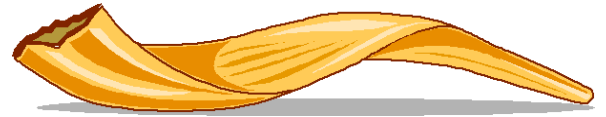


Return to Daylight

אור חדש

Defending and Restoring Liberty Under Siege

www.orhadashusa.org



“As nightfall does not come all at once, neither does oppression. In both instances, there is a twilight when everything remains seemingly unchanged. And it is in such a twilight that we all must be most aware of change in the air — however slight — lest we become unwitting victims of the darkness.” — Justice William O. Douglas

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Passover Seder Insert

The Four Children/The Four Americans

This Passover, let us remember that we are both Jews and Americans. **As Jews**, we have a duty to remember our liberation from oppression and enslavement. **As Americans**, we have a duty to remember our founders' struggles to free themselves from tyrannical rule, and their determination to form a system of government that would prevent tyranny from ever again taking root on American soil. **As Jews and as Americans**¹, we have a duty to affirm and protect our freedom. We must ever ask: Is our democracy in a time of danger now? Is it possible that we might lose our precious freedoms? What signs should we look for? What echoes from the past might inform us?

This year we must ask: What does it mean when those in power can, in the name of an endless war against an indeterminate enemy —

- Read our e-mail, listen to our phone calls, track which Web sites we visit, and open our mail;
- Threaten the press with prosecution for treason and espionage when it tells us what the government is doing;
- Decide which parts of the laws passed by Congress they will and will not enforce or obey;
- Detain and harass American citizens just because they exercise their First Amendment rights to dissent from government policy;
- Detain and harass solid American citizens just because they adhere to a particular faith;
- Decide arbitrarily what an “enemy combatant” means, and who fits that definition;
- Imprison people without telling them why — in secret prisons;
- Hold them indefinitely without hope of a trial or even an appearance before an impartial judge; and
- Torture those they hold?

Considering these issues, we ask: Could this be the beginning of the “twilight” of American freedom and democracy that Justice Douglas warned against?

As we face this possible American twilight, this decline in our liberty, we remember also that as Americans we must make sure that in every generation each American understands the fragility of freedom, internalizes her stake in democracy, and affirms his commitment to freedom through vigilance and repeated action in the public arena.

The Torah commands that we tell our children in every generation the story of our journey to freedom, not only so that they can understand it, but so that they can identify with it and feel it to be their own. The rabbis of the Talmud identified four different types of children, and advised us how to speak to each type of child in a way that he or she would best be able to hear the message.

Perhaps there are four different types of Americans too, each of whom must be approached differently in a way he or she will be best able to hear and understand this important lesson and what needs to be done:

- **The Wise American** says: “I know there is a problem — a danger. I’m ready to act. How can I help? What can I do to promote justice and restore democracy?” We must tell this American, “We’re glad you asked! You are not alone. Many people are already

¹ **As Jews**, we are duty bound to concern ourselves with the government of the place where we live, and to hold our secular leadership accountable to high standards of conduct, as the Torah enjoins, “Justice, justice shall you pursue” (Deuteronomy 16:20); as the prophet Jeremiah said, “Seek the *shalom* of the city where I have sent you... for in its *shalom* will be your *shalom*,” (Jeremiah 29:7) and as it is said in the Talmud, “As goes the leader, so goes the generation; [and the other holds] As goes the generation, so goes the leader.” (Arakhin 17a).

working on what you want to work on; join with them and bring others with you. Here are some people who are already doing the work.”

ACLU “Safe and Free” campaign
www.aclu.org/safefree/
<http://aclu-sc.org/ourconstitution/>

Rabbis for Human Rights
http://www.rhr-na.org/kvod_habriot/home
http://www.rhr-na.org/stop_torture

Amnesty International
On Torture:
<http://www.amnestyusa.org/page.do?n=38>
On the War on Terror:
<http://www.amnestyusa.org/page.do?n=821>

National Religious Campaign Against Torture
www.nrnat.org

American Freedom Agenda
americanfreedomagenda.org

American Freedom Campaign
www.americanfreedomcampaign.org

Oh, and by the way, we really are glad you asked...

I'll help! Please help “funnel” my energies to the right places by sending me Or Hadash USA alerts when action is needed and requested by any of the organizations working to restore and protect liberty.

Name: _____ Email: _____ Phone: _____

Please also contact my friend(s)/family/associate(s)

Name: _____ Email: _____ Phone: _____

(Please return this information to: Or Hadash USA, Robin Braverman/Joel Siegel, 1900 Aspenridge Ct., Walnut Creek, CA 94597)

- **The Indifferent American** who refuses to look at what’s going on asks: “Why are you bothering me with this? It’s not my problem. I’m not even sure there is a problem. The government is protecting us from the terrorists, after all. If it’s anybody’s problem at all, it’s someone else’s problem.” As the Haggadah instructs us to rebuke the wicked child saying, “Had you been there you would not have been redeemed,” perhaps it is time to rebuke the indifferent American and remind her of what Benjamin Franklin said: “Those who would give up Essential Liberty to purchase a little Temporary Safety, deserve neither Liberty nor Safety.”
- **The Naïve American** who thinks the “system” will fix itself without continual vigilance asks, “Why should I be concerned? Even if leaders take too much power we can always vote them out.” We must tell this American, “It is not enough to wait and vote such people out of office. It is everyone’s job in a democracy to make sure that, no matter who the leaders are, they are not allowed to upset the balance between governmental power and the people’s individual rights, nor to upset the balance of power among branches of the government, a balance designed to protect us against a democracy becoming a despotism. It’s not just about voting and it’s not a once-every-four-years activity. Each and every one of us must make her voice heard and demand that elected officials act to maintain and protect our liberty even in between elections.”
- **The Sleeping American**, the one who doesn’t even know what to ask, is so overwhelmed with life and/or so busy that he believes he has no time or energy to become informed about what is going on, let alone take an active part in affirming liberty. The Haggadah teaches: You must “begin for her.” Wake him up, and show her that there is danger — now. You must tell him that there are already signs that our democracy is eroding, and if we do not take action soon we may lose our precious freedom. (The Or Hadash USA website, www.orhadashusa.org, provides some reference materials to help wake the sleeping.)

Cover the matzah, raise the cup of wine and say:

It is sometimes hard to tell if America *is* on the edge of the twilight of liberty or not. But we can’t take the chance.

For in every generation there are those who rise up and seek to destroy liberty. We must ensure that, as in times past, in this generation also the light of freedom prevails.

Here, around this seder table, as we commemorate our people’s journey to freedom, we affirm that as Americans we still have the power to help our nation **Return to Daylight**.

Put down the cup.

Like the Hebrew midwives, Shifrah and Puah, who took a stand and refused to cooperate with Pharaoh, we commit ourselves to *K’vod HaBriyot*, a respect for all creation, affirming that we believe all human beings were created *B’tselem Elohim*, in the image of God. **We will not permit our government to torture in our name**, nor to imprison people secretly and indefinitely without trial, nor stifle dissent, nor violate basic rights of privacy, nor create “enemies of the state.” The midrash says that the Sea split only when one Israelite, Nachshon, took the risk for freedom and jumped into the sea. As we jump into the sea of action we will together create the Or Hadash, the New Light, we need to return as a nation to justice and liberty.