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Jewish community shocked by Mumbai attacks

Nov 29, 2008 04:30 AM

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LESLIE SCRIVENER
SHABNAM JANET JANANI
STAFF REPORTERS

"How are you?" a caller asks Rabbi Mendel Kaplan.

"Broken," Kaplan replies.

Kaplan, leader of the Chabad@Flamingo, a Jewish outreach centre in Thornhill, was speaking of the terrible assault on the Nariman House in Mumbai.

Explosions and gunfire rocked the centre for two days before Indian commandos seized control late yesterday. They were too late to save the young rabbi and his wife and four others, all found dead.

While he didn't know Rabbi Gavriel Holtzberg, 29, and his wife Rivkah, 28, he knew their mission in Mumbai – one of some 3,000 centres run by the Hasidic Jewish group, Chabad Lubavitch, in 73 countries.

"Any Jewish people who happened to be in Mumbai knew it was the place to go to find kosher food and a warm and comfortable environment to nurture Judaism," Kaplan said. The couple regularly fed more than 30 visitors every night, he said. They also ran a rehabilitation program for young people troubled by drug use.

"We are part of a family," Kaplan said yesterday. "Some are blood relatives and some relatives in soul and spirit."

Chabad Lubavitch rabbis usually make a lifetime commitment to a mission when they are in their mid-20s.

"They generally move to a place and remain there for the rest of their lives," Kaplan said. "You find your calling and devote yourself to those people and that place."

The Ontario Chabad Centre is holding a memorial service for the victims of the Mumbai terrorist attack. It has also launched a scholarship fund to support the couple's 2-year-old son.

Moshe Holtzberg, who was set to celebrate his second birthday today, was rescued from the house by an Indian cook.

Twelve hours after gunmen stormed the centre, Sandra Samuel, a cook at the centre, heard the toddler's cries outside the room in which she had barricaded herself. She opened the door, grabbed the toddler and ran outside with another centre worker.

The boy's pants were soaked with blood, and Samuel said she saw four people lying on the floor as she fled.

The young couple had lived in New York before going to India.

"We are trying to continue the positive way this young couple and others have begun," said Rabbi Yosef Gansburg, Ontario's Chabad Lubavitch educational director. "We will try to strengthen ourselves, and the community there, as well as help Moshe's family."

"The Jewish community of Toronto is shocked and torn apart," said Gansburg in a phone interview with the *Star*. "The Chabad house in Mumbai isn't a political place, it is a house of worship. They were there to help people, be kind to people. That was the beginning and end of their mission. To come and invade them and kill them is unbelievable."

Moshe is now with his maternal grandparents, Shimon and Yehudit Rosenberg, who left Israel immediately in order to come to Mumbai after learning their daughter and son-in-law were being held as hostages. The second son of the slain couple was with relatives in Israel when the attack occurred.

Chabad Lubavitch of Ontario and B'nai Brith Canada have joined to extend their profound condolences to the families of the victims of the Mumbai terrorist attacks.

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"We mourn the passing of Rabbi Gavriel and Rivka Holtzberg amongst others, not merely as fellow Jews and colleagues but as family," said Rabbi Zalman Grossbaum, director of Ontario Chabad Lubavitch.

An hour-long memorial service for the victims will be held tomorrow at 4:30 p.m. at the Chabad Lubavitch Community Centre, 770 Chabad Gate in Thornhill.

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Nothing has Changed for over 3,00 years

These attacks on common place in region. We call it a terrorist attack. It has always been a way of life. We seem shocked because we have television & journalists and newspapers telling us what is happening as if it is news. Terrorists today are intelligent they have many weapons available from alot of countries western & eastern to support their cause. The world doesn't change because some people want peace. War will always be with us. It is indeed very horrible that this way of life will continue. As for the Jewish people they are always at risk just like Christians missionaries in the region. Nobody will stop this. It is up to the Pakistan, India, Muslims & Hindus to put an end. I doubt none of them will.

Submitted by leslietobiasleslie at 6:57 AM Tuesday, December 09 2008

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A miracle amidst the carnage.

Sandra Samuel is to be commended for saving the life of little Moshe Holtzberg. She is a hero! It is heartbreaking that this little boy lost his parents in such a needlessly violent way.

Submitted by spiritofwicca at 4:37 AM Sunday, November 30 2008

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Jews were singled out

LivinginTO makes a good point that it was indeed an terrorist attack but to dismiss it as not an attack on Jews specifically is not accurate. Jews were targeted by these terrorists for the sole reason of their Jewish faith. I think its most appropriate to point out that Jews remain targets in a world that anti semitism endures. Nevertheless while noting that Jews were targeted so too were Americans and the British we also know that the majority of the victims were Indian and that all life is precious. MR

Submitted by mdrtec at 1:50 PM Saturday, November 29 2008

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Living in TO: Where does the article categorize the entire terrorist episode as a "Jewish attack"? The fact that of all religious philanthropic centres in Mumbai, the one Jewish centre was targeted is, obviously, significant, but it doesn't make the attacks elsewhere less so. This particular article is profiling the Jewish victims, as the article on the Montreal doctor is profiling him; how is this not "recognizing" the full scope of the attacks? It's personalizing them, by going indepth in one aspect. If this were the only article The Star published, sure I'd agree with you, but it's not (at all) so I hesitate to ask why you have a problem with this...

Submitted by Rachel9 at 1:42 PM Saturday, November 29 2008

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We salute Indian security forces

We salute the Indian commandoes who made the supreme sacrifice to save innocent lives.

Submitted by Hero888888 at 12:42 PM Saturday, November 29 2008

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Saddness

Its shocking that terrorists would target Chabad of all places, known for its outreach to Jews and Gentile alike. Its shocking all the more that Rabbi Yossi Holtzberg of the Markham Street Shul here in Toronto lost his beloved family member - condolences to him his family and the entire Jewish and Chabad community. M.R.

Submitted by mdrtec at 12:11 PM Saturday, November 29 2008

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The entire terrorist attack was shocking

The needless loss of life in the attacks in Mumbai is shocking. Whether at the hotels, at Nariman

House or other. I believe that our sense of loss should transcend religion - no exceptions. This article would have done well to recognize that, while at the same time grieving the loss of life of those specifically mentioned. This was not a Jewish attack, this was a terrorist attack.

Submitted by LivinginTO at 9:06 AM Saturday, November 29 2008

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