

Unyielding Hope:

Remembering and Rebuilding



Preface

As we mark the passing of one year since the massacre of October 7th, and in accordance with Jewish tradition, we gather to recount together the story of that tragic day, and its aftershocks that continue to be felt across the Jewish world. We will conclude the ceremony by renewing our hope and faith in a better future, and in our ability to shape that future.

Ceremonies play a central role in our community. This proposed ceremony includes recorded testimonies, songs, and readings, as well as narration to create one cohesive experience. The ceremony presented here is a basis for each community to use, while adapting the content to its values, culture and mourning rituals. There are structured elements where we encourage incorporating expressions of your specific community, particularly in the preparatory activity and in the “one people” section.

Emphases for organizers:

- The ceremony should last around 40 minutes.
 - The preparatory portion creates an opportunity for active dialogue among community members. We do not recommend skipping it.
 - The ceremony is aimed at large communal gatherings in communal institutional spaces. With small changes, it can also be adapted to gatherings of family or friends seeking a safe space to mark this difficult day according to their values and culture.
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Preparatory portion

This section is designed to allow community members to step outside their day-to-day routine, orient themselves towards engaging with this difficult content, and share their thoughts and emotions actively with one another. It's very important that this section is shaped in accordance with various communal contexts – family members who were impacted, partnership communities and so on. It can take place in an external space outside of the location of the ceremony, or in the same location before everyone takes their seats. We have included several proposals, from which you can pick one or combine a few.

- An exhibit of the fallen who have ties to community members
 - A table for lighting yahrzeit candles
 - Signing board or guestbook where participants can write down messages, thoughts or emotions regarding the events of October 7th, names of the fallen, or events that community members wish to commemorate.
 - A pile of stones and a permanent marker, so community members can write the name of a victim or a community they wish to focus on during the ceremony. At the conclusion of the ceremony, they can place the stone on a table at the front of the stage, in parallel with the Jewish tradition of placing stones on graves.
 - Music can be played in the background.
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Let Us Remember

Narrator On Shabbat morning, Simchat Torah, 5784, Hamas terrorists invaded the Western Negev by land, sea and air. With deliberate, premeditated and unprecedented barbarism, they infiltrated kibbutzim, moshavim and cities, while torturing, raping and murdering men, women, the elderly and children. They murdered over 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and wounded thousands. 251 human beings were taken as hostages into Gaza. The terrorists spared no one – including migrant workers from Thailand and the Philippines who worked in agriculture or as caregivers, and Arab Muslims who work and live in the South of Israel. The events of that day and their consequences have impacted us all throughout the past year.

Reading **Yizkor: May we remember the fallen from the Black Shabbat of 5784-2023 and let us embrace the living | Shitim Institute**

May the People of Israel remember the innocent souls of its sons and daughters, faithful and brave, people of labor and peace, victims of the massacre on the Black Shabbat of 5784.

Let us remember the women and men murdered in their homes, in their kibbutzim, moshavim, and cities of the Gaza envelope, which were breached and occupied by a cruel and merciless enemy. The mother, gathering the last of her strength to hold the iron door handle tight to protect her family from the evil on the other side.

The father, throwing his children out of the window

of their burning home, leaping out after them and taking the lead bullets with his own body.

The friends, fleeing murderers through the fields but finding no refuge.

Let us remember the noble and courageous ones who ran to defend the communities.

The warriors, women and men, from local security teams, who remained vigilant and confronted the enemy with their meager weapons, fighting for their lives.

The soldiers, women and men, positioned along the fence, who fought courageously, the few against the many, and fell in battle.

Those serving in the Search and Rescue forces, the Israel Security Agency, the Israel Police and the Israel Defense Forces, who hastened from all over the country to help their brethren under attack and were cut down in the killing fields.

Let us remember the victims of terror from the Western Negev and the Bedouin communities, year after year, to this very day.

All the inhabitants of the frontier, citizens and soldiers, foreigners, immigrants, and residents, whose bodies served as our border.

Let Israel remember, and be blessed by its scions, and mourn the radiance of youth, the preciousness of courage, the sanctity of will and the devotion of self-sacrifice that perished in this fierce battle. May those who fell on that Black Shabbat be bound up in the hearts of Israel for all the generations to come.

Let us embrace the living, the survivors of the hell and the atrocities on that dark day.

Let us embrace the hostages, women and men, who are being held prisoner in the underbelly of Gaza, as well as the missing, whose fate is yet unknown.

Let us embrace the old woman and the soldier, the young boy and the teenage girl, the family members who were taken captive together, the mother taken from her babies, and the babies taken from their parents.

Behold, their eyes are looking upon us, so let us not remain silent until they are returned home.

Let us embrace the little girls and boys who grew up under the shadow of a volcano and were caught in the crosshairs of the erupting inferno. The wounded, of both body and spirit.

Those trembling with worry for their dear ones who were captured and are missing.

The orphans, the widows and widowers, and all the bereaved.

The refugees of this war, the communities of Israel, by the thousands, who were forced into exile from their homes without knowing when they may return.

Let our mourning not go silent, and not be comforted, and not fade away until Israel returns and redeems its plundered land, and dwells upon it in safety and peace for all the generations to come.

Narrator Our prayers and customs inspired many great works of culture. The following song was written by Leonard Cohen, a Canadian Jew, based on the prayer Unetaneh Tokef from the Musaf services on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. The song was written after Cohen performed for Israeli soldiers on different fronts during the Yom Kippur War.

Song Who by Fire \ Leonard Cohen



Who by Fire

Testimony The following are several proposed testimonies that can be projected during the ceremony.



Ben Sadeh



Nikita Soumrov



Shachar Butzchak



Zohar Hubara



Mirjam Reijnen

You could ask a community member to perform the song or have the whole community sing it together.

Edut 710 is a civil initiative established immediately following the massacre in order to document, film and present testimony from survivors of October 7th, 2023. Their website includes hundreds of testimonies from survivors of all backgrounds, collected by volunteers working to ensure that the events of that day will never be forgotten.

Reading Bar Hefetz, Kibbutz Nirim

Farmers are connected to their land, to the smell, the colors, the changing of the seasons, and here in the Western Negev you can see it better than you can anywhere else in the world. There's the brown season where the fields have been sown and they're waiting for rain, and then there's the green season, and the red season where the anemones blossom, and then the bright yellow of the daisies, and the straw yellow of ripe wheat. And suddenly a new season has joined this cycle. The black season, the black color of fire, smoke and burning.

One people

Narration The terrible events in Israel resonated in our community here as well. Through family ties, friendships, our efforts to provide aid and support, and by the prices we pay here for simply being Jewish and for our support for Israel. We want to acknowledge together the challenges we have faced since October 7th, 2023, our partnership as a community, and the solidarity of those who choose to stand with us as we seek to stand with them.

Suggestion In this section, you can show a video or slideshow of the community's involvement in supporting Israel over the past year during the war. You can also invite a member of the community to describe his/her experiences of a visit to Israel or of community action during this time.

Reading Speech by Mayor of New York Eric Adams from October 17th, 2023

We are not all right. We are not all right when we see young girls pulled from their home and dragged through the streets. We are not all right when we see grandmothers being pulled away from their homes and children shot in front of their families. We are not all right when right here in the City of New York you have those who celebrate at the same time when the devastation is taking place in our city.

We are not all right when we still have hostages who have not come home to their family. We are not [...] going to say we have a stiff upper lip and act like everything is fine. Everything is not fine. Israel has a right to defend itself, and that's the right that we know.

Right here in New York we have the largest Jewish population outside of Israel. This is the place that our voices must rise and cascade throughout the entire country. We will not be all right until every person responsible for this act is held accountable. [...] And I want to thank my religious leaders throughout this city of all religious groups who reached out to us and clearly stated that they denounce the hatred and the antisemitism that was displayed on one of the holiest days of the year.

Your fight is my fight. That swastika not only displays the pain of antisemitism; it displays the pain of racism among African Americans. You marched with us with Dr. King. You stood with us with all the fights we have. And I'm saying we're going to stand with you and stand united together.

Revival

Reading The Mitzva of Redeeming Captives – Maimonides

There is no mitzvah greater than the redemption of captives, for captivity is in the same category as famine, drought, or exposure, and one stands in danger to one's life. Someone who shies away from redeeming a captive violates the following Torah prohibitions: Do not harden your heart from helping the poor [Deut. 15:7]; Do not close your hand [ibid.]; Do not stand by when someone's life is in danger [Lev. 19:16]; Love your fellow man as yourself [Lev. 19:18]. There is no mitzvah greater than the redemption of captives.

Narrator October Rain by Eden Golan is the full uncensored version of her song, Hurricane, which was disqualified for performance at the Eurovision Song Contest. It was performed at Hostages Square at a rally calling for the release of all those held in captivity in Gaza, immediately after her return to Israel following the contest.

song



Lyrics



Performance at
Hostages Square

Reading The Prophecy of Consolation – Micah 4:2-4

For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide concerning mighty nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree; and none shall make them afraid.

Testimony **Yousef al-Ziadna**, a Bedouin Muslim, married and father of seven, is a minibus driver by trade. On Friday night he drove young adults to the Nova party. On Saturday morning he awoke to phone calls from his passengers, pleading with him to rescue them. He risked his life and took advantage of his knowledge of the terrain to drive thirty young people who had gotten stuck out of harm's way. He himself lost family members that day. "I pushed 30 young people into a minibus with 14 seats. I kept driving to Kibbutz Tzeelim [where I dropped off the wounded]. I always say that we're all human beings, and now they [Hamas] came here and didn't distinguish between an Arab, a Bedouin and a Thai; all they wanted was to kill. It didn't matter if they saw a soldier, a civilian, a child, a grandfather – they just wanted to kill whoever they could. [...] October 7th is a day that needs to be more powerful than Yom Kippur. Only Jews observe Yom Kippur. I say that it needs to be a memorial day for all people living in the state of Israel. And it doesn't matter what community they're from. It's a fate that we all share – Jews, Arabs, Bedouins, all of us."

From the Edut
710 website

Testimony **Moran Freibach**, 52 years old and father of five.

He was born on Kibbutz Nachal Oz and works as the field crops manager; field crops are one of the central economic branches of the kibbutz. “One of the missions Hamas undertook was to cause as much damage as possible to agriculture, so that we would give up and not try to rehabilitate our fields, and disconnect Nachal Oz members from their land. If there’s no connection between a person and the land that he or she lives on, there’s no reason to be in Nachal Oz. So let’s move Nachal Oz somewhere else and then slowly, they’ll be able to take over part of the country, to shrink it. And that’s why we decided to rehabilitate our fields immediately, that we will continue to work in agriculture even as the war is going on, together with the army. [...] We planted potatoes as planned, we planted onions, garlic, wheat, and now we’ve got a field of sunflowers. [...] It was important to me to create an image of victory – a blossoming field of sunflowers against the backdrop of the destruction in Gaza. [...] War takes place in a great many different battles. There’s no question that in the first battle, we took a serious blow. But from that first battle on, we have to win all of the other battles, in all of the arenas, in order to win the war. Our battle, the battle for agriculture in Nachal Oz that I am leading, it’s for sustainable agriculture right here and now. We’ve finished a season now. Did we make a profit? We didn’t. We could have sat at home and collected compensation for damages. But we chose not to do that. Did we win this battle? We absolutely did.

From the Edut
710 website

Reading Muki Tzur, May 2024

Whoever observes the world without masks must make a great effort to embrace the rebellious claim that every moment is not only an end but also a beginning [...] And these days, when we are commanded to write, as was written in Israel's Declaration of Independence, "In the land of Israel the Jewish people arose". Here amidst our pain, we must rise up, not to forget and rid ourselves of the pain that we bear, but in order to weave the tapestry of Israeli society anew.

Please join those who are committed to rise from their mourning, who repeat the refrain of the early Zionist pioneers in the face of endless obstacles: "Nevertheless." Hope is not a feathered cap, not a mask worn by those asleep on the watch. It is a true hunger for repair, an unyielding adventure of responsibility. It is "Nevertheless."

Conclusion Singing Hatikva

List of additional proposed songs to incorporate in the ceremony:



Bridge Over Troubled
Water - Simon and
Garfunkel



Od Yavo Shalom Aleinu
- Sheva



Anachnu Ve'Atem
- Hashayarah



You Want It Darker -
Leonard Cohen

“Our building is not a building of stones, rather it is a building of hearts. A stone lies in the place where it is laid, but the human heart is always shifting, always fluttering and fluctuating. This building is in constant need of renewal, it must be tested and examined, and one must always ask if its structure aligns with the dream...”

Berl Katznelson

It’s difficult to believe that a year has passed.

An entire year since evil manifested in the form of Hamas terrorists stormed the state of Israel and sowed chaos, destruction and death in every place that they touched. The circle of bereavement expanded in one horrible moment, and all of us were astonished by the atrocities.

Within the indescribable pain, we are committed first and foremost to the return of all our hostages. This is the moral imperative and the fulfillment of Jewish tradition that sanctifies life and defines redeeming hostages as a commandment of supreme importance. “And there is no greater commandment than that of redeeming hostages.” (Maimonides)

At the close of the first year, and during the many long days and endless nights that have passed, we have committed to commemorating the communities and people who are no longer with us; the kibbutzim, the moshavim and the towns that will never again be what they had been.

We all aspire to peace, justice and fraternity at all times. From there we can cultivate hope, and from there we will arise and build our future.

I know that within the pain, it is difficult to see a clear image of the future, but at the same time, I know this nation and society, and I know that we and the entire people of Israel will find peace. The day will come when we will be partners in making the wilderness bloom and upbuilding the land, in educating a new and better generation, in creating a culture of hope, in renewing science and technology in all field. We will march together towards an exemplary society, as envisioned by Benjamin Ze'ev Herzl, and towards a Jewish and democratic society in the spirit of the Declaration of Independence.

Silvio Joskowicz

Head of the Zionist Enterprises Department

World Zionist Organization

