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JUNE 12, 2016... A day of no words... Stunned silence... Shared tears... Spiritual hugs... Standing together... Torn hearts... Tearful prayers... Questions with no answers ... Solidarity ...

Genesis describes the creation of the first human being, reflecting God's Image, male and female together. The author of the Creation story gives us no details about this individual – skin color, physical structure, certainly not religion – only that, according to the Hebrew text, male and female are created together as one individual being. The message to humanity is clear: every individual carries the spark of the Divine Image, and human dignity is the highest religious ideal. Period.

As we mourn with the LGBT and Latin communities, we stand together as one family. When a hate crime is directed against one part of our family, we tighten our bond. When the dignity of one part of our family is denied, we are all diminished. When one part of our family is disrespected, all of us are insulted. When one member of our family is hurt, we all feel pain.

This is not a time for fear; it is a time of empathy for parents who mourn children, for friends who mourn friends, for all of us who mourn our brothers and sisters.

We are proud to be in Orlando where the lines to donate blood are as long as the lines at Disney, Universal, and Sea World; where volunteers flock to provide water and food for those waiting in line and for those who were waiting to hear if their loved ones are alive. We offer our grateful respect to the police, to the first responders, to medical care teams – including nurses, technicians, therapists and physicians – who immediately donated their personal time to work overtime in the emergency departments and operating rooms.

The outpouring of goodness brings strength to those who understand what it means to reflect the Divine Image in which humanity is created.

Unifying Energy of Life:

You have not brought us into being to hurt and to hate, but rather to gather and to grow, to learn and to love, to stand together and to support each other. Let us not point fingers of blame in consequence of fear, but rather strengthen us to extend our hands to support each other as we stand together. Just as the Children of Israel were brought out of Egyptian bondage with an outstretched arm, so may we follow lead the world out of the bondage of hate and terror with outstretched arms.

OSEH SHALOM BIMROMAV, HU YA'ASEH SHALOM
ALAYNU V'AL KOL YISRAEL, V'AL KOL YOSHVAY TAYVEL

Give us the strength to bring the harmony of the heavens to the life of the extended human family, in our community and throughout our country. May we see the day when the world experiences wholeness and harmony, the true meaning of Shalom.

Amen.