

The Watchtower

BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE

Sooner or later, the enemies of the Jewish people become the enemies of the world. Nazism, Soviet communism, radical Islam. All single out the Jews for special obloquy, but eventually, the world pays the price. This has led some to call the Jewish people the canary in the coal mine: the canary, with its limited lung capacity, dies to let the miners know there is lethal gas.

But despite everything the Jewish people have survived. Better is the image of the sentinel in the watchtower. We have seen the oncoming enemy and called out in alarm.

"You are My witnesses" (Isaiah 43:10) — to live a Jewish life is to be called to witness. Not only about the sufferings of Jews alone: it is profoundly Jewish to cry out about Darfur, Congo, the oppression of women — about evil anywhere in God's world, in our world. Hatred always bursts its bonds and will spill over.

The Midrash tells us that love and hate are similar in this sense — they both proliferate. Neither stays neatly confined. A sacred task of Judaism is to call attention to hatred anywhere. And to combat it with all the tools at our disposal — sometimes words, sometimes weapons, and of course as the Rabbis remind us, with faith and with love.