S/He who saves a single life it is as if s/he saved an entire world.

Mishna, Sanhedrin 4:5

When I log in to my computer, the news flashes to inform me of yet another mass shooting. The TV nightly or morning news reminds me of the shootings with a round of discussions. What can we do? What can we do? We’ve read about the blame for these shootings being video games. But, the studies show that video games do not cause a person to go out and shoot real human beings. We’ve read about mental illness being blamed for these shootings. But, mentally ill people generally don’t go out and shoot groups of people. The shootings do connect. Most of the assault weapons used were purchased legally by people who were not diagnosed with mental illness. The shooters had a commonality. They hated people different from themselves. Baseless hatred – must we live in a world filled with hate, hate that makes one human being take another’s life? It seems to be such a hopeless situation with no solution.

Rabbi Lawrence Kushner wrote in *Invisible Lines of Connection,* “A light snow was falling and the streets were crowded with people. It was Munich in Nazi Germany. One of my rabbinic students, Shifra Penzias, told me her great-aunt, Sussie, had been riding a city bus home from work when SS storm troopers suddenly stopped the coach and began examining the identification papers of the passengers. Most were annoyed, but a few were terrified. Jews were being told to leave the bus and get into a truck around the corner.

My student’s great-aunt watched from her seat in the rear as the soldiers systematically worked their way down the aisle. She began to tremble, tears streaming down her face. When the man next to her noticed that she was crying, he politely asked her why. ‘I don’t have the papers you have. I am a Jew. They’re going to take me.’ The man exploded with disgust. He began to curse and scream at her. ‘You stupid bitch,’ he roared. ‘I can’t stand being near you.’ The SS men asked what all the yelling was about. ‘Damn her,’ the man shouted angrily. ‘My wife has forgotten her papers again! I’m so fed up. She always does this!’ The soldiers laughed and moved on. My student said that her great-aunt never saw the man again. She never even knew his name.”

We do not live in a hopeless world. Let’s fill the world with people who will step up to save a single life.

Questions

1. What can we do as a community to save a single life?
2. What can we do as individuals to save a single life?
3. What have you done to save a single life?

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