is a picture of the gun used in Orlando – the same model had already wreaked havoc and murder at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT and in San Bernardino, CA and in Aurora and in....

They could not fit it on the [cover page of the Boston Globe](#).



Until 2004, these weapons of war were banned. While many horrific shootings occur without them, the most devastating ones happen because the shooter has a high-capacity clip, which can fire 30 bullets without reloading. I started an organization in 2011 in response to the Tucson attack that severely wounded U.S. Representative

Gabrielle Giffords: [Clergy Against Bullets](#), its main goal was to pass legislation outlawing high-capacity ammunition clips. Thanks to the NRA again and its friends in Congress, that bill died.

Friends, on Wednesday, hundreds gathered on the Lexington Green to mourn the victims from Orlando, to stand with the LGBTQ community, to join together as an inter-faith community committed to the values of unity among our diversity, and to demand changes in our gun laws. It was quite moving to be there as we listened, sang, and lit our candles.

But, I have to confess that I have stood there TOO many times – too many vigils on the green, at the Depot, at Emunah, at Isaiah. Enough!

Why do we have a law about selling plastic toy guns that are black – they have to have an orange tip so they are not confused with real guns – but not enough laws for REAL GUNS!

Why do we check only 60% of gun purchasers?

It's time for action. PLEASE go to <http://everytown.org/> after Shabbat and sign their petitions, donate funds and read and learn more

about these issues. And use social media to forward articles and petitions so we pass common-sense gun legislation. Ensure your elected representatives help us change our laws to make this country safer. Join our Emunah Task Force to Address Gun Violence – contact [Temple Emunah](#) for more information.

While many Americans want guns, it turns out that most Americans want safer gun ownership. Members of our *shul* who own guns want that! Most NRA members want that!

What do we need?

1) Closing the terror gap by allowing the Department of Justice to block gun sales to anyone on the terror watch list. Between 2004 and 2014, more than 2,000 people on the list purchased guns in the U.S.

INEXCUSABLE!

2) Closing the loophole that allows people to buy guns without undergoing background checks through private sales, at gun shows, and online. An estimated 40 percent of all firearms transferred in the U.S. are transferred by unlicensed individuals not required to conduct background checks on buyers. **SHOULD NEVER HAPPEN!**

3) Banning convicted domestic abusers and stalkers from buying guns. Abused women are five times more likely to be killed by their abuser if that individual has access to a firearm. UNBELIEVABLE!

4) Prohibiting the manufacture and sale of assault weapons and “large capacity” magazines for civilian use. THIS SHOULD NOT BE THAT HARD!

I would like to comment on several other areas that this shooting touched on.

First, the shooter was Muslim and dedicated this massacre to ISIS. While we will learn more about the shooter and his connections, we need to find a nuanced way to approach the complexities of Islamic extremism. There is Islamic extremism which foments terrorism – most of it exported from Iran on the Shiite side and Saudi Arabia on the Sunni side. It causes a few terrible acts in the U.S., many more in Europe, even more in Israel and the most on fellow Muslims around the globe.

That said, there are groups of moderate Muslims – most of our neighbors who are Muslim are in that category. They should be

supported and we are actively building bridges with those communities, looking for places of cooperation and co-existence.

One of the places our Temple Emunah Israel Trip will be visiting is the [Hand-in-Hand School for Jewish-Arab Education in Israel](#). This is what we need more of – not statement maligning an entire religion or proposals to ban them from this country.



Second, how difficult this attack was on the LGBTQ community. They were targeted in particular and, as it turns out, they are the group most frequently targeted in hate crimes in our country. For many in the LGBTQ community, this brought back memories of previous attacks and their own vulnerability.

So, let us share a strong message of love and support with all those who are Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender or Queer in our own community and throughout the world. And we send those wishes

to all who support them – their families and friends. June is LGBTQ
Pride Month.



We share our solidarity with you and stand shoulder-to-shoulder
with you during this difficult time.

Third, feeling disenfranchised. It is clear that there is a battle
between those who feel comfortable in our country's increasingly
diverse population and those who rail against it. They might be angry
at immigrants or at gays or at transgendered individuals, or at Jews or
at Muslims. They may be mentally ill or they may be inculcated with

deep hate. This is a reminder to redouble our efforts to “*olam hesed yibaneh* – build this world with *hesed* – with love,” in the words of the book of Psalms. (Psalm 89:3)

We need to create a world that is more inclusive, more accepting and more kind.

And that brings us to the *parashah*, which contains the challenging laws about the *Sotah* and the Nazirite. But what’s behind these laws? From where do they spring?

They come from a place of fear. In the case of the *Sotah*, there is a breaking down of the trust in a marriage; there is fear of betrayal.

And in the Nazirite case, there is the desire to come close to God, but there is also fear. Jews took on the extra obligation of the Nazirite often because they were scared of something; they were afraid of not being able to have a child, as in the case of Samson’s mother and Samuel’s mother.

The fear leads to an intensity of action.

In our Torah portion, we learn that the temporary Nazirite had to bring an offering when he or she completed the term of being a Nazirite.

Why? While Maimonides explained that it is because the person is now moving from a more sacred state to a more profane state, I prefer another explanation which is that being a Nazirite is extreme. Due to fear, this person takes on this more ascetic path.

And while very real, fear is not the best state in which to remain. We need to move out of fear so we can live. And live with love.

We cannot live in fear of the other, but rather learn about and from the other. We cannot live in fear that someone will take our gun away and so we prevent any common sense gun legislation. But rather we work to understand our fears and move beyond them.

This is actually modeled perfectly in the *parashah* which moves straight from the Nazirite laws to the Priestly Benediction. It is a reminder not to live in a negative state, in a state of fear, but to embrace love. *Yivarekhah Adonai V'yishmereikha* - May Adonai bless you and protect you!

That way you will not live in fear, but feel the Divine love that allows us to speak out in support of the LGBTQ community, the nuanced ways to talk about terrorism and to demand gun safety.

Together, [we can build this world with love and not fear](#) and let us
all say Amen.