



Our Time to Come Together

It's a striking moment in the Purim story when Mordechai, scared and dressed in sackcloth, calls on Esther to make a choice:

"If you keep silent in this crisis, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another quarter, while you and your father's house will perish; and who knows whether you have not come to your royal position for a time such as this?" (Esther 4:14).

Esther, forced to quickly grapple with the gravity of Haman's wicked plot to annihilate the Jewish people, is given a choice. She can continue to focus inwards and fall back on the excuse of not yet being "called to come to the king" (4:11), or she can use her vital position in the service of her people.

In the end, Esther chooses the bold path, courageously confronting King Achashverosh and Haman. Her initiative ultimately enables the Jewish people to unify and prevail.

Esther's brave leadership has continued to inspire the Jewish people in the most trying of times. Faced with Hamans of our own, the Purim story teaches us to come together as a community in the face of adversity.

Today, in the backdrop of external threats, we, the Jewish people, face internal challenges as tensions and disagreements threaten to tear us apart. This is best personified in the ongoing discourse regarding the growing gap between Israel and world Jewry, a people meant to be one but separated by geography, culture and beliefs. Let us heed Esther's call, "Go gather all the Jews" (4:16). Our responsibility is to overcome this divide and build a

common language with shared goals. With these tools, we will have the ability to engage where there are differences of opinion.

The eternal bond of history, text and tradition that links the Jewish people must return to the forefront. Ultimately, we are connected by our fundamental mission to be a light unto the nations and to provide a vision of a better tomorrow.

While the Jews of the Purim story were spread across 127 different provinces, they were unified "in their own script and language" (8:9), and connected by a common goal. Each and every one of us today is called upon to revitalize the mutual responsibility, solidarity and respectful dialogue that unified the Jewish people throughout the generations. By reaching out and building bridges, we forge a stronger, more connected people bonded by a collective purpose.

Our Common Destiny, a declaration published a few months ago, is a joint initiative of the President of Israel, the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and the Genesis Philanthropy Group. It provides a valuable foundation to build upon. Written and signed by Jewish leaders and thinkers from around

the world, it lays out our shared story and principles to guide our actions. This living mandate can advance us as we tell a new narrative of the Jewish people; one rooted in our shared past and inspired by our shared future.

Today, the Jewish people face a dilemma, similar to Esther's. We can choose to turn inwards, or we can proactively – and perhaps uncomfortably – reach out. This bold movement requires the collective participation of rabbis, leaders, communities small and large, and every individual to effectuate Our Common Destiny.

As Mordechai challenged Esther, "Who knows whether we have not come to our position for a time such as this?"

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