

Thoughts on Ukraine

February 25, 2022

As Jews, as Americans, and as global citizens committed to freedom and democracy, we watch in horror as the people of Ukraine face an unprovoked military invasion, fleeing for their lives under intense bombardment. We feel profound anger at the brutal and cruel behavior of Vladimir Putin, an authoritarian nationalist acting in a way that recalls the darkest, bloodiest days of recent European history. And we are frightened, because we know that such brazen aggression, unchecked, can unleash even more violence and terror.

Many of us—here at JTS and in online groups—have prayed for the safety of the innocent people of Ukraine, which includes not only tens of thousands of Ukrainian Jews but the members of thriving Masorti congregations that are part of our worldwide movement of Conservative/Masorti Judaism. Indeed, JTS itself has very close ties to Ukraine through Project Judaica, an education and research program run by Professor David Fishman. The project brings JTS professors to teach in Ukraine and sponsors a program that sends researchers into the Ukrainian archives to find materials and documents on Jewish history. Professor Fishman will speak to our community on Monday, March 7, at 1:10 p.m. In addition, we will have the benefit of hearing from Alisa (Tzipi) Zilbershtein, a rabbinical student from Ukraine, when she speaks at *Minhah* services on Tuesday, March 1, at 2:20 p.m.

Let us continue to pray for all those in Ukraine, and to gather in community and solidarity. One way we can also act is by donating money to organizations working to aid those who have had to flee their homes, are injured, or face a lack of food, medicine, and other essentials. Masorti Olami has created an emergency fund for Ukraine, as has the Jewish Federations of North America. You'll find links to give to both below. There are many other groups working on the ground, and I encourage you to find one to support.

Here is an excerpt from a prayer shared yesterday by Masorti Olami, which we included in our afternoon prayers at JTS. May our words bring compassion and strength to those who are suffering, and may we find ways to bring an end to this senseless violence. (You can read the entire prayer, in Hebrew and English, [here](#)⁹⁹.)

*We pray to you now, God of the spirits of all flesh
to use your infinite power
to end these acts of bloodshed and terror
spread peace across the earth
and bring joy to all its inhabitants
so that the words of the prophets can be fulfilled:
“The warriors bow will be broken
and peace will be promised to all peoples”*

And let us say *Amen*.