

After the Pittsburgh massacre

Israeli lessons in resilience are important to cope with new reality.

By Meir Elran, Scott Lasensky / Nov. 21, 2018

Israelis are eager to help Americans – and American Jewry – cope with terrorism and mass violence post-Pittsburgh, and one of the most profound lessons they can share is the notion of hosen, Hebrew for societal resilience.

Tragically, 70 years of violence on the home-front– including a spike in civilian casualties in recent years – have forced Israeli society to innovate and integrate resilience strategies that enable entire communities to bounce back quickly in the aftermath of trauma.

The concept was first introduced in a beleaguered Israel in the 1980s when a group of professionals in the besieged northern regions of the country realized that terrorist attacks would continue, despite extensive preventive measures.

Attacks, particularly if they are on-going, have dire effects on the physical safety of civilians, but also on the well-being of communities and their capacity to function. The notion of resilience at that time was primarily about assisting individuals and communities in coping with heightened risk and enhancing capacity by deploying various types of therapy and strategies that promote a sense of togetherness.

These early measures and subsequent studies led to the development of a broader concept of resilience as a systemic strategy to allow societies to cope with disruptions of diverse types, man-made and natural. Community-based programs across Israel now actively utilize social capital to enhance resilience, including initiatives like the Israel Trauma Coalition, which has itself been funded by American Jewry.

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