



# Prayers and Resources

---

RECONSTRUCTIONIST RESPONSES TO THE  
2016 U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Resources for Discussion

NOVEMBER 2016/ CHESHVAN 5777

## Contents

⌘: Rabbi Ruhi Sophia Motzkin Rubenstein – Temple Beth Israel, Eugene, OR.....	2
⌚: Anna Neumann.....	3
⌛: Rabbi Jonathan Kligler – Woodstock Jewish Congregation, Woodstock, NY.....	4
⌜: Rabbi Joshua Lesser – Bet Haverim, Atlanta, GA .....	5
⌝: Anonymous.....	6
⌞: Rabbi Malka Packer – Interfaith Family, Atlanta, GA .....	6
⌟: Rabbi Benjamin Weiner – Jewish Community of Amherst, Amherst, MA .....	7



## Rabbi Ruhi Sophia Motzkin Rubenstein – Temple Beth Israel, Eugene, OR

November 9, 2016

Dear Community,

I hope that you are all taking good care of yourselves today - resting, eating nourishing meals, moving slowly, and gathering in mutual support with those you love.

I know that ours is a politically diverse community, perhaps more than some of us are aware, and I make no presumptions about how you all voted yesterday. Some in this community are feeling more hopeful about our nation today than they have felt in years. And yet, I need to acknowledge that a great many in this community are in mourning, or are feeling terribly afraid. Not just upset about abstract concepts, but afraid for their own lives and safety, as people of color, as immigrants, as LGBTQ people, as women, as Jews.

This fear can feel debilitating. The Chasidic master, Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, taught: *Kol ha'olam kulo- gesher tsar m'od. V'ha-ikar lo l'fached klal.* “The whole entire world is a very narrow bridge. The important thing is not to be afraid.” Of course this can't mean that we should suppress our feelings, that we shouldn't seek support when we are frightened.

It means, however, that fear can distort, that it can keep us from noticing that we are still breathing and the earth is still spinning. It can make us lose sight of our power, our solidarity, all that is right with the world, all that we *can* do. Fear can isolate us from each other and from our truest selves.

I write you this letter on the 78th anniversary of Kristallnacht, the night of the broken glass, the night that many Jews of Germany realized that the government could incite against them with impunity, and that they would not have allies stepping forward to defend them in an organized movement.

We are not there now. There was no “Jewish Lives Matter” movement in Germany in 1938. There was no free and open internet. In contrast, there are so many awakened movements of solidarity now. I sat this morning with Pastor Dan Bryant and with Father Brent Was, and we affirmed to each other that if any individual in this town is attacked because of hateful incitement, all of our faith communities will step forward in solidarity.

This Shabbat is *Parashat Lech Lecha*, in which the patriarch then called Abram takes a great leap of faith and embarks on a journey whose destination is unknown. And now, we do not know what will be required of us in the coming months and years. We must all be vigilant bearers of compassion and solidarity, but I have faith that you are up for the task, and we – no matter whom we each voted for – are up for the task together as a community.

*Lech Lecha* - go forth,

Rabbi Ruhi Sophia



## Anna Neumann



**Anna Neumann**

1 hr · 

I try to speak. I try to write. I have to find a way to connect again. My memories are crowding my head. Such hope. Such fear. Such grief. 1958. My father waiting with a brilliant smile to catch my sister and me, age 6 and 3, as we bounded off the train in Laredo -- We had arrived in the U.S. It would be so good. It would be safe. It would be safe. It would be safe. I never had seen him be so happy as when that train door opened. He had such hope, and his children, he knew, he swore, would have brilliant lives. And from time to time -- too much, too often, in years that came and went -- his sadness and loss, his fierce anger, his fear revived -- The camps, deportations, mass murders, gas, flames. He spoke in such explicit terms. His hope, the one and only hope he had, was that this was America and we were safe. His children, the utter magic of his life, would live well. He would be ok. My mom would be ok. I grieve for him, for his hope, and mine. I will call my mother soon. I do not know what to say to her. I do not know what to say to myself. I do not know what to say to you.

 Like

 Comment

 Share



## Rabbi Jonathan Kligler – Woodstock Jewish Congregation, Woodstock, NY

November 9, 2016

Each of us woke up this morning (if we happened to get some sleep) to the stunning victory of Donald Trump in our presidential election. Knowing you well, I know that for most in our congregation this was a bitter defeat, and for some in our congregation a satisfying victory. We as a community will be best served if we can continue to greet each other warmly and love each other well, no matter what the near future holds. The world will keep wheeling around the sun, and we can still remember to give thanks for each breath, each moment, and each act of kindness, even as we speculate about what is to come, and about what we each might do to make our world a better place. My colleague Rabbi Paul Kipnes sent out this prayer this morning, and I asked his permission to re-post it here:

*“There was that moment at the Red Sea when our people despaired like never before. Looking behind, the people saw an enemy coming for them. Looking ahead, the waters seemed ready to swallow them up.*

*To stand still was not an option.*

*We pray,*

*Eloheinu veilohei avoteinu v'imoteinu,  
Our God and God of our fathers and mothers,*

*When our nation is divided  
When our people are afraid  
When our children are confused  
When we ourselves are unsure about how to move forward.*

*Grant us,*

*Like Nachshon, the courage to face our fears and walk forward into the unknown.*

*Like Miriam, the insight to find the hidden waters in the wilderness to quench our thirst.*

*Like King Solomon, the wisdom to decide wisely as we face difficult questions in the days and months ahead.*

*Like the prophet Nathan, the faith to speak truth to power, demanding as he did from King David, truth and justice, compassion and kindness.*

*And may we lie down in peace and rise up each tomorrow refreshed and renewed, prepared to work toward blessing for all.*

*Amen.”*



## Rabbi Joshua Lesser – Bet Haverim, Atlanta, GA

November 9, 2016

Good morning friends.

I am profoundly sorry--and yet knowing your fundamental goodness and decency is my bedrock. My faith in the unfolding godliness that binds us together in mutual care which flows with goodness is my well.

We have experienced a political earthquake. There is a major fault line in our ability to trust what we thought we knew or could count on. Terror. Uncertainty. Rage. This is trauma. You are not alone.

Feel what you are experiencing. Say what you need to say. Today will be disorienting and dislocating. Find ways to ground yourself in the simplest and most profound truths.

Turn to people. Some of us will be designated first responders to this trauma. We will not have sufficient answers today nor sufficient strategies. Not today. But we will. And soon.

Give some extra love to our children because they will be scared and will notice how we are feeling. Embrace your Muslim, Latino, female, LGBTQIA, disabled, black and brown friends and acquaintances just to let them know you're here. You are needed.

Know I love you and even be shaken to the core, my bedrock sense of humanity and goodness gird my feet.

Breathe.



## Anonymous

If you wear a hijab, I'll sit with you on the train.  
If you're trans, I'll go to the bathroom with you.  
If you're a person of color, I'll stand with you if the cops stop you.  
If you're a person with disabilities, I'll hand you my megaphone.  
If you're an immigrant, I'll help find you resources.  
If you're a survivor, I'll believe you.  
If you're a refugee, I'll make sure you're welcome.  
If you're a veteran, I'll take up your fight.  
If you're LGBTQ, I won't let anybody tell you you're broken.  
If you're a woman, I'll make sure you get home ok.  
If you're tired, me too.  
If you need a hug, I've got an infinite supply.  
If you need me, I'll be with you. All I ask is that you be with me, too.



## Rabbi Malka Packer – Interfaith Family, Atlanta, GA

Brucha at ya eloheinu ruach haolam

Blessed Source of Love and Life, Healer of deep sorrows and pains, please fill us with hope and strength. Help us to remember that we are not alone.

Surround our raw souls and broken hearts in delicious love and nurturing connection. Spread a shelter of your peace around all the inhabitants of this land and this world.

Amen



## Rabbi Benjamin Weiner – Jewish Community of Amherst, Amherst, MA

Dear friends,

Like many of you, I am sure, I am spending the day in a state of semi-reality as I contemplate the seismic election we have just experienced.

It has never been my place to endorse a specific candidate. Rather, I see it as my role to name the values I believe we should seek to realize in the world, as a socially-committed spiritual community. But as I articulate these values--ecological sanity and economic justice, broad inclusivity with regard to race, class, gender, and sexual orientation, sensible self-interest tempered by compassion and frugality, respect for scientific inquiry and the life of the mind, self-possession and the cultivation of mature character--you will sense that I face our new political reality with concern.

And as the leader of a Jewish community, writing on the anniversary of Kristallnacht, I am trying to calibrate my own level of anxiety--seeking to remain vigilant without blowing things out of proportion.

But the purpose of this note is not to rile you up. Rather it is to remind you of what we have to offer each other. In the midst of an angry, uncertain, and divided world we remain a loving community, capable of providing each other with the refuge of spiritual and ritual practice, and the solace of simple human companionship. Don't forget, either, that together we carry the modern version of an ancient tradition, which has persisted through countless political upheavals over the course of the millennia, and carries the wisdom of that survival in its bones.

In the days to come, I trust that we will support each other as we seek to make sense of this new world, and determine how we will continue to proclaim our values over a shifting landscape--even as we take the necessary step out of our burst bubble to consider, with changed eyes, a country that has proven itself to be beyond our prior understanding.

In Torah, we read this week about Abraham and Sarah, and how they were told one day that it was time to leave the familiar world and journey onward. But I find myself thinking instead about the words that Moses said to Joshua, many years later, when Joshua, bereft of his customary assurances, was told it was now his turn to take a perilous journey into the unknown.

"*Hazak v'ematz!*" his teacher said. Be strong, and have courage!

b'shalom,  
RBW