

HOLOCAUST

SHEFOCH HAMOTCHA

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We pause in our celebration to remember the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, the Holocaust, and the ways that those in the present who choose to testify to the possibility of transformation become the focus of everyone's anger and displaced frustrations, and eventually their murderous rage. Being a spiritual or moral vanguard is risky. No wonder it's easier to assimilate into the celebration of money and cynicism about the contemporary world.

Tonight we remember our six million sisters and brothers who perished at the hands of the Nazis and at the hands of hundreds of thousands of anti-Semites — many of them Germans, Poles, Croats, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Romanians, Hungarians, Austrians — who assisted those Nazis throughout Europe. We remember also the Jewish martyrs throughout the generations — oppressed, beaten, raped, and murdered by European Christians. And we remember tonight with pride the Battle of the Warsaw Ghetto, and the tens of thousands of Jews who resisted, fought back, joined Partisan units, or engaged in acts of armed violence against the oppressors.

It is not fashionable to speak about these atrocities, particularly because some reactionary Jews use these memories to legitimate human rights violations against Palestinians — as though they were still fighting the Nazis, as though shooting Palestinians angered by expulsion from or Israeli occupation of their homeland could somehow compensate for our own failure to have taken up arms soon enough against the Nazi oppressors. Others use the violence done to us as an excuse to be insensitive to the violence done to others — as though our pain was the only pain — or to legitimate a general “goyim-bashing” attitude based on a total distrust of non-Jews. But though the memories of past oppression are sometimes misused to support insensitivity to others, it is still right for us to talk about our pain, what was done to us, how unspeakable, how outrageous.

Permitting ourselves to articulate our anger — rather than trying to bury it, forget it, or minimize it — is the only way that we can get beyond it. So, tonight it is appropriate to speak about our history, about the Holocaust, and about the ways that the American government and peoples around the world failed to respond to our cries and our suffering. What was done to us was wrong, disgusting, an assault on the sanctity of human life and on God.

It is with righteous indignation that Jews have traditionally called out “*Shefokh Chamatkha ha'goyim aher lo yeda'ukha*” — pour out your wrath, God, on those people who have acted toward us in a way that fails to recognize Your holy spirit within us as it is within all human beings. Tonight we reaffirm our commitment to the messianic vision of a world of peace and justice, in which inequalities have been abolished and our human capacities for love and solidarity and creativity and freedom are allowed to flourish, in which all people will recognize and affirm in each other the spirit of God. In that day, living in harmony with nature and with each other, all peoples will participate in acknowledging God's presence on earth. We remain committed to the struggles in our own time that will contribute to making that messianic vision possible someday.

Partisan Song

*Al nah tomar heeney darkee ha'achrona
Et or ha yom heesteru shmey ha'ananah
Zeh yom nichsafnu lo od ya'al veyavo
Umitz adeynu ode yareem ANACHNU POE*

Do not say that we have reached the end of hope

Though clouds of darkness makes it hard for us to cope
The time of peace, justice and loving is still near,
Our people lives! We proudly shout that WE ARE HERE.

WELCOMING THE POSSIBILITY OF THE MESSIANIC AGE

We open the door for Elijah – the prophet who heralds the coming of the Messiah and a world in which all peoples will coexist peacefully – acknowledging the Image of God in one another. To deny the possibility of fundamental transformation, to be stuck in the pain of past oppression, or to build our religion around memories of the Holocaust and other forms of suffering is to give the ultimate victory to those who oppressed us. To testify to God's presence in the world is to insist on shifting our focus from pain to hope, and to dedicate our energies to transforming this world and ourselves. We still believe in a world based on love, generosity, and openheartedness. We continue to affirm the Unity of All Being.

*Eliyahu ha navee Eliyahu HaTishbee Eliyahu
Eliyahu Eliyahu HaGeeladee
Beem heyrah beyameynu, Yavoe eyleynu eem
mashi'ach ben David
Miryam Ha nivi'ah Oz vezimrah beyadah
Miryam Miriyam le taken ha'olam
Beem heyrah beyameynu Tavoe eileynu eem
meymey ha'yeshua*

Now let us build together a communal vision of what messianic redemption would look like.

Close your eyes and let some picture of messianic redemption appear in your minds. Then, open your eyes and share with others your picture of the world we want to build together.

Imagine

Imagine there's all kindness, it's easy if you try
No Hell below us, above us only sky
Imagine all the people living for today...
Imagine there's no countries, it isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for, and no oppression too.
Imagine all the people, living life in peace
You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one.
I hope someday you'll join us...and the world will be as one.
Imagine no possessions, I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger, a sisterhood of man.
Imagine all the people, sharing all the world
You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one.
I hope someday you'll join us, and the world will be as one.
Imagine love is flowing, no scarcity of care
Holiness surrounds us, the sacred everywhere
Imagine awe and wonder, replacing greed and fear.
You may say we're all dreamers, but we're not the only ones
Tikkun and Spirit soaring, and the world will live as one!

Blessing over the fourth cup of wine.

Sing songs of liberation!

