

El Ezkarah for Pittsburgh

These things do I remember and my heart is grieved!
How the arrogant have devoured our people!
Who would believe that in our day there would be no intervention
For the eleven slaughtered from our holy community?

That Shabbat morning was like every Shabbat
The twenty early-risers from the three shuls
Came to read *Parshat Vayera* from the Torah
And they did not know nor could they see in the reflection of God's mystery
That the portion would reveal what would happen to them

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And they read:

Abraham rose early and brought his servant lads
And his only son who he loved
They went to Mount Moriah together
His son Isaac by his side and two lads behind
They walked three days in silence.
They went in hushed voices for nothing occurred to them.
Finally they arrived at Moriah
And there God tested Abraham
And Abraham let the youths rest at the bottom of the hill.
God said to Abraham: Ascend to me on the hill and I will test you there.

And they saw:

And Abraham rose
He ascended the mountain of God, the hill of Moriah

And a cloud covered the mountain and God called to him saying:
Thus will you say to the house of Jacob and thus will you tell the house of Israel:
You will be holy for I am holy
And everyone who wishes to enter my covenant and visit my Sanctuary
That time when the many will come to sanctify my Holy Name in public
And to the living God they will call
And unto the Sanctity of Life and of Love that is implanted in every heart

And then the group returned, Abraham leading,
And they walked separately to their homes
And they were silent all of them in reaction to the frightful vision their eyes saw.

And thus they heard from behind the Veil of Mystery:
And if you ask in your bitterness, "This is Torah and this is its reward?"
"My answer is known:
It has been decreed ...
Don't dwell too much on what separates You from Me.

What occurred in our Holy Sanctuary that day
As the enemy came to tread upon our holy space
His wielding sword to break apart our memories from that place
The sanctified recalled a few that remained –
Among some their faces turned to one another before "Kaddish d'Rabbanan"
Among some their faces turned toward the door to welcome new faces
Among some they quickly assisted their friends in finding their place in the Siddur
Among some those engaged in Torah Study
And among some who were in the kitchen preparing the next meal.

And to the eleven, God spoke in a whisper
"The time has arrived to sanctify My Name in public.
"And I know you did not ask for this."
Even so, they would be remembered and looked upon as personally bound to the
Altar as one united.

For in the future their children and congregations would remember
That we are Sanctifiers of Life who come to live
For we arose, we stood as your followers in your path
For we remembered faith and friendship here toward your light.

We buried our bodies.
And upon them we wept
And even so, this did not break us.
Nonetheless we were steadfast in our place
And we continued to stand.

And so, Our Father our King, act for the sake of those who were slaughtered for
your holy name.
And act for the babies and children and for all the people of your faith.
Remember us, our King, for we keep You in mind.
Help us, our King, for we prayed to You.
Save us, our Creator, for our eyes are upon you.

As long as this breath is within us
We ponder the world you created for us
And evening and morning, each and every day.
We gather and we cry out as one:
Hear O Israel, the Lord our God , the Lord is One.

