

***This insert is to be recited after the Ten Plagues
or at another time deemed appropriate during one's seder.***

For as long as we have recorded our stories and history, women's lives and bodies have been degraded during times of war. From the rape of Dinah to the kidnapping of Helen of Troy, violence against women is synonymous with armed conflict. During this current war in Israel, many of the more than 200 hostages were women, facing violence, pain, and suffering. With over 100 hostages still in Hamas captivity, the threat of continued violence, including forced pregnancy, remain an ongoing threat. Time is running out to safely bring them home.

This is a story we cannot ignore: the excessive and disproportionate violence against women, stemming from our oldest days to this present, terrible moment. From the Passover story to this contemporary devastation, we are determined to free those held in captivity.

Jewish tradition affirms that "there is no greater commandment than redeeming the captive." During Passover especially, we have a commitment to advocate for the rights of those who are suffering from gender-based violence, who have had their freedom taken away from them, and who have been separated from their home and their loved ones.

As broken as our people are, we are also resilient and do not stand idly by. This year, when we say "Next year in Jerusalem," we say it with the conviction that all are returned to their families and embraced safely; that those who are still held captive and are experiencing this atrocious violence are freed; that those recently freed and those who have senselessly suffered loss find peace and healing; and that the raging violence comes to an end.

Our God, the God of our ancestors
Free all those captured in war.
Free the captive women;
Free our mothers, grandmothers, daughters, sisters, and aunts.
Free the babies and children,
senselessly, violently kidnapped.

Fulfill that great mitzvah, that holy duty
Of redeeming the captive.
May they all return, swiftly
To their families and their homes.

May women's bodies be sacred and safe.
Shechinah, nurturing presence, watch over them.
Guard them.
Protect them.
Bring them home.

Blessed are You, Eternal our God, who frees the captive.

- Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch (she/her)
WRJ Executive Director

