

חזק
חזק
ונתחזק

Protesting in the Streets

a JFREJ ritual toolkit

Introduction

We are in a time of mass disruption—pandemic, global economic collapse, climate catastrophe, and mass uprisings across the country and the world—in the wake of the police murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Tony McDade. This toolkit aims to support Jews taking action against anti-Black racism and White Supremacy and draw strength from our rituals and traditions. We believe that protests are sacred spaces. We believe we do our best work with intention, care, and integrity. We believe ritual supports us, grounds us, connects us to our ancestors, and helps us mark time as holy.

We see our work to end anti-Black racism, White Supremacy, and police murder as essential, varied and far ranging in our ongoing work for justice/*tzedeck*. Use these rituals as you take action—whether by marching in the streets, calling your representatives, creating resource materials, contributing financial or material resources, leading and facilitating educational opportunities, or providing support to a friend. All our work toward Tikkun Olam, repairing the world, is needed and necessary as we work to make the world and ourselves whole through demanding justice.

Take these rituals as a suggestion. We encourage you to adapt them and the language to your needs, community, and practice.

(In that vein, one note on the Hebrew prayer text that follows: in keeping with many contemporary Jewish traditions and practices, we have adjusted all language about “G-d” to the word “*Adonai*” and adjusted the word “*Melech/King*” to “*Ruach/Spirit*”).

It is vital that we respect and follow the Black organizers in our local areas. We encourage your group to coordinate with local Black organizers before blowing the shofar, performing chants, or offering other public rituals. Please do not bring rocks (traditionally brought to Jewish gravesites) or other public ritual items that can be mistaken as weapons by the police. If you are taking action in public, we encourage you to go in a group. The below rituals can be carried out individually or collectively. We are all learning to meet this moment, to come humbly and to give space for growth and connection.

COVER: CHAZAK CHAZAK VENIT'CHAZEK /
BE STRONG, BE STRONG, AND WE WILL STRENGTHEN ONE ANOTHER
CALLIGRAPHY BY ARIELLE TONKIN

BEFORE GOING INTO ACTION

As with many rituals, we take a moment to prepare. Going into action is no different. First, we start with setting our intentions. You can think or journal about these questions alone, or discuss them with your protest buddy(ies).

FOUR QUESTIONS FOR INTENTION-SETTING

Why is this day different from all other days? What makes a protest sacred and different from other spaces? What do I need to do differently in this space and how can I center black voices?

Am I prepared? Take a moment to check in with yourself. Where am I emotionally? Do I have all of the supplies I need—water, a buddy, phone numbers for legal support, a safe way of getting home?

Why am I going? Consider your reasons (personally and broadly) for the action/s I will be taking.

What do I hope to move on the path to justice? How do you hope your actions can affect change?

PREPARATIONS: GARMENTS & SUPPLIES

To distinguish the actions you are about to take, what might you wear in a time of grief or to mark holy time or to mark prayer? Whatever that is, we encourage you to wear it. For some, this might be a tallis, kippah, tefillin. For others, a specific color of clothing, perhaps black or white.

Supplies you will need:

- Black ribbon for everyone participating
- Shofar or other noise making instrument/object
- Water and something to pour it with



HAND WASHING / NETILAT YADAYIM

Next we take a moment to wash our hands—cleansing ourselves as we prepare for action. You can follow the below tradition or wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap in quiet contemplation. This also links us to an ongoing commitment and obligation to safety, during this time of COVID19.

Netilat yadayim is customarily done with a 2-handled cup. Common practice can be found below.

- Pour twice on the dominant hand with your non-dominant hand
- Pour twice on the non-dominant hand with your dominant hand.
- It is also customary not to speak following the recitation of this blessing, found below:

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך/רוח העולם אשר קדשנו במצוותיו, וצונו על נטילת ידים

Baruch atah Ado-nai elo-heinu melech/ruach ha'olam asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav vitzivanu al netilat yadayim.

Blessed are you, Adonai, ruler/spirit of the universe, who commands us to wash our hands.

TRAVELER'S PRAYER / TEFILLAT HADERECH

Lastly, we take a moment to say the Traveler's Prayer to ask Adonai to bring us safely back after our trip. Followed by silent contemplation as you transition to action.

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, שתוליקנו לשלום ותצדיקנו לשלום. ותסמכנו לשלום. ותדריכנו לשלום. ותגיינו למחוז הפצנו לחיים ולשמחה ולשלום ותצילנו מפף כל אויב ואורב ולסטים וחיזות רעות בדרך ומכל מיני פגעניות המתרגשות לבוא לעולם. ותשלח ברכה בכל מעשה ידינו, ותתגנו לחן ולחסד ולרחמים בעיניך ובעיני כל רואינו ותשמע קול תחנונינו. כי אל שומע תפלה ותחנון אתה: ברוך אתה ה', שומע תפלה

Y'hi ratzon milfanekha Adonai Eloheinu velohei avoteinu she-tolikhenu l'shalom v'tatz'idenu l'shalom v'tadrikhenu l'shalom, v'tagi'enu limhoz heftzenu l'hayim ul-simha ul-shalom. V'tatzilenu mi-kaf kol oyev v'orev v'listim v'hayot ra'ot ba-derekh, u-mi-kol minei pur'aniyot ha-mitrag'shot la-vo la-olam. V'tishlah b'rakha b'khol ma'a'se yadeinu v'tit'nenu l'hen ul-hesed ul-rahamim b'einekha uv-einei khol ro'einu. V'tishma kol tahanuneinu ki El sho'me'a t'fila v'tahanun ata. Barukh ata Adonai sho'me'a t'fila.

Adapted translation for protest (traditional text [here](#)):

Adonai, guide us, support us, and direct our steps in pursuit of justice. Cause us to reach our destination in action, strength, and justice, and return us safely. Protect us all from violence and sorrow. Grant us an open mind and heart and the will to persist, in Your eyes and in the eyes of all who see us, and bestow upon our community abundant kindness and hearken to the voice of our prayer, for You hear the prayers of all. Blessed are You, Adonai, who hears our prayer.

TAKING ACTION

We offer these ideas for actions, prayers and rituals for action. Again, when using these in public protest, check in with local Black organizers to ensure you are supporting their leadership.

HINENI: A Call to Tzedek/Justice

As you gather together, call out and raise voices and the sound of the shofar (or other instrument or noisemaker). We have included suggestions for traditional shofar sounds* to include if you wish.

Hineni: We are here!

[Blow the shofar: *tekiab*]

Hineni: Silence is violence!

[Blow the shofar: *t'ruah*]

Hineni: Black lives matter!

[Blow the shofar: *shevarim*]

*Glossary of shofar sounds (more info [here](#)):

TEKIAH • one long note; a summons to attention.

T'RUAH • nine staccato notes; an urgent alarm, rousing us from our spiritual slumber.

SHEVARIM • three short notes; represents the sounds of weeping.

MANTRA / BRACHOT / PRAYER

Our hope is that these *brachot* lift you to feel connection, especially during times of anxiety, injury or even incarceration.

GIVING STRENGTH

חזק חזק ונתחזק

Chazak chazak v'nitchazek

Be strong, be strong,
and we will strengthen one another

FACING FEAR

כָּל הָעוֹלָם כִּלּוּ גֶשֶׁר צָר מְאֹד וְהִטְיָקָר לֹא לִפְחָד כָּלֵל

*Kol Ha'Olam Kulo gesher tzar ma'od,
v'haikar lo l'fached klal*

The world is but a narrow bridge,
the important thing is to not be afraid

וְעַם רוּחִי גִוְיָתִי ה' לִי וְלֹא אֵירָא

V'im ruchi g'viati, Adonai li v'lo ira

For as long as I have breath, You are with me;
I will not fear

KADDISH to honor those we've lost:
#SayTheirNames

This Kaddish, traditional Jewish prayer said for those who have died and to bring comfort to those in mourning, is adapted following a model that was created to uplift those lost in the Holocaust/Shoah. The Kaddish itself is in ancient Aramaic (not Hebrew) and is transliterated. As a resource, [here](#) is one well researched, but not comprehensive, list of names of numerous Black people killed by the police.

Adapt the example below for what is of most meaning in your community:

*Yitgadal v'yitkadash George Floyd
sh'mei raba Breonna Taylor
B'alma di v'ra chirutei Tony McDade
v'yamlich malchutei, Jamel Floyd
b'chayeichon uv'yomeichon Sandra Bland
uv'chayei d'chol beit Yisrael, Eric Garner
baagala uviz'man kariv. Philando Castile
V'im'ru: Michael Brown
Amen.*

*Y'hei sh'mei raba m'varach, Bettie Jones
l'alam ul'almei almaya. Tamir Rice
Yitbarach v'yishtabach Akiya Gurley
v'yitpaar v'yitromam v'yitnasei, Mary Truxillo
v'yit'hadar v'yitaleh Tyree Crawford
v'yit'halal India Kager
sh'mei d'Kud'sha Lamontez Jones
B'rich Hu, Billy Ray Davis
l'eila min kol birchata v'shirata, Janet Wilson
tushb'chata v'nechemata, Victor Manuel Larosa
daamiran b'alma. Alteria Woods
V'imru: Alton Sterling
Amen.*

*Y'hei sh'lama Atatiana Jefferson
raba min sh'maya, Akia Gurley
v'chayim aleinu Walter Scott
v'al kol Yisrael. Demarcus Semer
V'imru: Natasha McKenna
Amen.*

Oseh shalom bimromav, Hu yaaseh shalom aleinu, v'al kol Yisrael. V'imru: Amen.

May the one who creates peace on high bring peace to us and to all people. And we say: Amen.

עוֹשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרְוֹמָיו הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן



MI SHEBEIRACH: Healing

We move from mourning toward the hope of healing, for all those who are grieving losses, and for our society as we wrestle with the impacts of racism and police violence.

מי שברך אבותינו אברהם יצחק ויעקב, שרה רבקה רחל ולאה, הוא יברך את החולים []. הקדוש ברוך הוא ימלא רחמים עליהם, להחלימים ולרפאתם ולהחזיקם ולהחיותם, וישלח להם מהרה רפואה שלמה מן השמים, רפואת הנפש ורפואת הגוף, השתא בעגלא ובזמן קריב. ונאמר: אמן

Mi Shebeirach avoteinu v'imoteinu, Avraham, Yitzchak v'Yaakov, Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel v'Lei-ah, hu y'vareich et hacholim [names]. HaKadosh Baruch Hu yimalei rachamim aleihem, l'hachalimam ul'rapotam ul'hachazikam, v'yishlach lahem m'heirah r'fuah, r'fuah shleimah min hashamayim, r'fuat hanefesh ur'fuat haguf, hashta baagala uviz'man kariv. V'nomar: Amen.

May the one who blessed our ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, bless and heal those who are ill or in need of healing [names]. May the Blessed Adonai be filled with compassion for their health to be restored and their strength to be revived. May Adonai swiftly send them a complete renewal of body and spirit and cessation of their pain, and let us say: Amen.

KRIYAH: Marking This Time / Making Distinction

It is customary for Jewish mourners to rend/rip a garment or wear a black ribbon to mark that they are in mourning.

Bring a big piece of black ribbon or fabric to rip, or rip your t-shirt.

This is a way to mark this time together, to stand in solidarity with the families of those lost, and to honor the collective loss our communities and society suffer because of racism and police violence.

COMING OUT OF ACTION

As we return home, transitioning out of action, we offer this closing ritual.

SILENT CONTEMPLATION

Use silence for the transition from the street. If possible, find a gathering spot. Then, move silently from the protest to that sacred space or home. Or engage in a 5-minute meditation of just noticing the breath or focus on the intention you set for the action.

MIKVEH

Also in silence—mikveh (taking a shower) or hand washing if a shower is not available. You can follow the below tradition for mikveh or wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap in quiet contemplation. This also links us to an ongoing commitment and obligation to safety, during this time of COVID19.

A mikveh consists of three immersions.

For the first immersion, enter the shower, close your eyes, and take a deep breath. Immerse yourself in the water and think about where you are coming from and what you hope to release in the waters and/or say the blessing:

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך/רוח העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצוננו על הטבילה

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech/ruach ha'olam, asher kidshanu bi-t'vilah b'mayyim hayyim.

Blessed are You, God, Majestic Spirit of the Universe, who makes us holy by embracing us in living waters.

(Blessing courtesy of Mayyim Hayyim Ritual Creation Team, 2004)

For the second immersion, take a deep breath, immerse yourself in the water, think about where you are now and/ or say the blessing:

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך/רוח העולם שהחיינו וקימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech/ruach ha-olam, shehecheyanu, v'kiy'manu, v'higianu, la-z'man ha-zeh.

Blessed is the Eternal One, who gives me the ability to remember those blessings which are still mine to affirm and the strength to arise anew each day.

(Rabbi Nancy Flam)

For the third immersion, take a deep breath, immerse yourself in the water, think about how you would like to move forward, what you learned from the day, and/or say the blessing:

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל, ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ, ה' אֶחָד

Sh'ma Yisrael, Adonay Eloheynu, Adonai echad

Hear o Israel, the eternal our God, the eternal is one!

SH'MA & V'AHAVTA

This brings us to a grounding power of our enduring prayer.

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל, ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ, ה' אֶחָד

Sh'ma Yisrael, Adonay Eloheynu, Adonai echad

Hear o Israel, the eternal our God, the eternal is one!

An excerpt from "V'ahavta" by Aurora Levins Morales
(full poem [here](#))

Say these words when you lie down and when you rise up,
when you go out and when you return. In times of mourning
and in times of joy. Inscribe them on your doorposts,
embroider them on your garments, tattoo them on your shoulders,
teach them to your children, your neighbors, your enemies,
recite them in your sleep, here in the cruel shadow of empire:
Another world is possible.

...

Don't waver. Don't let despair sink its sharp teeth
Into the throat with which you sing. Escalate your dreams.
Make them burn so fiercely that you can follow them down
any dark alleyway of history and not lose your way.
Make them burn clear as a starry drinking gourd
Over the grim fog of exhaustion, and keep walking.

BIRKAT HAGOMEL for those whose lives were in danger during the action
(additional info [here](#))

The one seeking blessing and expressing gratitude recites:

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך/רוח העולם הגומל להיבנים טובות שגמלני כל טוב

Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu melech/ruach ha-olam, ha-gomel l'chayavim tovot she-g'malani kol tov.

Blessed are You, our God, ruler/breath of the world, who rewards the undeserving with goodness, and who has rewarded me with goodness.

The others respond:

מי שגמלך כל טוב הוא יגמלך כל טוב סלה

Mi she-g'malcha kol tov, hu yi-g'malcha kol tov selah.

May the one who rewarded you with all goodness reward you with all goodness for ever.

FOUR QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Now that we have washed our hands, given thanks, and honored our actions with water, we take some time for reflection. Just as we prepared this action with reflection so too do we close. This can be done alone or in a group, verbally or journaling.

How was my experience (protesting, having a meeting, etc.) different than all other experiences? What did I learn? How did I grow? What questions do I have now?

Was I prepared? Did I have what I needed? Did I have the supplies? Did I have the emotional and physical capacity for my task? What did I leave behind/overlook?

How do I grow from my experience? Did I hold true to my intentions? Did I show up well?

How did I support movement on the path toward justice? How am I going to continue this work? What am I committing to do next?

Conclusion

honoring ongoing work

Our rituals and actions today are part of the ongoing work to dismantle white supremacy, end racism, structural inequality and police violence.

“The Black mother within each of us—
the poet—whispers in our dreams:
I feel, therefore I can be free.”

Audre Lorde

“It is our duty to fight for our freedom.
It is our duty to win.
We must love each other and support each other.
We have nothing to lose but our chains.”

Assata Shakur



Ritual Team

This ritual was crafted by Susannah Dyen,
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JEW **FOR** **BLACK** **LIVES**

The English text "JEW FOR BLACK LIVES" is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font. Below each word, there is a horizontal line of stylized Hebrew calligraphy in a gold color. The calligraphy is a decorative representation of the words "יהודים לפרוץ שחור חיים" (Jews for Black Lives).