

A Prayer for Ending Gun Violence in 5784

Ancient One, so many generations have come before you and prayed:

"May this be a year free from needless suffering!"

"Avinu Malkeinu, halt the onslaught of sickness, violence and hunger."¹

And so too our generation comes, and offers up our broken hearts:

Every week, 33 people die from gunfire in Pennsylvania.

Tragedy in cities and in rural towns,

Terror in places that should be safe,

Two suicides by gunshot every day in Pennsylvania.

Compassionate One, so many generations have come before you and wept:

God, behold how small we are, and helpless!

"Who will live and who will die? Who by sword, and who by beast."²

And so too our generation comes, and offers up our broken hearts:

Another shooting, another tragedy - when will it end? When will we do something?

Politicians offer words,

Victims offer tears,

And a few days later, a few weeks later, the headlines fade away.

But we are not helpless.

Holy One, to so many generations you have spoken the prophecy:

That ours are the voices that must speak truth to power.

"Cry with full throat, without restraint;

Raise your voice like a ram's horn!"³

And so too our generation comes, and offers up our broken hearts:

Al chet shechatanu l'fanecha⁴: For the sin we have committed against You by our silence.

And for the sin we have committed against You by our complacency.

But we are not helpless.

This is the season of change. This is the time of turning.

May this be the year that we turn from despair to action.

May this be the year that we offer up our voices, our votes, and our resources.

May this be the year we hold ourselves and our leaders accountable for a world that is safe for our children.

May this be the year we make an end to needless suffering.

- Rabbi Leah Berkowitz and Rabbi Beth Kalisch

¹ Avinu Malkeinu prayer, *Mishkan HaNefesh*, p.223 (Rosh Hashanah), and p.252 (Yom Kippur)

² Unetaneh Tokef prayer, *Mishkan HaNefesh*, p. 178 (Rosh Hashanah), p.212 (Yom Kippur)

³ Haftarah for Yom Kippur Morning, *Mishkan HaNefesh*, p.277 (Yom Kippur)

⁴ Long Confession, *Mishkan HaNefesh*, p.300 (Yom Kippur)