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**"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of convenience and comfort, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy,"
- Martin Luther King, Jr.**

We stand at a dramatic juncture in the face of dangerous legislative initiatives whose goals are to weaken the legal system and to endanger the checks and balances of Israeli Democracy. It will limit the rights of minorities in a way that will truly endanger the pluralistic nature of the state and even its existence as a liberal democracy that is the home of the entire Jewish people. It will limit the rights of individuals to a life of human dignity, liberty and equality in a society that remembers that every individual is created in God's image. As a movement, we must emphasize the mitzvah of protest, in the spirit of the verse: "Do not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor." (Lev. 19:16)



"Do not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor"

After a number of years of political instability, Israeli Society is now in a period of difficult disputes and stormy internal debates. The political pendulum has been swinging wildly now for several years in a storm of social changes, a weakening of governmental and legal systems, leading to an experience of shaken identity for all of Israel's citizens.

We stand at a dramatic juncture in the face of dangerous legislative initiatives whose goals are to weaken the legal system and to endanger the checks and balances of Israeli Democracy. It will limit the rights of minorities in a way that will truly endanger the pluralistic nature of the Israeli state and even its existence as a liberal democracy that is the home of the entire Jewish people.

Against these dangers, we as a movement must emphasize the mitzvah of protest, in the spirit of the verse: "Do not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor." (Lev. 19:16)

We believe that this Judicial revolution endangers all of our rights and that we must stand on guard over the democratic frameworks that constitute the basis of our existence as a free society in the midst of polarization and division.

At the same time, we must emphasize our obligation to maintain a society that allows and encourages dialog among people of diverse opinions, a truly pluralistic society in which it is possible, desirable, and important to live together, openly listening and honestly debating in a spirit of acceptance and dignity.

Above: Reform Jewish members of Kibbutz Lotan protesting in Southern Israel

Justice, Justice Shall You Pursue: The Right and Obligation to Protest

Beginning with Scripture, we are commanded not only to guard Justice, peace, and human rights, we are required to be actively concerned about the implementation of those rights. As it is written, "Justice, justice shall you pursue," "Seek Peace and pursue it", and more. We have a moral duty to design the society in which we live, to concern ourselves that it be a Just society and that it promote the values of Liberty, Equality, and Peace. And when those values are in danger we must not be silent nor quiescent, rather we are obligated to protest, to pray with our legs and to work towards the repair of society.



"I am just making sure that the world will not change me"

// David Grossman, Excerpt from speech at the acceptance of the Erasmus Prize 2022

"Mending the World' (in Hebrew: tikkun olam) - This term originates in an ancient Jewish notion conceived over 2,000 years ago. [It] describes a fundamental component of Jewish identity: an aspiration and obligation to improve our world; a sense of moral responsibility toward all people, whether Jewish or not; and a concern for social justice and even the environment... there are still many, many people in Israel for whom despair is not an option. For whom apathy or escapism are luxuries they cannot afford and do not want. We are still here. Our parties might have lost, but our values and beliefs were not defeated, and they are more crucial than ever before... Perhaps you are familiar with the anecdote about the American citizen who, during the Vietnam War, used to stand outside the White House for hours every Friday, holding a sign protesting the war. One day a journalist went up to him and asked, with a sardonic smile, 'Do you really think you're going to change the world if you keep standing here?' 'Change the world?' the man replied with surprise, 'I have no intention of changing the world. I'm just making sure the world doesn't change me.' As someone who has spent his entire life in a disaster zone – again, the Middle East – I know how easy it is to give in to 'the world,' meaning, to cynicism, apathy, despair. And from there it is a short path to religious fanaticism, nationalism, fascism."

Above: Reform Jewish members of Kehillat YOZMA saying Havdala before joining the protest in Modiin

The Perils of Indifference

// Elie Wiesel

What is indifference? Etymologically, the word means "no difference." A strange and unnatural state in which the lines blur between light and darkness, dusk and dawn, crime and punishment, cruelty and compassion, good and evil. What are its courses and inescapable consequences? Is it a philosophy? Is there a philosophy of indifference conceivable? Can one possibly view indifference as a virtue? Is it necessary at times to practice it simply to keep one's sanity, live normally, enjoy a fine meal and a glass of wine, as the world around us experiences harrowing upheavals?

Change

// Yitzhak Rabin

Maintain that which is worthy of maintaining, change that which must be changed, and a great deal of things must be changed.

Home

// Rabbi Oded Mazor

We came to shout, and when you asked 'what's up?'
I said if we're here – that's good.
We shout because it hurts, because something should hurt.
Because I have a heart to feel, because I have a voice.
Because we came together, and someone's listening.

This is our home and we're worried about it. Worried together.
And behind our worry hides gratitude.
Because generations didn't have it: home.
It's our responsibility.

We have a shared home, and behind the disagreements
Hides great love.
So great
That sometimes it makes it hard to see
The love that he also has for
The home.

And that she wants, like me, that this will be our
Shared home.
But how should we behave at home, and what's 'shared'
-This is what hurts.
And behind the pain hides beauty, beauty
Really miraculous, but human.
Not the most beautiful, but the most beautiful here,
At home.





Truth and Peace Embraced

In this period of political division and disagreement, we face the danger of disparagement of the other, we risk forgetting the legitimacy of opinions different from our own, and even of losing our ability to speak our opinion honorably and listening patiently to that of others. And *davka* because of this we are commanded to remember that ours is a culture of mahloket, of disagreement, that believes in the importance of respectful dialog in which we never forget the human love that is behind every demand for justice.

Do not reject any idea

// Maharal (Rabbi Judah Loewe 1512-1609, Prague), Be'er HaGolah Well 7, ch 7

Therefore it is not seemly to reject any words that are opposed to your own, that challenge your love of study and learning. Specifically that which is not intended to provoke, rather simply to express an opinion, even if the words are opposed to one's own faith, one must not say 'don't speak, shut your mouth,' for then there will be no clarification of faith. Instead, one should say 'speak as you wish'... for hiding from the words of one's opponent in faith is nothing but negation and shows a weakness of faith... one's intellect demands there be no restraint of that, in other words, there must be freedom of expression.

One language and one speech

// Yeshayahu Leibowitz

One language and one speech is, according to many naive people in our days, a description of an ideal situation: all of humanity a single block, without differentiation, and, as a result, without conflicts. But one who truly understands will know that there is nothing which is more threatening than this artificial conformism: a city and tower as the symbol of the concentration of all of mankind about a single topic-where there will not be differences of opinion and there will not be a struggle over different viewpoints and over different values. One cannot imagine greater tyranny than that, one cannot imagine a greater mental and moral sterility than that-that there should be no exceptions and that there should be no deviations from what is accepted and agreed upon, and this being maintained by the artificial means of a city and a tower. In His mercy and compassion for mankind, God prevented this from occurring, and He made a humanity in which a totalitarianism of complete unity cannot exist. Rather, humanity became one in which differences and oppositions, moral and intellectual differentiation abound, and in which humans are forced to wrestle over opposing values, directions, and aspirations. The Holy One did us a great favor, by preventing totalitarian centralization and not only abandoned us but required us to struggle over values and content. Even if that struggle requires heavy sacrifices from us, they are meaningful sacrifices.

Prayer for the health of our democracy

// Rabbi Oded Mazor

May the One who blessed our ancestors, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, Rachel, Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah, bless those who stand guard over democracy, equality and peace, whether from our people or around the world, who will not stand idly by, but work for the repair of society in the face of threats to our system of justice and to the rule of law.

May the Holy One bless them and save them from all danger and distress, from all illness and infirmity, from all harassment and harm, and from any attempts to humiliate them or avert them from their mission in the struggle against apathy, indolence, and unwillingness to get involved.

May their efforts be successful, and may they be blessed with a good eye, to see injustice, a good heart, that they never stop caring, and strength to continue working to protect the rights of every human being, because they are human beings, to establish justice and to make peace for every woman and man, for every child, for every human made in the image of God. And may the verse be fulfilled in them: "for in return Adonai your God will bless you in all your efforts and in all your undertakings." And let us say, Amen.

Mi Sheberakh avoteinu veimoteinu, Avraham veSarah, Yitzchak VeRivka, Ya'akov, Rachel, Leah, Bilhah veZilpah, hu yivarekh et eleh ha'omdim veva'omdot 'al mishmar hademokratia, hashiviyon veshalom, mikerev 'amenu ubekhol rachavei tevel, she'einam 'omdim mineged vepo'alim letikun hevratu lenokhach iyum 'al ma'arekhet hamishpat vepgi'ah beshilton hachok. Yishmerem hakadosh barukh hu veyatzilem mikol tzara vetzuka umikol neg'a machalah, mikol hitnaklut vepgi'a vemikol nisayon lehashpilam vele'ar'er et mechuyavutam bima'avak neged ha'adishut, choser hama'as vehe'ader hame'oravut. Mi Yiten veyatzlichu bema'amatzeihem, veyihyu bahem 'ayin tova lema'an yir'u avalot, lev tov lema'an lo ya'amdu mineged vekochot lema'an yife'alu 'avor kol isha va'ish, yalda veyeled, tzelem elohim ba'olam. Viykuyam bizchutaman hakatuv: "ki biglal hadavar hazeh yivarekhekha Adonai eloheikha bekol ma'asekha uvekhol mishlach yadekha venomar Amen.

מי שברך אבותינו ואמותינו אברהם ושרה, יצחק ורבקה, יעקב, רחל, לאה, בלהה וזלפה, הוא יברך את אלה העומדים והעומדות על משמר הדמוקרטיה, השויון והשלום, מקרב עמנו ובכל רחבי תבל, שאינם עומדים מנגד ופועלים לתקון חברתי לנכח איום על מערכת המשפט ופגיעה בשלטון החק. ישמרם הקדוש ברוך הוא ויצילם מכל צרה וצוקה ומכל נגע מחלה, מכל התנכלות ופגיעה ומכל נסיון להשפילם ולערער את מחיבתם במאבק נגד האדישות, חסר המעש והעדר המעורבות. מי יתן ויצליחו במאמצייהם, ויהיו בהם עין טובה למען יראו עולות, לב טוב למען לא יעמדו מנגד וכוחות למען יפעלו עבור שמירת הזכויות של כל אדם באשר הוא אדם לכוון צדק ולהשכין שלום עבור כל אשה ואיש, ילדה וילד, צלם אלהים בעולם ויקים בזכותם. הפתוב: "כי בגלל הדבר הזה יברך יהוה אלהיך בכל מעשך ובכל משלח ידך" (דברים טו, י). ונאמר: אמן.



Aleynu LeShabe'ach

// (alternative Aleynu, by Rabbi Dan Prath)

It is incumbent upon us to praise the Creator of all, who has given us a part in the creation, we stand before You in prayer to thank You for making us human – our lips open in words of Torah, our arms to embrace the beauty of the world. All our bones say who is like You, You have taught our hearts to differentiate. You save the poor and the needy from their oppressors. You are the flame in the candle of our souls. As it is written in Your Torah and in the noise of the crowd: "and you shall know on that day, and you shall return to your own hearts."

Thus we bow and bend and give thanks

For this gift we call life, that we receive into our hands, opening new ways to sanctify them, if only we choose love. To walk in Your ways, the ways of God. Therefore do we hope that the spirit of generosity will appear in us, the spirit of love and the pursuit of justice – Your spirit in us. We do not pray to you, Adonai our God, for free gifts, and we are ready to sanctify ourselves – from dawn until dusk – and under the blanket of the nighttime stars in order to chisel out the sparkle of love, truth, and peace from within us – You, God, hidden within us. In Your light we see light, light to act for the salvation of the world from anger and pain, to free ourselves from anger and pain, that our eyes may see the fruition of the prophesy "Never again shall be heard there The sounds of weeping and wailing. They shall build houses and dwell in them, They shall plant vineyards and enjoy their fruit. They shall not toil to no purpose; They shall not bear children for terror, Before they pray, I will answer; While they are still speaking, I will respond. In all My sacred mount Nothing evil or vile shall be done." And "And they shall beat their swords into plowshares And their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not take up Sword against nation; They shall never again know war;" – "For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples," – In that day, may our hearts will be with the One God, One Godly people.



Together we can secure an Israel we are proud of.

To learn more about and join our emergency campaign,
visit:

<https://reform.org.il/en/campaign-2023/>

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