

Dear Chavraya,

*Parashat Vayigash – Vayigash eylav Yehudah/And Yehudah approached him. Vayigash* is the first word of this week's Torah portion and its name. Approaching Yosef, viceroy of Egypt, the brother he does not recognize, Yehudah sets in motion the possibility of reconciliation. The word *vayigash* from *lageshet*, meaning *to approach, to draw near*, is used in three contexts, *drawing near to do battle, drawing near to seek reconciliation, drawing near to pray*. It has been a wrenching week. I speak as one person who has watched in horror as events have unfolded in the Middle East. The rocketing of Israel cannot continue to be endured. I believe that the response of Israel insures that there will be much more to endure, God protect us. I have been dismayed by the official statements of the Jewish community that assume but one way of thinking and of responding and of supporting and loving Israel. I have been dismayed by the failure of these statements to reckon with the true horror unleashed upon so many innocent people, regardless of the evil of their leaders. In prayer I find an outlet for the turmoil that is in my heart. As we draw near to pray, may we yet see a great drawing near for the sake of reconciliation. I offer my own "stream of consciousness" prayer, or perhaps it is a "stream of conscience" prayer. It may speak to feelings that are shared by some and not by others. I do not seek to impose, but to wrestle and strive and pray together for a way toward peace that is desperately needed. May we speak and share with respect and love for each other, and together kindle a glimmer of hope.

Shabbat shalom,  
Rabbi Victor

Ribono Shel Olam, Master of the Universe, I pour out to You a torrent of anguish, tangled thoughts jagged and torn, of love and fear, anger and despair, lead us from the valley of shadows, help me to contain within me all that I feel, for my people and our land and for the horror that is wrought in our name. Open our eyes to the wisdom that is ours by tradition, forsaken and left behind in our failure to engage the other, however hard the pill to swallow; peace is to be made with enemies, a notion some have sadly scorned.

Help us to learn what seems impossible to learn, that war does not resolve conflict, timeless delusion sowing seeds of strife to come. Help us not to speak empty words in lockstep when prophetic challenge is needed, when love is called to utter truths that do not want to be heard. So hard to restrain when might is at hand, responding to pain inflicted by rockets fueled of hate sent deeper to the heartland. Responding then with fury, horrific scale, innocents beneath the bombs that do not distinguish, terror that is ours and terror that is theirs, words of sympathy ring hollow when followed by "we're sorry, but it's not our fault." From out of the rubble, open our eyes to see that no peace will come, but legions more of those who hate.

"Not by might, nor by power," Your prophet Zecharia said, words we chanted on Chanukkah when the bombs began to fall, give us the courage to heed their

truth and find another way. Help us to see the openings to be made in borders on the ground and in the borders of our minds, that food not bombs will create the greater possibility of minds expanding, our own and theirs, to know there is no place for one without the other. Hear our anguish, Merciful One, and help us to respond out of the place from which it comes, elusive hope so hard to find, hidden in shards of darkness waiting for the light. Knowing that Your truth is not exclusive to one, help us all to clothe in humility our words to each other and to You, and let that itself be a tender step toward peace. And let us say, Amen.