

Dear Chavraya,

In this time so full of anguish and hope we marked the *yahrzeit* a few days ago of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, and in a few days time we honor the memory of Rev. Martin Luther King. As Heschel and King walked arm in arm in the freedom march from Selma to Montgomery, and raised their voices as one, it is a time to rededicate ourselves to the dream and make it real, a dream no more. In this week's Torah portion, *Parashat Sh'mot*, the cry is raised for the first time, *shalach et ami/Let My people go*. So too, in the courage and resistance of Shifra and Pua, two midwives who refused to do the bidding of Pharaoh and kill the Hebrew sons, is a call to civil disobedience. And in the coming week, a day of inauguration, more than of a president, but of a new day dawning. In honor of the confluence of memory and history, I was moved to write and to share with you now, a Prayer for America.

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Victor

Prayer for America

Compassionate One, fill our hearts with love and compassion for each other that in truth we might be one nation indivisible. Bless our country, its government, its leaders, and its people. Bless the vision that is America and help us all to make it real. Help us to be for each other a mirror in which to see the best we are, and when we stray give to each one the courage to remind, speaking truth to power when need be.

Of qualities that built this land, help us to distinguish between their light and shadow sides, and to know the upright way, that good not be twisted into evil. Let not our confidence become arrogance, nor might the measure of right, mature enough in our independence may we celebrate with all nations the interdependence from which a greater good will come.

Thirsting for peace, help us to sing an anthem now, not of bombs bursting, but of amber waves of grain and purple mountains' majesty; the beauty of this land we love, your blessing manifest, not of destiny, but of goodness spreading out from sea to shining sea; and not upon us alone Your blessing bestow, but upon every nation and people in the world of Your creation.

Help us to see that we the people are America the beautiful, in all the grandeur of our colors, and in the symphony of faiths and tongues by which we sing to You and call each other's names; in the pilgrims' pride of roots diverse, each one of us from other lands have come, not only of a Mayflower on the sea, but of steerage passage, and in chains, and through sweltering desert sands, wretched and poor yearning to breathe free; let us be the strength of heart and mind to sustain the hand of she who lifts her lamp beside the golden door.

In our caring for the earth, the sky and water, may we honor those who first dwelled upon this land, and in small measure so atone for all the wrong done to them.

With liberty and justice for all, that freedom not ring hollow, help us to insure that health and knowledge, bread and roses, be the birthright of every child born, each one free to be, she and he, dreams deferred no more.

Bring near the day, her dawn soon to rise, when in rainbow chorus we shall sing, we have overcome. Let it be, and let us say, Amen.