

A Prayer for This 'Different' Seder 2024

Rabbi Noam E. Marans

Director of Interreligious and Intergroup Relations, American Jewish Committee

Mah nishtanah? Why is this seder different from all other seders? Because at this seder, the deadliest day for the Jewish people since the Holocaust remains a fresh, open wound which continues to bleed. The October 7 massacre in Israel, indelibly seared in our hearts and minds.

Loved ones are sorely missed yet painfully remembered as their seats at the seder table remain empty.

The hostages of diverse faiths and nationalities, men, women, and children, dead or clinging to life, linger in brutal, inhumane captivity.

The innocents, Israelis and Palestinians, Jews, Christians, and Muslims, are too many victims to bear.

And more, an ominous worldwide resurgence of antisemitism, instilling in Jews a vulnerability few thought they would ever experience in their lifetimes.

Vehi she'amdah: In every generation there are those who seek our destruction, but the Holy One delivers us from their hands.

Anu tefillah, we pray.

We pray for the victims of horrific terrorism and their families whose lives have been shattered.

We pray for the hostages and their loved ones, who continue to live through unending horror.

We pray for the innocents who are victim to the war, human beings created in the image of God, the dead, the injured, the hungry, and the displaced.

We pray for the soldiers in harm's way, the wounded, and the maimed. May they return safely to the warm embrace of their closest ones.

We pray for the purveyors and deliverers of humanitarian aid who endeavor to do what is right and needed.

We pray for the peacemakers. May they bring shalom to all.

We pray for the world to wake up and say: there is no place for antisemitism in our society. Confronting all forms of hate is everyone's responsibility.

Shirah chadashah: Let us sing to God a new song, a hymn that longs to extol our deliverance from despair to joy, from mourning to celebration, from darkness to light, from enslavement to redemption, from war to peace.