

Dear Friends,

October was a sweet and sour month. We had phenomenal Shabbat and Havdalah programs with Cantor Ramon Tasat, and the buzz that filled Temple Sinai was just amazing. We all learned so much about the world of Sephardic prayers and songs. Our guests took away a warm welcome, beautiful music, and exquisite food.

A week later, on Saturday, October 27th, I was preparing for the next day's program, Plants of the Bible, after our Kiddush refreshments, and it wasn't until I got home that I learned, from my mother, who lives in France, that a tragedy had just taken place, in a state so close to ours.

Local faith communities reached out to our congregation in love and solidarity, and it was truly heartwarming to have them among us at the Service of Healing and Solidarity with special prayers for the victims of the Tree of Life shooting.

At that Service, I said that the baby whose naming took place that Saturday morning would carry the light of the victims' precious memories and the torch of our faith, passing on to future generations the inspiring teachings and everlasting love of our brothers and sisters of Israel.

Later on, my dear colleague Rabbi Lawrence Forman shared with me a poignant poem, dedicated to that baby. As we continue to grieve and grapple with the tragedy, in turn, I am sharing it with you:

### **WHAT'S YOUR NAME? – by Zev Steinberg**

"Little boy, what's your name – do you have one?  
Sweet baby, just eight days, what should we call you?"

I have heard the sacred circumcision postponed for jaundiced yellow, but never before for bloodshed red.

Is your name Shalom? We long for peace in this troubled world. I hope you are Shalom.

Is your name Nachum? Oh, how we need to be comforted in our grief. I hope you are Nachum.

Is your name Raphael? Our broken hearts and bleeding souls need healing. I hope you are Raphael.

You should have been carried high into the congregation on Shabbat morning - passed from loving hands to loving hands - on a cushioned pillow to receive your Jewish name. Instead your elders fell and were carried out on stretchers in plastic bags. Their names on tags.

Is your name Moshe? Our unbearable anguish and rage demands justice. I hope you are Moshe.

Is your name Ariel? We need the ferocious strength of lions to protect our people. I hope you are Ariel.

Is your name Barak? We need courageous warriors to vanquish our enemies. I hope you are Barak.

The blood on Shabbat morning was supposed to be covenantal not sacrilegious, sacramental not sacrificial, sacred not unholy. The tears were supposed to be of boundless joy not bottomless sorrow. The cries were supposed to be “mazel tov” not the mourner’s kaddish.

Is your name Simcha? We need an end to sadness by bringing joy into our world. I hope you are Simcha.

Is your name Yaron? We need an end to mourning by bringing song into our lives . I hope you are Yaron.

Is your name Matan? We need the gift of children who will bring a better tomorrow. I hope you are Matan.

So little boy, what’s your name? Take them all if you will. Take a thousand names. Be peace and Comfort and Healing. Be Justice and Strength and Courage. Be Joy and Song and a Gift to the world. Be every good name and every good thing.

And, Sweet baby, take one more name if you will – because I hope you will be blessed with a long, blissful, beautiful and meaningful life...

I hope you are Chaim."

May the light of Hanukah shine forth and renew us with those values embodied by the Tree of Life baby boy, who will live to tell the tale of our people. A tale of love, resilience, and hope.

Wishing you all a peaceful Hanukah,

Rabbi Severine Sokol