

From the editor's desk: Response to anti-semitism



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Like many young, reform Jews, my attendance at the local synagogue declined following my Bar Mitzvah. It wasn't necessarily because I lost touch with my religion, but the sense of obligation was gone. I went to synagogue because Judaism was the faith I believed in, and the faith I was raised on.

Attending Shabbat services was not only a family activity and a way to get closer to God, but studying for my Bar Mitzvah was also a rite of passage in my religious journey. So,

it was only natural that my attendance dropped. Not only had my Bar Mitzvah training ended, I was growing older. It became more burdensome to sacrifice my Friday nights to pray, and I've found myself choosing social activities with friends over Shabbat services.

Over the past few years, whether with age and maturity or an increase in anti-semitism across the world, my feelings towards being Jewish have changed. With last October's issue of BluePrints, I wrote my editorial days after the shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh. I ignored my parents' advice to write about the attack because it was a difficult topic that I didn't feel like confronting at the time.

Now six months later as I sit down to write the editorial for another issue of BluePrints, I am confronted with yet another terrorist attack at the Chabad of Poway synagogue near San Diego on the six-month anniversary of the Tree of Life shooting.

Before these events, I knew of the growing anti-semitic movements in Europe. While they were serious enough to be scared of, the fear was not a personal one, but one for my

fellow Jews in Europe. I felt a sense of pride being Jewish, and feared for others like me in other lands.

With the attacks in San Diego and Pittsburgh, however, that fear has become real. My synagogue hired an armed guard for every service, rotating three paid guards to protect us.

I wish that I could say this preventative measure is a silly overreaction, but I'm realizing that it may be necessary. All it takes is one unstable person.

I stand at a crossroads between determining my own faith, taking pride in my upbringing, and refusing to let fear run my life. While I may not go to synagogue, the fear of simply being Jewish is becoming more and more frightening. I worry for my Jewish friends, my family and Jews across the world. As my religious ideals are internally questioned, I'm coming to realize that my Jewish identity means much more than my belief in God or the Torah.

Any explanation of my Jewish identity and how that identity is affected by recent attacks would be an extreme oversimplification in such a short column. As it becomes more and more difficult to believe in God, I find myself closer and closer to the Jewish community.

Jewish people in America are fairly lucky: we don't face regular racism, and there are no systemic factors holding us back. We are not persecuted by police and the judicial system, and many Jews are very financially stable. But for the first time in my life, there is a notable threat against the Jewish people, which has made me realize the importance of my Jewish identity. People are willing to die or be killed for their beliefs, and I've realized that I must respect and appreciate for my Jewish identity, even when I struggle with my belief in God. 🐾