THE MESSIAH AIN'T COMING SO YOU'LL HAVE TO BE IT
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I've had two predominant and competing emotions these past few days, hopelessness and pride. Maybe you have had them too?

The fact that these two emotions sit generally on the opposite ends of the human psychological spectrum - speaks to the emotional turmoil that afflicts my soul right now. It's not that I vacillate between the two, but rather I find I feel an overall impending sense of dread, that my life as a Jews and ours as a Jewish community has been ripped and ruptured on a scale that I had only read about front he darkest days of our long and tortured history and at the same time I

am so proud of our people, so proud of our values, so proud of community, pulling together as the world as we knew it is falling apart.

There is a realization that we are living in a moment that will be in the histories of the Jews written centuries from now. It is the nature and lesson of our tradition to look back at events and see through the 20/20 hindsight of history when everything changed.

We recall the moment when Torah was given at Mount Sinai, and see that was when we became a people, a people of the book.

We crossed from the shore of slavery through the parted seas to freedom, a story of redemption that we return to again and again in our most harrowing times. If we can make it out of those narrow places we can make it out of anything, God will redeem us again.

Tomorrow we will read of Abraham hearing God's call to leave his father's house to seek a new home, a new identity in a new and distant land - Lech lecha - go find yourself and in doing so he founded a people and Judaism. We listen for our calling as people and as a community, we answer hinnei time

and again we rise to the moment and seek justice and pursue it.

But as is the Jewish way, we cannot ignore our darker moments in history, those times when our survival, precarious as it was, seemed finally at its end.

A new pharaoh is crowned and Jews go from valued immigrants in Egypt to tortured slaves, how did we survive?

The Amalakites attack our exodus from the rear preying on the elderly and the youngest who make

up the slower ranks on our march through the desert.

Haman issues a decree that all the Jews of Persia will die, a gallows are built, a lot is cast, a date is set, the clock is about to strike midnight for the Jews.

The destruction of the first and second temples, sitting by the waters of Babylon and weeping, if I forget thee O Jerusalem may my right hand lose its grip. Judaism never looked the same after the second temple was destroyed. It took 2,000 years and a Holocaust for us to return in sovereignty to our native homeland and still to this very day we are

fighting and Jews are dying to simply live in it in peace.

For students of history you will have heard of the Kishinev pogrom in 1903, it was from that moment of atrocities, not at all dissimilar to October 7th that Zionism became a mass movement.

Twenty-five years later as Jews made a desperate aliyah to reclaim their indigenous homeland another pogrom, this time in Hebron, not Egyptians, Amalekites, Haman or Cossacks but Arabs who in 1929, took out the old playbook and massacred

Jewish families yet again. From that moment the armed conflict between Arab and Jews began.

People talk about the cycle of violence, it's not a cycle.

For 3,500 years with the lone exceptions of the Davidic Dynasty and the brief reign of the Maccabees who fought against forced assimilation at the hands of the Assyrian Greeks, it has been a one way street of violence against Jews.

Until 75 years ago, with the founding of the State of Israel Jews finally had an army, they finally had

power, they fought back. Having an army didn't end violence against Jews as we stand here tonight on the fifth anniversary of the massacre at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh but it changed it.

The wholesale slaughter of Jews in their homes, in their towns, kibbutzim and villages - that was what Israel and the IDF were created to prevent. While we have never been able to let our guard down, not there or here, as evidenced by the guards outside our synagogues long before October 7th, the eternal vigilance of the IDF - we had a sense, maybe it was false, apparently it was a false sense of security. The danger we now realize if we didn't want to accept or

know, never went away, it was just kept at bay by an army in the East and strong allies in the west.

Everything has changed, but really nothing has changed; only our perception of reality. Yes they really do hate us, yes many, many people do not like Jews. It’s not about Israel, they didn’t like us before Israel, they don’t like us now.

We are not at war with Hamas as a military or even a terrorist organization, we are at war with an ideology, and it is a hatred that has stalked us since we marched out of slavery in Egypt.

As security expert Ian Bremmer has written: "Hamas is as much an idea as it is an organization made up of specific people: Israel can kill its entire leadership and destroy its infrastructure, but the movement and ideology will survive in one form or another so long as the political conditions that underpin its support continue to fester." Those conditions are not merely the existence of the State of Israel, they are the existence of Jews. Hamas is just the latest manifestation of that genocidal thirst. As Jean-Paul Sartre wrote, "if the Jew did not exist, the anti-semite would invent him."

Hence my feeling of hopelessness.

But I said I have two competing and conflicting emotions battling for attention inside me, the other is tremendous pride.

I look at our community, at how we have pulled together to support each other, how we have mobilized to combat the hatred, ignorance and indifference. We may be alone against the world, but we are not alone, we have each other. (and for the time being two US carrier groups stationed in the mediterranean sea, thank you Joe Biden, Tony Blikin, John Kirby and many in your administration for everything you have said and done.)

For generations our people have prayer for the messiah to come, we want moshiach now has been the call from the shtetl.

I think these past few weeks have taught me that the messiah is not coming from heaven, which was really never a Jewish idea. Nor will the messiah come from outside, as our people have long held, the messiah will come from within. I don;t think the source of our salvation will be one of us, but I am certain that it is all of us.

We are not powerless, not simply because we have an army, though that is something we have lacked in almost all those other moments in history. The source of our salvation will be what it has always been, the reason why in spite of all those times to kill us, in spite of all the times the eulogy for the Jew has been written we are still here. The source of our salvation will be Judaism itself. The power of our ideas, our values and our resolve to pass them on, *L'dor vdor* from one generation to the next.

Rabbi Jeffrey Myers, rabbi of Tree of Life/Or L'Simcha Congregation and a survivor of the Pittsburgh massacre wrote, "Part of my answer has

regularly been that the more antisemitism they do, the more Jewish we must do.”

I don’t simply mean coming to synagogue and studying Torah, you know my theology and my Judaism well enough that is not how we raise up our collective salvation. I mean we must bring more Jewish into the world. Our values, our love of life and humanity, our pursuit of justice and righteousness, our love for the stranger, our quest for knowledge and understanding - the world needs that now more than ever.

We are the messiah and the world have been waiting for not just for us, but for all of humanity in this moment. That may sound boastful, even arrogant, pompous and pretentious. But its true, we don’t massacre people, and on those few, very few occasions over 3500 years when we do, we tear our clothes and mourn and wail at our own moral failure, we don’t celebrate it. That’s not just an indictment of those who dance in the streets over dead Jews today, it's an indictment of those who dance in the streets over any atrocities. We strive to fight a moral war, as moral as war can be, we pray for peace and we mean it, not just for Jews but for the whole world, because we know we won;t have it unless others do

and even then its no guarantee for us, so it must be real Shalom, whole and complete peace.

You know what we call that, we call that the messianic age, when all the horrors of the world have been solved not from heaven but by human beings, God's creation, charged to create heaven on earth for all humanity.

We are not fight simply against Hamas, we are fighting against hatred, against injustice, against the suffering of all people. That gives me pride, that gives me hope, that is worth fighting for.