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Kol Rinah  
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## Marching for our Lives: Exodus, Freedom and Justice

Today, thousands of Americans are marching, in St. Louis, in Washington D.C., and in dozens, maybe hundreds, of communities around our nation. Today is a March For Our Lives.

As they explain on their website, “March For Our Lives is created by, inspired by, and led by students across the country who will no longer risk their lives waiting for someone else to take action to stop the epidemic of mass school shootings that has become all too familiar. In the tragic wake of the seventeen lives brutally cut short in Florida, politicians are telling us that now is not the time to talk about guns. March For Our Lives believes the time is now.”

“On March 24, the kids and families of March For Our Lives will take to the streets of Washington, DC to demand that their lives and safety become a priority. The collective voices of the March For Our Lives movement will be heard.”<sup>1</sup>

When have we marched for our lives?

The Israelites marched for their lives when they left Egypt, leaving the paradigmatic home of tyranny and oppression, for an uncertain future that just might be better than slavery.

Pursued by the Egyptians, the Israelites passed through the Red Sea, the split sea, the water in walls on either side of them, marching for their very lives.

Wandering in the desert for forty years, waiting to be ready to enter the land of Israel, the Israelites marched. Marching was their life.

The Israelites marched the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, to the Temple. It was the march of their lives!

And when the Temple was destroyed in 586 BCE, we were marched as captives to Babylonia.

We returned home to Israel seventy years later, now marching ourselves.

In 70 CE, the Temple was destroyed. And after the Bar Kokhba rebellion in 135 CE, we marched from our Holy City, expelled from Jerusalem.

We marched for our lives to ships to leave England when we were expelled in 1290.

We marched for our lives from France when we were expelled 1306 and again in 1394.

In 1492, expelled from Spain, we marched for our lives.

And in 1497, expelled from Portugal, we marched for our lives.

During the Shoah, we marched on forced marches, for our lives, to our deaths.

And in May 1948, we marched for our lives to war to defend the newly-declared State of Israel.

In 1967, Israeli soldiers marched for their lives, and for Israel, in the Six-Day War, reclaiming the entire historic land of Israel.

And in 1973, Israeli soldiers marched for their lives, and for the lives of every Jewish Israeli, after being attacked on Yom Kippur.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://marchforourlives.com/mission-statement/>

On December 6, 1987, hundreds of thousands of Jews marched in Washington, D.C. for freedom for Soviet Jewry.

As Americans, so many of us have marched—about Vietnam, about civil rights, about racial equity, about LGBTQ rights, about guns, about Israel, about abortion.

When we march now, what are we really marching against? We are marching against Egypt, from Egypt, where, as the midrash teaches, the pyramids were built with the blood and bones of our people as mortar. We are marching from oppression, against tyranny, from a culture that cares more about stones than bones, that cares more about glory than children.

But the truth is, we don't want to have to march for our lives, or anyone else's. The world for which we yearn is a world where our lives are safe, a world where all lives are safe, where black lives, white lives, blue lives, immigrants' lives, poor people's lives, all matter. Where no one's life matters less. We yearn for a world where life is treasured.

But until we achieve "a world where human dignity is real and God's presence is manifest,"<sup>2</sup> where human dignity is real *so that* God's presence *may* be manifest, we will continue to march. We must continue to march.

How do we march? We march every time we speak out for justice. We march every time we donate in support of our values. We march every time we pray and ask God to bring peace upon us, over all the people Israel, and all who dwell on earth. We march every time we march.

And we march every time we notice the ways the world is not yet how it needs to be. We march every time we imagine a better, more humane humanity.

We march at every Passover Seder as we remember our previous marches, and imagine our future marches.

Whatever you do, don't stop marching.

Look around, and you'll see the people you're marching with.

We're all marching together.

Some days, it will seem like we're marching in circles.

Some days, it will seem like we're marching backwards.

But Pesach reminds us that we have already left Egypt. And someday, if only we can keep marching, we will arrive. And maybe not us, but maybe our children, or their children. But only if we keep marching.

So let's keep marching. Marching For Our Lives.

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<sup>2</sup> To use my teacher Rabbi Shai Held's phrase.