

Rabbi Drs Edward van Voolen

Drashot Ukraine War

1. Shabbat Vayakhel, February 25-6, 2022/ 25 Adar I 5782

Я хочу передати світло миру для Європи без війни

Keine Nation wird gegen eine andere das Schwert erheben, und das Kriegshandwerk werden sie nicht mehr lernen (Jesaja 2,4).

Osseh schalom bimromaw, hu ja'asseh schalom alenu, achshaw, bimhera, bejamenu

Möge der Friedensstifter hier oben Frieden für uns stiften – jetzt, baldmöglichst, in unseren Tagen

Вс-вишній, що дав мир небесам своїм, дарує мир нам, невдовзі, у найближчий час

Unsere Gedanken und Gebete sind bei allen Menschen in Ukraine, bei allen die Opfer des Krieges sind, bei allen die flüchten sowie bei allen die sich weltweit für Gerechtigkeit und Frieden einsetzen.

2. Shabbat Pekudei, March 4-5 2022/ 2 Adar II 2022

We - Jews and non-Jews - are all responsible for each other (cf. Talmud Shevuot 39a).

An impressive part of the world supports Ukraine, the people in the country and the millions who are fleeing. They are welcomed, also here in Germany.

Numerous organisations and individuals are working 24/7 including our congregations, rabbis, and our own Geiger students.

May the divine cloud that accompanied our people through the desert, protect them and all of us now, throughout this dangerous journey (see pekudei, Exodus 40,36).

In the words of John Lennon and the Plastic Ono Band, the anthem of the anti-war movement: „All we are saying is give peace a chance.“

Naftali Herz Imber from Zolochiv, Ukraine, said it 130 years ago, in what became Israel's national anthem: “Our hope is not lost, the hope of two thousand years.“

3. Shabbat Tsav, March 18-19, 2022/ 16 Adar II 5782

Persönliche Berichte und Bilder aus Ukraine erinnern uns öfters an Ereignisse, die unsere Verwandte, Eltern und Großeltern erlebt haben, in der Sowjetunion und in Europa in der Nazizeit. Krieg war lange weit weg für uns.

Innerhalb kürzester Zeit hat Deutschland sich politisch umorientiert und fast ganz Europa identifiziert sich konkret mit der Ukraine. Die Türe für Millionen Flüchtlinge sind geöffnet.

Das Bibelbuch Leviticus heißt auf Hebräisch VaYikra, Er (Gott) rief. Warum ist der Buchstabe Aleph/a klein geschrieben? Eine Erklärung sagt: alle Menschen, nicht nur Juden, sind angesprochen.

Viele Organisationen und Individuen – wie zum Beispiel Geigerstudent Alexander Kovtun per Zoom in Yugorsk, einer kleinen jüdischen Gemeinde in Russland – wissen sich angesprochen und leisten Hilfe.

Tsav, gebiete, wie die heutigen Wochenabschnitt heißt (Leviticus 6,2) bedeutet Zedaka, Wohltätigkeit, in der Praxis umzusetzen: überall und für alle.

Personal stories and images of the current war remind us of what our parents and grandparents experienced in Nazi Europe or during Soviet times. For a long time, real war was far away.

Germany changed its political course within a couple of days, and most of Europe identifies with Ukraine.

Leviticus is called VaYikra in Hebrew, He (God) called, written with a small Aleph, a. Why? One explanation is that everyone is called, not only Jews.

Many organisations and individuals feel called and are involved. One example being Geiger student Alexander Kovtun, who celebrated Purim via Zoom in Yugorsk, a small Jewish community in Russia.

Tsav, command, the name of today's parashah (Leviticus 6,2) means exactly that: to practice tzedakah, charity everywhere and for everyone.

4. Shabbat Zachor and Purim, 11-12 March 2022/ 9 Adar II 5782

Don't forget to remember what Amalek did to you, attacking you from the rear when you fled from Egyptian slavery, famished, and exhausted (Deuteronomy 25, 17-18). This is the theme of Shabbat Zachor.

Amalek symbolizes evil, from Haman to Hitler, till this very day. Everyone who has access to uncensored media is familiar with flight, fear, and hunger amongst refugees, with atrocities, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. Holocaust survivors, Russian Jews during and after the fall of the FSU, and Ukrainians remember this and millions experience it now, again.

Haman's name is silenced by noise whenever he is mentioned in the Scroll of Esther on Purim, next week. I doubt whether we can drink so much alcohol as to forget the difference between good and evil, as tradition suggests.

Shabbat Zachor and Purim remind us that we cannot stand by and look away. Because “seeing leads to remembering and remembering leads to doing” (Talmud Menachot 43b). Like Esther and Mordechai, the heroes of Purim did, we need to act to prevent present and future disaster, and find creative solutions. Together.