

## **A Rabbinic Plea to Free Israeli Hostages and Support Their Families**

In these painful days, as we grapple with immense sorrow for the loss of so many innocent lives while also feeling inspired by stories of heroism, we are constantly reminded of the faces of the sons and daughters of Israel who have been so tragically torn from their families. Babies, children, young women, young men, mothers, fathers, and the elderly were all kidnapped by Hamas, cruel perpetrators of evil and wrongdoing. Our brothers and sisters, abducted and held captive, are desperately pleading for help and rescue. They surely believe that we will not stop trying to ensure their safe return, entrusting us with their hopes for deliverance.

These profoundly difficult days test the very essence of our Jewish values and the strength of our Jewish-Israeli covenant. Throughout the ages, our tradition has mandated the redemption of captives. As Rabbi Yosef Karo quotes the Rambam (who was extraordinarily emphatic in stressing the importance of this mitzva) in the *Shulchan Aruch*, "Every moment that passes without redeeming a captive when it is possible to do so is equivalent to shedding blood."

Israeli society must mobilize a united national and global effort to free the hostages and stand together in unwavering support of their families. Governments of every nation must do everything within their power to gather information about the captives and their condition, demand humanitarian intervention, and secure their freedom.

More than 200 innocent Israelis have been held hostage in Gaza for over two weeks. We must not abandon the hostages. We must explore every avenue and summon all our strength to confront those who threaten the dignity of humankind while working tirelessly to bring every one of our brothers and sisters back home.

הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא יִשְׁמַר וְיַצִּיל אֶת חַיְלֵינוּ מִכָּל צָרָה וְצוּקָה, וּמִכָּל נֶגַע  
וּמַחְלָה, וְיִשְׁלַח בְּרָכָה וְהַצְלָחָה בְּכָל מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵיהֶם.

”וּפְדוּיֵי הַיְיָ יָשׁוּבוּן וּבָאוּ בְרֵנָה וּשְׂמֵחַת עוֹלָם עַל רֵאשֵׁם שְׂשׁוֹן וּשְׂמֵחָה  
יִשְׂיִגּוּן נְסוּי יָגוֹן וְאַנְחָה.” (ישעיהו נא:יא)  
וכן יהי רצון ונאמר אמן.

May God protect and save our soldiers from trouble and distress, plague and illness, and may God send blessing and success to all their endeavors. May God bless, preserve, and protect all of the hostages, the missing, and those abducted, and return them to their families. “So the redeemed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion rejoicing with eternal happiness upon their heads. They shall have gladness and joy; all sorrow and sighing will be no more.” (Isaiah 51:11) And so may it be, and we say, Amen.