



## Prayer for Moral Mondays

December 2025/Kislev 5785 | Rabbi Michael Knopf

On Monday, November 17, 2025, I was honored to participate in our local Moral Mondays gathering outside the Stamford courthouse, the site of illegal and immoral immigration enforcement actions over the past year. Below is the prayer I shared:

Good afternoon, friends. My name is Michael Knopf, and I'm the Senior Rabbi of Temple Beth El here in Stamford. I'm honored to stand with you — clergy, advocates, neighbors, and immigrant families — in this weekly witness for human dignity.

In the Jewish tradition, we are taught that God appears wherever the oppressed shed tears. We are taught that the measure of a society is how it treats the widow, the orphan, and — named more than any other in the Hebrew Bible — the stranger, the immigrant, the one who comes to our doorstep seeking refuge or opportunity.

And we gather here because families in our own community walk into this courthouse afraid. We gather here because federal policies crafted far away are enforced right here. And we gather here because, as Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel taught, “morally speaking, there is no limit to the concern one must feel for the suffering of human beings, that indifference to evil is worse than evil itself, and that in a free society, some are guilty — but all are responsible.” And we refuse to be indifferent.

I want to invite you to join me for a moment of prayer — grounded in our many traditions and our shared conviction that justice is sacred.

*Ribbono shel Olam* — God who hears the cry of the oppressed and walks with the stranger, we gather today in the shadow of this courthouse to proclaim that dignity is not the privilege of the few,  
but the birthright of every child of God.  
We come from many traditions.  
We call You by different names.  
Some of us are not certain what we believe at all.

And yet we stand together because our faith — our shared moral imagination — insists that where the oppressed shed tears, You appear.

And so we ask You to appear now —

here, where fear meets hope,  
where families come trembling through these doors unsure if this is the day they will be torn apart,  
where the presence of ICE turns the machinery of justice into an instrument of terror for our immigrant neighbors.

God of Hagar and Ishmael,  
You hear the cry of the child left beneath the desert bush.  
You open wells in barren places.  
You draw near not to the powerful, but to the vulnerable —  
to the migrant, the asylum seeker,  
to the ones whose very existence is deemed inconvenient by empire.  
Be near to them now.  
Surround every person who enters this courthouse with courage and protection.  
Let them know that they are not alone.

And strengthen the hearts of all who gather here —  
Grant us resilience, moral clarity, and steadfast love,  
that we may continue to stand with our neighbors even when the work grows heavy.

Source of Compassion, teach us to walk in Your ways —  
to love the migrant as You love the migrant,  
to accompany and defend,  
to build communities where hospitality is not charity but justice,  
rooted in the truth that every person bears Your image.

Guide the leaders of our city, our courts, our state, and our country —  
those who wield power in the administration,  
those who craft, implement, or defend policies that criminalize the stranger,  
those who applaud or advocate for these cruelties,  
and those who capitulate, remain silent, or stand idly by  
as families are torn apart.

We also pray for the federal agents stationed at these doors —  
those whose uniforms place them at the fault line between law and conscience.  
Holy One, awaken their moral imagination.  
Help them remember the Constitution they swore to uphold,  
the humanity of the people before them,  
and the quiet voice inside that still knows right from wrong.

Awaken the sleeping consciences of everyone in our community and country — to all

of us who live in this free society:  
to the moderates who prefer comfort to courage, the absence of tension to the  
presence of justice;  
to the bystanders who witness suffering yet feel no urgency to respond;  
to all who convince themselves that neutrality is not a choice.

Guide us all — every one of us gathered here —  
to keep showing up,  
to widen the circle of witness,  
to insist that justice is not abstract,  
but embodied in how we treat one another right here, right now.

Let us lift our voices together in a shared affirmation — a collective declaration of who  
we are and what we stand for. With each line, I invite you to respond with: “We will not  
look away!”

Let’s try it once:

**Leader:** When the oppressed shed tears...

**All:** We will not look away!

**Leader:** Again – When the oppressed shed tears...

**All:** We will not look away!

**Leader:** When families fear to walk into our courthouse...

**All:** We will not look away!

**Leader:** When our immigrant neighbors are targeted or terrorized...

**All:** We will not look away!

**Leader:** When laws are used to intimidate rather than protect...

**All:** We will not look away!

**Leader:** When leaders remain silent, or indifferent, or complicit...

**All:** We will not look away!

**Leader:** And when our nation demands moral courage...

**All:** We will not look away!

**Leader:** Again — when our nation demands moral courage...

**All:** We will not look away!

This is our promise.

This is our witness.

This is our covenant with one another:

That we will not sit out the suffering of our neighbors.

That we will not confuse moderation with morality.

That we will not let cruelty hide behind bureaucracy.

That we will not surrender our conscience to anyone’s convenience.

We believe in a country that protects the vulnerable.

We believe in a community where no one stands alone.

And we believe that we are called to pursue and build that beloved community.

May we be the ones who refuse to look away.

May we be the ones who keep showing up.

May we be the ones who bend this moment toward mercy,  
and bend this nation toward justice.

**And let us say: Amen.**