

Readings from Temple Sinai's Service in Support of Israel October 23, 2023

The Diameter of the Bomb

The diameter of the bomb was thirty centimeters
and the diameter of its destruction —
about seven meters
and in it, four killed and eleven wounded.
And around these, in a larger circle
of pain and time, are scattered
two hospitals and one cemetery.
But the young woman
who was buried in the place
from where she came, at a distance
of more than one hundred kilometers,
enlarges the circle considerable.
And the lonely man
who is mourning her death in a distant country
incorporated into the circle
the whole world. And I won't speak
of the cry of the orphans
that reaches God's chair and from there
makes the circle endless
and godless.

Yehuda Amichai

Israel: A Pledge

Israel,
You are my people.
You are my heart and you are my hope.
We waited together at the mountain
When God revealed the Holy Word.
We wandered together through the desert
On the path to sacred soil.
We watched the sea part.
We heard the heavens roar.
We stood at the doorway to freedom,
At the border of a Promised Land.
Israel,
You are my destiny.
You are my joy and you are my truth.
We were victorious at Jericho,
Unyielding at Masada.
We defied empires
For Torah.
We defied kings
For justice and freedom.
We've traveled the earth,
Wandered the millennia,
Refugees of the ages,
Homeless and hopeful,
Waiting to return

To native ground.

Israel,
You are my brother in history,
My sister in fortune,
The mother of my courage,
The father of my heart,
The child of my longing,
And the light of generations.
To you I pledge my right arm
And my voice in song.
To you I pledge my soul.

To you I pledge my spirit.
Israel.
You are my nation
You are my inheritance
You are my home.

A Prayer for the State of and People of Israel

Parent in heaven, Rock and Redeemer of Israel, bless the state of Israel, the first flower of our redemption. Guard it with Your kindness and shield it with Your shelter of peace. Share your light and truth with its leaders, its ministers and every citizen in Israel, so that they may sustain a country based upon the principles of freedom, justice, and peace, as envisioned by the biblical prophets. Plant within Israel the love of Torah, whose paths are pleasant, whose ways are peaceful. Strengthen those who defend our Holy land. May they go forth proudly and may they return home safely. Grant peace throughout the land and eternal joy to all who live there. May Israel realize the prophetic vision: "May Zion be redeemed in justice, and those who return to her in righteousness." And let us say Amen.

For the Soldiers of the IDF

Rock of Israel,
Our sons and daughters,
Our brothers and sisters,
Our family and friends,
Have been called to serve,
In the name of peace and justice,
In the name of sovereignty and survival,
To defend and to protect our land
From violence and assault,
From kidnappers and terrorists,
From missile and mortar,
From those who would destroy our nation and our people.
We stand with the defenders of Israel.
We honor the guardians of Zion.
We hold dear the sentries of Am Kadosh.
God of Old,

We know the price of safety,
We know the cost of security.
Bless the injured and wounded
In every generation
With Your healing hand.
Bless the dead and the bereaved
With Your love and consolation.
Bless the heroes of our past
And the heroes of the future
With a share in the world to come.
Source of Peace,
Keep our soldiers safe,
And let our soldiers keep us safe,
So that they return in life and in health
To the loving arms of our people.

A Prayer For Those Held Captive

One of up to 130 men, women, children, and infants taken captive into the pit of Gaza:

“Our God, the One who raised Joseph up from the pit,
be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.”(Psalms 9:10).

Send complete rescue and full redemption to those held captive by the enemy.

Strengthen their spirit and bring them our prayers that they be protected from all harm.

Implant understanding in the heart of the enemy that they may return the captives in wholeness of body and spirit.

Grant wisdom to the Israel Defense Forces that they may secure freedom for the captives without loss of life.

Grant strength of spirit and courage of heart to all the sons and daughters of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar to release bonds of captivity and allow us all to live in freedom.

“They shall call upon Me, and I will answer them;
I will be with them in distress;
I will rescue them, and honor them.” (Adapted from Psalm 91:15).

Hoshanot

Hoshia Nah

We left the embrace of the sukkah
for the shelter of Shabbat
Hoshana
And they blasted away the wall
Hoshana
Please reopen Your gates of salvation
Hoshana
Can anyone pick the lock?
Hoshana
For Your sake and
For ours
Hoshana
For fathers gunned down in front of daughters
Hoshana
For mothers shielding the bodies of sons
Hoshana
For elders with caregivers bedside
Hoshana
For Amit who bandaged wounds in the infirmary, who never made it out
alive
Hoshana
For Rachel who served the terrorists coffee and cookies
Hoshana
For Avital who carried babies Eshel and Negev on her back from Gaza
Hoshana
For Adi, their mother, nowhere to be found
Hoshana
For Tamar Kedem Simon-Tov - light of Eshkol
Hoshana
For Johnny, Shachar, Arbel and Omer
Hoshana

For Hayim, his wells of knowledge, unwritten guide books for ways out of war

Hoshana

For Noa forced away on a motorcycle

Hoshana

For her father Yaakov begging it not to be so

Hoshana

For Shani who came to dance, braids swiveling in the open air

Hoshana

For Doron, little Aviv, little Raz, gone

Hoshana

For their father Yoni aching to bring them home

Hoshana

For the thousands filling city squares and sandwiches and boxes for the soldiers called

Hoshana

For the thousands giving beds, giving blood

Hoshana

For the ones who circled with Torahs in bomb shelters

Hoshana

For 260 motionless dancers

draped in white like Torahs in rows

Hoshana

Holy holy holy

Hoshana

For the earth screaming and soaked

Hoshana

For Darom Adom

Hoshana

For whole worlds swallowed back to dust

Hoshana

For the missiles tearing kriyah through the sky

Hoshana

For the fliers of the missing

Hoshana

For the fliers for the dead

Hoshana

For the words that fall flat

Hoshana

As too many souls ascend

Hoshana

Hoshana

Hoshana

When will you lie us down in peace?

When will these hakafot of violence end?

A Letter to My Non-Jewish Friends,

Please forgive me as I act so boldly as to speak for our collective Jewish community. I am writing in the fear that you may not know what your Jewish friends are currently going through. Surely you have heard the news of violence in Israel and some of you have even been so kind as to express your condolences. In this very lonely time, I cannot thank you enough.

Your Jewish friends and neighbors have spent the weekend in shock, misery and mourning. We are traumatized. Our families are under attack; some are missing and feared dead. Saturday morning began in dread and from there cascaded into frantic WhatsApp texts, panicked calls and constant scrolling through social media. We are not Ok.

If you are accustomed to receiving your news through the heavily sanitized Western media, please know that you are not living in the same world that we currently inhabit.

You are not seeing what we are seeing: kidnapped children, naked bodies massacred and dragged through streets, parents murdered in front of their children, the elderly dumped into the back of pickup trucks; pages and pages of images of missing young adults, feared dead or taken hostage in Gaza to be tortured and paraded in the streets.

Many young adults were attending a “nature party” music festival, as if Coachella was suddenly infiltrated by dozens of masked gunmen, arriving on machine-gun laden trucks, motorcycles and descending in hang gliders, thirsty for blood. Parents are posting pictures of their children, asking if anyone has seen them to please call them. There are dozens and dozens of such posts.

You have not seen the video of the frightened Jewish young boy, mocked, abused and taunted for fun by his terrorist captors. You have not seen people dancing in the streets and handing out candy to celebrate the news of Jewish blood.

You missed the TikTok videos and live streams of armed gunmen slaughtering parents in front of their children. You don't know about the houses set afire to burn alive the families huddled within their safe rooms. We have seen all of it. And we know those who filmed it wanted us to see it and shared it with glee. And there is a world in which these videos are distributed in joyful celebration.

Moreover, you might not understand the historical lens with which we receive these images, a history of mutilated Jewish bodies and killing Jews for sport. To say that Saturday was Israel's Pearl Harbor underestimates the sorrow and rage of the moment. At least the Japanese attackers had the dignity to focus upon military targets. They did not celebrate the animalistic torture of children and families. Candy was not passed out on the streets of Tokyo when the news of dead Americans was received. To see these images of tortured Jews invokes ghosts passed down from our great grandparents and beyond. We bear both the guilt and shame that it has happened again.

Our friends in Israel grieve. I can say without a doubt that there is not a single Jew in Israel who is not connected somehow to someone who was murdered over the weekend. The same goes for many Jews here in the US.

Here in America, your Jewish friends are under siege. Many of us spent the High Holy Days dealing with bomb threats. Did you know that many synagogues had to be evacuated last month? And that this happens to us all the time? Did you know that antisemitic attacks are soaring by double digits each year, with a 36% increase just last year? Do you perform regular bomb sweeps of your preschools? We do. Are you forced to employ professional security teams to protect you around the clock? We do. And each time we do, we need to find the resources or cut from our programming to find the proper funding. Sometimes, it's not enough and we have to call in the police as well.

When violence erupts between Russia and Ukraine, neither Russian nor Ukrainian churches must solicit professional protection for fear of attack. But we do. We are threatened by the far left and the far right, those who hearken to Hamas' call for the destruction of world Jewry and those who march alongside the Proud Boys. We have seen our synagogues attacked and our congregants killed. We do not feel safe.

Many of our political representatives offer infuriating words of moral equivocation in defense of murdering Jews. We hear the whataboutisms and the disinterested shrugs for a region inconveniently stained with blood. But worst of all, so many of our representatives remain utterly silent. Surely a raucous outcry will come when Israel inevitably defends itself.

But when Jews are murdered for simply being Jews, and when we American Jews are targeted for the same, the silence is deafening.

There are certainly those who have spoken out with empathy and clear denouncement of such cruelty. We are thankful for the light they provide in this time of darkness.

I wish I was in the mood for peace - but I am not. How can one talk peace as children are murdered over TikTok?

In this moment, we are reminded that unlike our ancestors, we live in a time in which Jews have gained the ability to defend themselves. This power was not given to us but was won through blood. We no longer need to beseech the local feudal lord nor prove our worth to the ruling monarch. We will do it ourselves.

The Jewish state is now beginning to surely, unapologetically defend itself. Vanished is the false security that a racist, ruthless threat can be endured through the occasional skirmish. You cannot make peace with those who distribute candy to children in celebration that yours have been murdered. And now, Israel will act like any other country would if it was invaded by a blood thirsty neighbor and its citizens murdered, tortured, kidnapped and mutilated. It will do whatever it needs to make sure this can never happen again.

On behalf of a mournful Jewish people,

Rabbi Jonathan Jaffe

Still, with Rabbi Jaffe's piercing words echoing we allow ourselves that in amidst our tears and anger to hope that one day, some day, perhaps in the messianic time, there will be peace: Found in Rabin's bloodied pocket, sung immediately before his assassination

El Maleh Rachamim

El Maleh Rachamim -- Compassionate God,
We pray
not to wipe out haters
but to banish hatred.
Not to destroy sinners
but to lessen sin.
Our prayers are not for a perfect world
but a better one
Where parents are not bereaved
by the savagery of sudden attacks
Or children orphaned
by blades glinting in a noonday sun.
Help us dear God,
to have the courage to remain strong,
to stand fast.
Spread Your light
on the dark hearts of the slayers
And Your comfort
to the bereaved hearts of families of the slain.
Let calm return to Your city Jerusalem,
and to Israel, Your blessed land.
We grieve with those wounded
in body and spirit,
pray for the fortitude of our sisters and brothers,
and ask You to awaken the world to our struggle and help us bring peace.
Rabbi David Wolpe

Kaddish Yatom: Mourners' Kaddish

The Kutz family: Aviv, Livnat, Rotem, Yontan and Iftach, found dead in the safe room of their burnt down home with Aviv's body wrapped over his family.

Awad Darawshe, a Muslim paramedic, 23 murdered by Hamas at the music festival where he raced to treat the wounded.

Daniel Levi, a Peruvian doctor who lived in a kibbutz in the south of Israel, sent his family away without him while he stayed to help and treat the wounded. Murdered.

Dozens of decapitated babies, names unknown.

Valentin (Eli) Ghnassia, 23, a lone soldier from France, interred at Jerusalem's Mt. Herzl Military Cemetery

Tamar, Yonatan, and their children six year old Shachar, six year old Arbel and four year old Omer, murdered at Niz oz.

And the over 1,200 Israelis slain.

For being.