

Creating a Collaborative “Eicha”

with P’nai Or Philadelphia, in the third year of the COVID pandemic

August 6, 2022 – Tisha b’Av, 5782

Eicha, or Lamentations, is the scroll that is chanted on Tisha b’Av, as we grieve the repetitive destruction of so much that was dear to us through our people’s history. It is a day of many tragedies, which we remember. There is in our own time much destruction and loss in our world. Much to lament. Much healing needed.

So, we mourn. Rising from our grief, with our resilience, healing emerges. We begin an ascent into hope and renewed commitment to justice, peace, and the redemption of the world.

We who gather at P’nai Or on Tisha b’Av to “pour out our hearts like water,” seek ways to express the grief that arises in our own lives and times, linked with that of the past. This year at the end of Shabbat August 6th, 2022 we came together during the third year of Covid – yet again on Zoom, in our darkened rooms illuminated by the light of Yahrzeit candles.

To write our collective Eicha, we gather first in small groups to take turns tenderly sharing our griefs and hopes. Then we write our own verses, using opening phrases from Eicha as prompts.

“Hear my plea...”

“My heart is in anguish...”

“I cry out...”

“I am heartbroken for...”

When we are on Zoom, we return to the main room to cascade our responses in the Chat. This is our Eicha, chanted in trope by our readers. We collect them after the gathering to create each year’s unique Lamentations.

A Collaborative Eicha of Grief and Hope for Tisha b'Av 5782 Written by members of P'nai Or Philadelphia, August 6, 2022

I am heartbroken for all those who died alone during the pandemic.

My plea is for compassion for those I meet and for myself.

I cry out for the return of my life as it was before.

My plea is for healing for the world.

My eyes are spent with tears for the long-festering breakdown and disintegration of family and social fabric, which leaves people alone, lonely, unsupported in life.

I am heartbroken from all the lost lives and missed opportunities, and the end of the lives of our loved ones.

My heart is in anguish for losing the joy of the life I used to have, and the freedom that is gone.

I am heartbroken for the physical destruction and disease that have taken over our world, and that know no boundaries.

I cry out for the woman and her three children on the subway. She, with 3rd degree burns on her arm from a work injury, had no other way to get to the hospital.

My heart is in anguish for all those still suffering from disconnection and uncertainty from Covid's impact.

My eyes are spent with tears of loneliness and isolation.

My plea is for stronger gun reform.

I am heartbroken for those who are alone and afraid.

My heart is crying for all the preventable losses.

I cry out for the awakening of humans toward the precious gifts of the Earth.

My heart is in anguish for the loss our world has endured with the relentless war in Ukraine.

My heart is in anguish for women who are being forced back into fear, anxiety, pain, hurt, and anger by the loss of the right to make decisions about their own bodies!

I am in anguish for the destruction of hope, the destruction of democracy, and the non-stop destruction of the Earth.

I hope we can go to family and friendly gatherings without fear.

My plea is for art, music, and dance.

My hope is for the freedom to not fear.

My plea is for humanity to prevail in our country.

I'm heartbroken for every child who is not getting even basic needs met.

My plea is for people to have more compassion for each other, offering counseling and support services for people willing to share their anxiety and fears, without worry of being judged.

My eyes are spent with tears for the long festering breakdown and disintegration of family and social fabric, which leaves people alone, lonely, unsupported in life.

My heart is in anguish for the unread "Torah scroll" of those who have died.

My plea is for people to see we are one community and can't be well if we all aren't careful.

I cry out for the children unmercifully killed by gun violence in the schools.

I am heartbroken for all who experience bigotry, hate, and indifference.

I cry out for justice for all marginalized people throughout the world.

My plea is that we can bring an end to the gun violence that haunts our schools, our houses of worship, our lives in community.

I anguish over the suffering and violence in the world, yet I have hope because of the love and work of *lamed-vavniks* – peaceniks.

My plea is to hear live music.

My heart is crying for all the preventable losses.

My plea is for truth that brings justice.

My heart aches for those who continue to suffer from loss and persistent despair from illness, violence, poverty, inequity, and isolation.

I pray for the presence of mind to embrace H.O.P.E. by honoring one's personal experiences.

My plea is for an end to gun violence and the daily deaths on our streets.

I am heartbroken for those who are alone and afraid.

My plea is: stop killing each other.

I cry out for rest.

I cry out for my lost laughter.

My plea is for food to be on all plates.

My hope is for more compassionate listening to each other and all sentient beings on planet Earth.

I have hope that we can solve this—if we join our hearts and minds.

I know that what is true is not a figment of my imagination.

I cry out for peace and hope for Shalom.

My hope is for peace.

My tears are a divine joy.

הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ ה' אֵלֶיךָ וְנִשְׁוּבָה חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקֶדֶם

Hashivenu Adonay Eylecha v'nashuvah: Chadeysh yamenu k'kedem

Let us return to You, and we will return!

Renew our days as they were-and-yet-will-be!

Eicha 5:21