

My friends, my topic tonight is “Stevie Ray Vaughan and Us.” If you know who Stevie was, then I know I have your attention. But I'm going to assume that many here tonight do not know who he was, so I have to explain in order to have everyone's attention.

Stevie Ray Vaughan was one of the greatest blues guitarists who ever lived. He was my absolute favorite. I listen to his music a great deal, but especially around my birthday. On August 26, 1990, Stevie played a concert in Wisconsin with some of the greatest blues players of all time. A bit after midnight on August 27, on a foggy night, Stevie boarded a helicopter to fly to Chicago. It is believed the pilot intended to fly around a small mountain, but misjudged its location in the fog. He crashed into the mountain, and everyone on board was killed instantly. Stevie's funeral was on my birthday, August 30. I once visited his grave, thinking I would put a guitar pick on it. I ended up adding my pick to a mountain of guitar picks that were already there. I suppose I also hoped that by going to his grave, maybe I would be able to channel some of Stevie's talent when I play the blues. Let's just say that didn't work.

I have a specific reason for talking about Stevie Ray tonight, and remember, the title is SRV and Us. To make the connection, I have to give you some backstory.

SRV and Double Trouble were invited to perform at the Montreux Blues Festival in France. The crowd hated them. They had come to hear acoustic blues, but Stevie and his band played electric blues. They were booed, but they were also heard by some of the biggest stars in the music world, David Bowie and Jackson Browne. Bowie asked Stevie to play on a album he was recording, and Jackson Browne offered the band free time in the recording studio he owned.

At Browne's studio, they did not record in the usual, one instrument at a time fashion. They simply set up their equipment and recorded like it was a live concert. Many of us feel the result was the best of Stevie's many albums. The album was titled with the title of the first song on the album, Texas Flood. "Well it's flooding down in Texas, and all of the telephone lines are down." It was very eerie listening to that this past week, because it is flooding down in Texas, and a lot more than just telephone lines are down. That is why this sermon is not called SRV, but SRV and Us.

My friends, it's flooding down in Texas. What have you done to help? Have you done anything to help? There are only two appropriate answers to that question from the point of view of Judaism: yes, or not yet. No is not an option.

The Torah tells us to love the stranger because we were strangers in the land of Egypt. Perhaps that's why I feel such a connection to Texas. We were hit twice by hurricanes during our Florida years, and let me tell you, even if your home survives, the aftermath of a hurricane is misery. I cannot imagine what it must be like if your home was destroyed.

The Torah also tells us we are not permitted to stand by and do nothing when people are in need of help. We don't have to go back to Egypt to be connected to those in need. We need only go back to Europe. We have six million examples of what can happen when not enough people help those who need it.

What can you do? I wish I could jump on a plane and pitch in with my hands. Life does not give me that option, and the same is likely true of you. So we give. We can give money. We can give clothes. We can give diapers and baby formula—I know all too well that what they need now in Southeast Texas is everything. Agencies like the Red Cross facilitate sending help

to those in need. Federation has a national relief fund, from which 100% of every gift goes to help the victims. That was the vehicle I chose for my donations. Remember, my friends, Judaism is behavioral. I don't mean to sound harsh, but Judaism really cares nothing about whether you feel sorry for the victims of Harvey. All that counts is what you have done, or what you will do after Shabbat.

To give you some inspiration and ideas, I am going to share a list with you. There happen to be ten things on this list, just like the Ten Commandments. I did not write this list, but I am proud to tell you who did. Kari Dunn Saratovsky, Sid and Linda's daughter, was in charge of much of the relief efforts after Hurricane Katrina because of her being appointed the head of a council on public service by President Bush 43. Here is a post from Kari's Facebook page:

1. Do you have anyone coming to help you cut out drywall? If not, can I help pull together some manpower for you? Can I call a few water mitigation companies to get quotes for you?

2. Do you have any laundry I can wash and store for you?

3. I have hand-me-downs from my kids, what sizes would be helpful?

4. Can I help arrange playdates for your kids?
5. Do you have any medications you would like me to call about getting replaced?
6. Do you need help packing items in your house and moving them to storage?
7. I'm making a trip to HEB today, please tell me 3 things I can pick up for you.
8. Is there anywhere you need a ride to?
9. I'd like to take you to pickup your rental car. Please call me when it's available.
10. I made extra lasagna / chicken / etc and would like to drop it off to you for dinner tonight.

Kari and Elias live in Houston, so they are in a position to do things that we cannot do, but there is no one in this sanctuary tonight who cannot do something. Do whatever is within your means, but do something. Because it's flooding down in Texas, and a lot more than just telephone lines are down.