

A Passover Prayer in Troubled Times

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On this Passover, even as we hope that the worst of the pandemic is behind us, Ukraine is being brutalized by a Pharaoh-like despot who cares not for human life, and Israel is experiencing a deadly wave of terrorism. We are sitting at our Seder tables in freedom, but we are not fully free as long as our Israeli brothers and sisters are under attack, as long as our fellow human beings in Ukraine are being driven from their homes and land as refugees.

Passover tells the story of our moment: good prevailing over evil, courage defeating power, right overcoming wrong, peoplehood and solidarity emerging from crisis. Slavery, Exodus, Torah are the legacies commanding us to care for all those in need. “Let all who are in need come and celebrate Passover” with us, the Haggadah tells us. Be they Ukrainians experiencing the horrors of a senseless war, Israelis who are unable to live normal lives without fear, or any in our world who need our outstretched hand, let all who are in need come and celebrate freedom with us.

We pray for the dead. May their memory be for a blessing. Some died as martyrs. Some died as heroes, defending their fellow human beings, their diverse fellow citizens, united by the Divine within each one of us. Other heroes died as they protected their homeland. Yet others died as they simply tried to live their lives or tried to flee. A world is destroyed with each who perishes.

We pray for the mourners. Their lives have been irreparably shattered. May they find the strength to carry on.

We pray for the injured, the frightened, the hungry, the homeless, the separated, the refugees. May they be made whole.

Even as antisemitism reasserts itself as an ugly and deadly force, we are grateful that we live in an age when the State of Israel has transformed Jewish history, when Jews can defend themselves, when Jews always have a place to go. Our scattered people have been gathered from the ends of the earth. They have been led with song to Zion, Your city, with everlasting joy to Jerusalem.

We are not powerless. We are empowered. We have helped and will continue to help the people of Ukraine. We have stood by and will continue to stand by the people of Israel.

This year, as Jews, Christians, and Muslims celebrate Passover, Easter, and Ramadan together, at one moment in time, we are reminded of our shared humanity as children of God and our collective aspirations for peace and renewal.

Even as our hearts are heavy, we are filled with thanksgiving. We pray the words of the Haggadah and trust that once again God will lead us “from slavery to freedom, from despair to joy, from mourning to celebration, from darkness to light, from servitude to redemption.” Amen.