



*Joanne Fink*

## **Our Collective Heartbreak**

Disbelief, fear, anger, grief, despair, love, anguish, longing, solidarity, alienation, hope: since October 7 we've felt all of these and more. Some of us have felt betrayed by the words, or the silence, of others around us. Some of us have been unable to sleep. Some have been unable to pray; others, unable to do much else. This is our attempt to give voice to some of what's in our hearts. We hope that it will speak to and for your heart too. May these words help us through these difficult days and into the work of building the just peace of which we dream.

*– The Builders at Bayit*



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## Hostage / Last Shabbat

Once upon a time  
Last weekend  
It was my older son's third birthday  
I laid in bed, next to my baby  
Opened the news  
Tears started streaming into my ears  
I was lying there  
Crying  
In absolute silence  
Reading  
And the images started rising  
They haven't stopped coming since then  
The sand in the desert plays hide and seek  
Rising and dancing  
And it's opening its mouth and  
It swallowed them up.

Once upon the time  
Last weekend  
We awakened and discovered  
That we are naked  
Helpless  
And vulnerable  
That it is possible  
To shoot us, surprise us, abduct us, rape us,  
Hunt us down  
Like sheep.  
Never again,  
Is suddenly over.  
I make applesauce for breakfast  
And wonder what happens there  
In the tunnels  
A gap.

Once upon the time  
Last weekend,  
Something changed the composition of my body  
My memories  
And the way that I breathe  
Something happened



To my ideas of the future, my visions, my loves  
There is no dream that has not been altered  
And no memory of the past remained intact  
I go to the playground, I am asking  
What are we doing?  
Nothing new has happened  
But something happened  
I lost my sense of protection  
The last safe place on earth for us.  
The walls have been breached.

Once upon the time  
I woke up,  
And God had the face of a stranger.  
We are sitting shivah here together,  
With a bunch of others  
Watching the images  
Of children and plastic bags and women and motorcycles and men and masks and crumbling  
buildings and guns and knives and books about how to murder babies and crying fathers and  
smiling teenagers on old photos and at some point in all this all our hearts are breaking and  
nothing can stop it and please stop.

Once upon the time  
Last weekend,  
My heart stopped beating,  
Only for one split second  
And then I changed a diaper and  
Did two weddings.  
I am singing  
Of a vision of all of us singing, filling the streets...  
I don't want to bring my children  
But I wish I was going  
I know  
Only bad news will come  
I am taking little,  
small breaths to keep the air in me moving  
*Baruch Atah Adonai,*  
*Natan v'Lakach.*

Blessed are You, Adonai,  
Who Gave and Has Taken.

*R. Sonja K. Pilz, PhD*

## Red Hand



*Mike Cockrill*



## For Strength On Social Media

God, just now someone that I don't know  
rejoiced to hear people like me were dead.  
I can barely breathe, shocky with grief.  
Or maybe, worse, it's someone I do know  
who doesn't see how carelessly they've cut  
the core of who I am, or doesn't care.  
We are not designed to hold so much.  
Our hearts are leaky vessels, prone to break.  
Shade me in Your sukkah, God, and block  
the noxious hatred seeping through the walls --  
the words I see, the angry chants I hear  
the fear I taste because I've always known  
my forebears were despised. I could be, too.  
Help me wash the hatred from my screen  
and scrub the ugly symbols from my mind.  
Help me shake their callous, painful claim  
we're not real human beings / no one cares.  
God, I know You care. You grieve each time  
a single soul is pinched out like a wick  
before its time to shine. Give me the strength  
to let people be wrong, and not be swayed.

*R. Rachel Barenblat*

## No Words



*Joanne Fink*



## Blessing

בשם יהו"ה הרחמן המרחם *B'shem Adonai ha-rah̄aman ha-m'rāheim.*

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ *Bism'illah ar-rahman ar-rahim.*

Holy One of Blessing –

You Who harmonize

all languages and Names:

We ask Your grace and compassion

on all in harm's way,

on all who suffer and fear,

on all who mourn,

on all who work for peace.

We ask Your grace and compassion to inspire our own.

May we balance patience and passion for justice.

May the better angels of our humanity inspire us

as repairers of the breach, resolvers of conflict,

and healers of our broken world.

May the One we call God

spread a canopy of protection and peace

over all who mourn.

May the memories of the thousands who died

be for a blessing.

And in their merit

may all of us help hasten the day

of which Isaiah wrote:

when nation will not take up sword against nation

and nobody will learn war anymore.

*R. David Evan Markus*



## Jewish Star



*Joanne Fink*

## Our Hearts



Joanne Fink

### I Can't Find the Words

I can't find the words, and so...

*Baruch Dayan Ha'Emet, blessed be the True Judge.*

*Zichronam livracha, may their memories forever be for a blessing.*

*Send peace to all who mourn, and comfort to all who are bereaved.*

*We can't find the words, and so...*

*Divine One, Podeh u Matzil, rescue and save the shvuyim, the hostages, now, please.*

*Protect the first responders, the rescuers, rescuing those hurt and in need.*

*Ana, El Na, Refa na lanu: please, God, heal the injured, heal us.*

I can't find the words, and so...

God, shield the children of Abraham, take heed of Sarah, listen to Hagar's children.  
Protect our children, all of our children.  
*Ana Adonai, hoshi'ah na, Ana Adonai, hatzlicha na: please God, deliver us, save us.*

*We can't find the words, and so...*

*Please, Adonai, don't let hate and revenge rule us.  
Help us help, somehow.  
Adonai, be with us.*

I can't find the words, and so...

I walk away from social media.  
I turn inward in grief.  
I know the gate of tears is always open.

*We can't find the words, and so...*

*Am Israel Chai. May we survive and be a source of life and hope.  
We praise the Divine Source as goodness, Creator of lovingkindness.  
We will do our part to build a world of love.*

I can't find the words, and so...

I pray for shalom, I don't know when or how, but please, speedily and in our days.  
I share others' words of comfort and prayer, of mourning and loss, of anger and hope.  
I weep.

*We can't find the words, and so we amplify others'...*

*"The real 'revenge' for murder is achieving peace."<sup>1</sup>  
The only way to honour our dead is achieving peace.  
May we make it so. Ken yehi ratzon.*

*Rabbi Dara Lithwick*

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<sup>1</sup> Member of the Knesset Ayman Odeh [quoting](#) Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish, physician and peace activist, who lost three daughters in the 2008 war and 25 family members the week of October 8, 2023.

## Home



*R. Allie Fischman*

## Afar

*For Jews and Palestinians in Diaspora*

We're over here:  
Too far to help, but not too far to feel.  
We're not living in a war zone  
But we can't sleep either  
Because when someone harms you  
We feel pain.  
Holding you from afar –  
Never really apart.

*R. Rachel Barenblat*



## **I Can't Sleep**

I can't sleep  
Neither can I  
Me neither  
It's shock  
I understand  
Same  
It happens  
It's stress  
Me, too  
Too many feelings  
So much pain  
I see you  
Shamati  
Sending love  
I'm with you  
Call me  
It's scary  
I can't stop thinking  
The children  
Can't read  
Can't write  
Me, too  
It's grief  
How can I help  
It hurts  
So cruel  
So stupid  
What should I be doing  
What should I have done  
It happens  
It's hate  
It's economics  
No sleep  
Too soon  
Not now  
Not tonight  
Me, too

*Trisha Arlin*

## The Sacred Call of Justice

THERE  
IS A  
TIME  
WHEN  
THE  
SACRED  
CALL OF  
Justice  
COMPELS  
US TO  
Action

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*Joanne Fink*

## Buried

I can't even wish  
for a time machine --  
we'd argue  
which fork in the road.

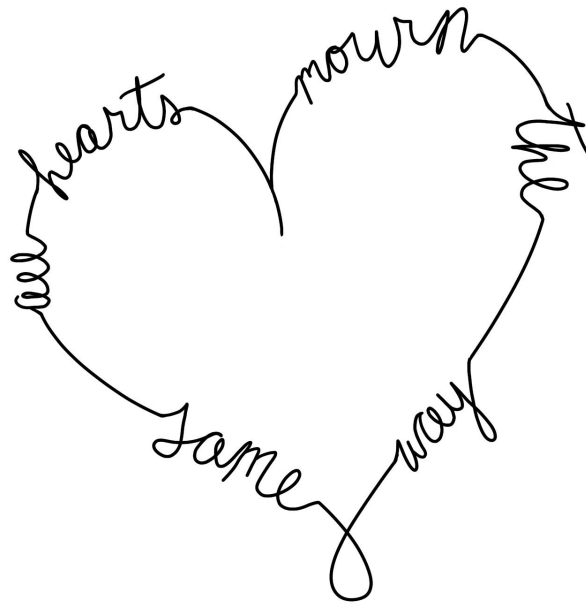
The blood of beloveds  
cries out from the ground.  
Every bent and broken body  
was someone's beloved.

If I say  
*we're more alike than not,*  
*all our hearts are shattered*  
someone will disagree, but

how can I not grieve  
with every bereft parent,  
most treasured hope  
now buried.

*R. Rachel Barenblat*

## All Hearts



*R. Allie Fischman*

## Praying for Peace



*Joanne Fink*



## Embrace



*R. Allie Fischman*

## Falling Flowers



*Mike Cockrill*



## **Beloved Of The Soul**

Compassionate Oneness,

Imagine us all,  
Everyone,  
Sweet as honey,  
Kind and loving.

Radiant with life,  
So pure at the start.  
Then we forget ourselves  
And learn about pain.

We yearn for safety, everyone,  
And then we kill for our religion  
And die for our homes.  
But oh, we can be so splendid!

Show us Your love!  
Keep us sane  
And help us to remember  
Our beautiful souls.

Amen

*Trisha Arlin*

## The Religious Factor

In 1998 I davened the afternoon prayers  
with Rabbi Menachem Froman.  
Just the two of us in his shul  
in the settlement of Tekoa,  
the ancient home of prophet Amos.  
Later he told our group of 23 American Jews  
the mistake politicians make  
is that when they negotiate for peace  
they ignore the religious factor:  
That of the Jews and that of the Muslims –  
“Neither will ever leave the Land,” he told us,  
“In Judaism and Islam the Land belongs to God,  
not to any of us – that’s the religious factor.”

The next day, I sat six feet from Sheikh Yassin, founder of Hamas,  
Six feet, the perfect distance for the depth of a grave.  
He was brutally honest, no duplicity like a politician.  
He told us, “No Israel, no two-state solution,  
No negotiations, and violence is our tool.”  
I’ve heard it said that when your enemies tell you  
what they believe and what they intend to do, believe them.  
He quoted parts of the [Hamas Charter](#) to us:

“The Day of Judgment will not come until Muslims  
will fight the Jews (killing the Jews)  
when the Jews will hide behind rocks and trees.  
The rocks and trees will say,:  
‘O Muslims, there is a Jew hiding behind me, come on and kill him!....’”

“Initiatives, the so-called peaceful solutions,  
and the international conferences to resolve the Palestinian problem,  
are all contrary to the beliefs of the Islamic Resistance Movement.  
For renouncing any part of Palestine means renouncing part of the religion.  
There is no solution for the Palestinian question except through Jihad.”

I understood then what Rabbi Froman meant  
By “the religious factor.”  
I’ve heard it said that when your enemies tell you  
what they believe and what they intend to do, believe them.

*Rabbi David Zaslow*



## A Prayer for Israel

We pray for Israel and the safety and security of all its citizens.

Bless those who fight for justice  
with the strength and skill needed  
to defend their homeland and protect their loved ones.

We pray for the bereaved and broken-hearted.

Bless those who grieve  
with hope, healing, comfort and connection,  
and the knowledge that they are not alone.

We pray for the Jewish community throughout the world.

Bless those connected by ancestry and history  
with the ability to work together  
to end the era of growing antisemitism.

We pray for our world leaders determining history.

Bless them with the wisdom and willingness  
to act decisively for the greatest good  
and to bring a swift end to this unwelcome war.

May the words of Isaiah 2:4:

*“Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
neither shall they learn war anymore”*  
become true in our day—in this very hour.

Source of Goodness, shine Your healing light on us!

Bless us, and all those in Israel we hold in our hearts.  
Shelter us, shield us, and show us the path to peace.

*Joanne Fink*



## For Vivian

If I made Aliyah  
It wouldn't be fun.  
I'd have to be an activist  
Against the fascists of any side.  
But I'm too old, I'm tired,  
I just want to stay in  
And scroll through Facebook  
And watch TV.  
So I stay home  
In my American nest.

But not Vivian!  
Peace Activist, Humanitarian, Progressive.  
Hostage.  
74, older than me.  
She reached out  
And helped when help was needed:  
Jews and Palestinians.  
A good person, the kind of Jew I like best,  
You might call her a *freyer*, a sucker,  
But she is my hero.

Vivian wasn't asked for her resume  
Before they took her.

In her honor,  
From my New York safety,  
I hug nuance  
As I speak up against hate and intransigence  
And identify the perpetrators of both sides.  
Let no one off the hook!  
Everyone may despise us but that's the gig,  
We learn it young. Screw it,  
Do good anyway,  
For Vivian.

*Trisha Arlin*



## You Asked If I'm Okay

I'm not okay, I'm  
crying at the drop of a hat

Whose hat is that, crushed brim  
covered in dust and mud and blood  
by the upended carriage and bicycle and  
basket of smashed stinking vegetables

I cannot watch and have not seen  
but caring souls have told me.  
The words I've read have been too much to convey the abject terror lasting hours  
upon hours upon hours upon hiding....like Anne

Where did they pee, I wonder  
while waiting to die  
or be rescued  
not knowing which will come to pass and all is  
still confusion

I'm not okay in this helpless bounty while  
you do not know what happened  
to your child, brother, mother, neighbor, friend.

Why?  
Why?  
My heart is a wailing wall.

*Sherrill Cropper*

## My Heart



*R. Allie Fischman*



## A Second Verse for Hatikvah

כָּל עוֹד בְּלִבְבֵנוּ פְּנִימָה    Kol od baleivav p'nimah  
 נֶפֶשׁ יְהוּדֵי הוֹמִיָּה,    Nefesh Yehudi homiyah  
 וּלְפָאֵתַי מִזְרַח קְדִימָה,    Ul'fa'atei mizrah kadimah  
 עֵין לְצִיּוֹן צוֹפִיָּה,    Ayin l'Tziyon tzofiyah.

עוֹד לֹא אַבְדָּה תִּקְוַתְנוּ,    Od lo avdah tikvateinu  
 הַתִּקְוָה בֵּת שְׁנוֹת אֲלָפִים,    Hatikvah bat sh'not alpayim  
 לְהִיּוֹת עִם חֶפְשֵׁי בְּאַרְצֵנוּ,    Lihyot am hofshi b'artzeinu  
 אֶרֶץ צִיּוֹן וִירוּשָׁלַיִם.    Eretz Tziyon v'Yerushalayim

As long as in the heart within  
 the Jewish soul yearns,  
 and onward toward the east  
 an eye still gazes toward Zion,

Our hope is not yet lost,  
 the hope of two thousand years,  
 to be a free nation in our land,  
 the land of Zion and Jerusalem.

כְּשֶׁחֹשֶׁךְ בָּא לְהַשְׁתַּלֵּט    K'shehahoshekh ba l'hishtaleit  
 וַיִּצִיבוֹת מִתְחַמְקֶת,    Viy'tzivut mithameket,  
 וְהַנְּשָׁמָה בְּמַהוּמָה נִמְצָאת    V'haneshamah bim'humah nimtzeit  
 וּמַחְלֹקֶת לְלֹא פְתָרוֹן נִרְאִית,    U'mahloket l'lo pitron nireit,

עוֹד לֹא אַבְדָּה יְעוּדֵינוּ,    Od lo avdah yi'udeinu,  
 הַתִּקְוָה עָלֶיךָ חוֹלְמִים,    Hatikvah alehah holmim:  
 לְהִתְאַחַד בְּיָמֵינוּ    L'hitahaid b'yameinu  
 אֹר לְאֲנוּשׁוֹת לְעוֹלָמִים.    Or la'enoshut l'olamim

When darkness threatens to overwhelm,  
 And stability seems distant,  
 When the soul is in turmoil  
 And there seems no solution to dispute,

Our destiny is still not lost,  
 The hope of which we dream,  
 To be united in our day,  
 An eternal light for humanity.

*R. David Evan Markus and Rabbanit Bracha Jaffe*



## About Us

*Co-created by members of Bayit's Liturgical Arts Working Group, 2023.*

*Bayit is building a soulful, inclusive and meaningful Jewish life for all ages and stages. Our visionary teams of clergy, liturgists, artists, educators and other thought leaders across and beyond denominational life develop, test, refine and distribute tools for a Jewish future always under construction.*

*Find our collaborations here: [Liturgical Arts Working Group](#)*

*And our bios here: [Builder Biographies](#)*