

"Restore Judah to His People!": A Prayer of Hope and Remembrance

Rabbi A. Brian Stoller

October 7th Commemoration / October 5, 2025

In this week's parashah, just before he dies, Moses offers this prayer:

"Hear, Adonai, the voice of Judah / And restore him to his people!" (*Deut. 33:7*)

For two years, the Israeli people and Jews around the world have been crying out, day after day: "Bring them home now!"

And for two years, it felt like no one was listening. Like no one cared.

The tragic memory of October 7, the worst massacre of Jews in a single day since the Holocaust, had been swallowed by endless news cycles of war and politics.

In the callous discourse of who's up and who's down, the men and women held hostage in the bowels of the earth were stripped of their humanity and recast as pawns in an international "game of thrones."

The 1,200 innocent human beings slaughtered by Hamas, it seemed, were all but forgotten by the world.

But the Jewish people have not forgotten.

Our cries were heard in Hostage Square, in Central Park, in Boulder, Colorado.

They were heard in our synagogues, in our community centers, in our schools, and in our homes.

And miraculously, they were heard in Washington, in Doha, in Cairo, in Ankara, and in capitals all over the world.

"Hear, Adonai, the voice of Judah / And restore him to his people!"

Today, as we approach two full years since that evil day, we stand on the precipice of the fulfillment of Moses' ancient prayer.

Today, we will add our voices to his—pleading in word, music, and song for the safe return of the hostages and the end of the war.

There are still miles to go before it comes to pass, and the captors still have too much power over their captives' fate.

But as we complete our annual reading of the Torah and prepare to begin again, we pray that this remarkable moment—the most hopeful for the Jewish people in two years—will herald the beginning of a new era for Israel, for the Jewish people, and for the world.

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I want to thank Regina Gil, Caroline Sorokoff, and the Gold Coast Arts Center for partnering with the Susan Stumer Center for Cultural Arts at Temple Beth-El to create this commemoration for our community.

Thank you to our talented Zemer Trio—Sharon Kahn-Bernstein, Dr. Pam Levy, and Dr. Esther Noh—for crafting the musical vision for today's service, and to Debbie Tartell and the Shireinu Choir of Long Island for bringing your beautiful voices to our prayer today.

And thank you to my colleagues: Rabbi Megan Brumer, Rabbi Howard Stecker, Rabbi Jerry Blum, and Rabbi Randy Sheinberg, who will share inspiring words; and to your congregations, Temple Israel of Great Neck, Temple Isaiah of Great Neck, and Temple Tikvah of New Hyde Park, for being here with us today.

We are blessed to be part of such a caring and dedicated Jewish community.

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And now, I ask you to please rise for the singing of the "Star Spangled Banner" and "Hatkivah."