

## A Prayer for Shabbat Tzedek 5778

Rabbi Neil P.G. Hirsch and Koach Baruch Frazier

This weekend, communities around the country will commemorate *Shabbat Tzedek* – a Shabbat of Justice – in connection with Martin Luther King, Jr. Day weekend. This is a moment to both recognize those whose pursuit of justice and freedom paved the path we walk today *and* march forward on the road towards redemption.

Many among us experience both privilege and comfort. Yet, the experience of Egypt endures; not all are free. And so tonight, we shake ourselves from complacency and affirm our pursuit of justice, offering this prayer of redemption that is both personal and communal:

"מִמַּעֲמָקִים קָרָאתִיךָ ייִ":

*Mi-ma-a-makim k'raticha, Adonai:*

Out of the depths I call to You, Adonai" (Psalm 103:1) cried the Psalmist. We hear the one who says, "I yearn to be free."

There are those among us who long to know this redemption: those victims of baseless hatred and bigotry, of anti-Semitism and racism, of xenophobia and homophobia, of sexism and of violence.

On this Shabbat, we pray: May we each know our own personal redemption. May we see a path toward personal liberation. May we hear the voice of others as we listen to ourselves. May we each know that we are loved by an unending love, and may we experience that love in our sacred communities, together.

For redemption is also communal:

"וַיִּאָנוּ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן־הָעֲבֹדָה וַיִּזְעֻקוּ וַתַּעַל שׁוֹעֲתָם אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים מִן־הָעֲבֹדָה":

*Va-ye-an'chu v'nei Yisra'el min ha-avodah va-yiz-aku va-ta-al shav'a-tam  
El-ha-Elohim min ha-avodah.*

"The Israelites groaned under the bondage and cried out; and their cry for help from the bondage rose up to God." (Exodus 2:23)



Eternal God, the Israelites cried out to You, and You took notice. You revealed Yourself to Moses first through a burning bush, and there You said:

"רָאָה רְאִיתִי אֶת־עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר בְּמִצְרַיִם וְאֶת־צַעֲקוֹתָם שְׁמַעְתִּי מִפְּנֵי נִגְשָׁיו כִּי יִדְעַתִּי אֶת־מַכְאֲבָיו:"

*Ra-oh ra-iti et oni ami asher b'Mitzrayim v'et tza-a-ka-tam shamati  
mi-p'nei nog'sav ki yadati et-mach'ovav.*

"I see the plight of My People in Egypt. I hear their crying because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings." (Exodus 3:7)

And so, we pray: Help us to see, to hear, and to know the injustices that keep us from redemption. Like Moses who comes upon the burning bush, make it so that we cannot look away. Enable us to hear the voices of our family, our friends, and our community members when they tell us how they are oppressed. Grant us wisdom and compassion to eradicate the experience of the captive, so that we are all free. Give us courage, energy, and humility to embrace those among us who we too easily label as "other." Let us transform other into one another. In so doing, we bring justice and healing to our world.

Disturb us from complacency that we may see, hear, and know the experience of the orphan, the widow, the stranger who dwells among us, the one who identifies differently, those who live in poverty, the unhoused, the newly immigrated, the person who thinks and speaks differently than us, anyone who could otherwise remain unseen, unheard, or unknown. And on this *Shabbat Tzedek*, energize us in our pursuit of justice and the fight for redemption, in keeping with the words of the Prophet Micah:

"הֲגִיד לְךָ אָדָם מִה־טוֹב יי דוֹרֵשׁ מִמֶּךָ כִּי אִם־עֲשׂוֹת מִשְׁפָּט וְאַהֲבַת חֶסֶד וְהִצַּנֵּעַ לְכַת עִם־אֱלֹהֵיךָ:"

*Higid l'cha adam ma tov u'ma Adonai doreish mimcha: ki im-asot  
mishpat v'ahavat chesed v'hatz-neia lechet im Elohecha.*

"It has been told to you, person, what is good and what the Eternal requires of you: to do justice, love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." (6:8)

Amen.

Learn more at [rac.org/mlk](http://rac.org/mlk)