

# PRAYERS FOR ORLANDO

Gun violence is taking an unacceptable toll on our society. On June 12, the largest and deadliest mass shooting in American history occurred at Pulse, a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida. This staggering loss of life causes us deep pain. We pray for those who were murdered, for healing of the body and soul for the injured and for comfort to the families of all who were present in Pulse nightclub. In light of this tragedy, consider incorporating these prayers into your Shabbat service in your congregation or home.

## ***Introductory Prayer***

*Adapted from a URJ Shabbat after September 11*

As we gather this Shabbat, each in our own communities, we are united by the grief and anguish we feel over the destruction of lives. We cry out as did Job:

Today again my complaint is bitter;  
My strength is spent on account of my groaning.  
Would that I knew how to reach God,  
How to get to God's dwelling place. (Job 23:2-3)

We, like Job, are weary from grieving:  
Grieving for a lost sense of safety in this world.  
Grieving for homes and memories lost.  
Grieving for souls extinguished before their time.  
Grieving for communities that bear witness to the unbearable  
and must somehow go on.  
Hear our voice, Eternal God;  
Have compassion upon us,  
And accept our prayer with favor and mercy,  
For You are a God who hears prayer and supplication.  
We praise You, O God: You hearken to prayer.

## ***Before the Shema:***

When we watch the news after each senseless act of violence, we feel pain as though we ourselves were the victims. Every time someone is murdered, we ourselves are offended; God is offended, for we are all inextricably linked. We are one. As we recite the Shema, we raise our voice and collectively affirm this oneness.

## ***Before the Mi Shebeirach:***

As we pray for those members of our community who are in need of healing of the body or soul, let our thoughts also include all those who have friends and family affected by the issue of gun violence.

## **Before the Mourner's Kaddish:**

As we read the Mourner's Kaddish, let us remember to include in our prayers all of those who have been killed by senseless gun violence. Let us remember the parents who will not see their children grow up; let us remember the children who will never grow up; Let us remember the brothers and sisters for whom an empty seat reminds us of their absence, the friend who no longer calls; and let us remember those for whom there is no one left to say Kaddish. We are taught never to grieve alone for we are made stronger by the bonds of our community. It is our charge to share in the grief of those around us so that none of us must suffer with loss in solitude.

## **A Prayer for Preventing Gun Violence**

*Courtesy of Temple Micah, Washington, D.C.*

וְדַרְשׁוּ אֶת-שְׁלוֹם הָעִיר, אֲשֶׁר הִגַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם שָׁמָּה, וְהִתְפַּלְלוּ בְעַדָּהּ, אֶל-יְהוָה  
And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried, and pray for it;  
כִּי בְשְׁלוֹמָהּ, יְהִיָה לָכֶם שְׁלוֹם  
for in her peace shall you have peace. (Jeremiah 29:7)

### ***Guardian of life, liberty, and the promise of peace, may our nation always merit Your protection.***

We recognize that gun freedoms in our nation have resulted in too many losing the freedom to full lives  
We know that peace anywhere might be shattered in a moment,  
but we know, too, that many in this nation rarely experience the safety some of us take for granted

### ***Help us to recall, as the prophet Jeremiah taught, that we must "seek the peace of the city," recognizing how our own peace is tied up in that of the city where we find ourselves.***

The words of Isaiah remind us to share our bread, clothe the naked, unlock the fetters of wickedness in this community and in our nation. (Isaiah 58:6-10)  
In this prayer we focus on one common affliction of the soul

Among us are those for whom gun violence is a policy issue

### ***Grant our advocates light and wisdom, and help us all to support their efforts***

Among us are those for whom gun violence is a real and present, if occasional, danger

### ***Grant the fearful Your sheltering presence, and help us all to understand and address this burden***

Among us are healers and others who deal directly with the aftermath of gun violence

### ***Grant the responders strength in turmoil, and help us all to support their work***

Among us are those who mourn victims of gun violence

### ***Grant the mourners comfort, and help us all to better support them in their grief and cries for justice***

Among us are those who have experienced gun violence

### ***Grant the shattered healing, and help us all to recognize this trauma and its cost***

Keep us ever aware of the wonder of humanity and of threats to the sanctity of human life

Teach us to recognize the affect of gun violence on so many of our nation's children

### ***May we never be lazy in the work of peace or complacent in our relative safety***

May we honor those who have died in defense of our ideals  
***And may we acknowledge threats, some of our own making, to those ideals***

***Grant our leaders wisdom and forbearance***

May they govern with justice, compassion and clear knowledge of the cost of gun violence

***Help us all to appreciate one another, and the variety of viewpoints in this community and beyond,  
and teach us to respect the many ways we may serve You***

Then, we've been taught, shall our light rise in darkness, and this gloom be as the noon-day. (Isaiah 58:10)

***Shine Your light through the gloom. Heal us and our local , national, and global communities.  
Lead us toward homes free of affliction and strife, bodies and spirits untrammelled by gun violence.  
Help us to be the change we hope to see. Soon and in our lifetimes. – Amen.***

***Our LGBTQ Siblings: A Prayer of Remembrance***

*Courtesy Siddur Sha'ar Zahav*

The fact that such devastation in Orlando targeted a club popular with the LGBT community and occurred during Pride month reminds us that despite strides made towards equality, there is much to be done to address ongoing discrimination that has been for too long acceptable in this nation.

O God, remember today our LGBTQ siblings who were martyred in years past: those murdered by fanatics in the Middle Ages, those who perished in the Holocaust, and those struck down in our own city, in our own time.

*Remember also those who took their own lives, driven by despair by a world that hated them  
because of their love or gender.*

And in mercy remember those who lived lives of loneliness, repressing their true natures and refraining from sharing their love with one another.

*O God, remember the sacrifice of these martyrs, and help us bring an end to hate and oppression of  
every kind.*