

DAYENU

Singing *Dayenu* from the Sea of Fire

דיינו



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. For what do you feel gratitude?
2. When have you had moments that made it difficult to feel any gratitude at all?
3. What helps you to find strength and hope even during extremely challenging times?

By Eliaz Cohen

...Take a boat
And cross the sea of fire...

Every Rose—Zelda

These lines from the Poetess Zelda have always intrigued me: “Take a boat and cross the sea of fire.” It’s an invitation delivered in simple language, but completely insane! A small fragile boat, usually made of flammable materials, how is it possible to use it to cross a sea of fire?

It’s been 500 days since October 7, since the holiday of Simchat Torah that was horrifically turned from joy to mourning, from a festive day to one of grief. Each of these days has become a kind of “Sea of Fire” which is difficult, if not impossible, to cross. I carry the weight of more than a hundred days when my three sons served in reserve duty along with hundreds of thousands of fellow reservists, fighting our enemies and those seeking to harm us in the South and in the North. It was life on the brink of the abyss, fearing the knock on our door that comes with the potential for horrifying news...

I think of the families of the kidnapped, how they endure even one day, how they have withstood 500 days.

Perhaps one of the things that may help us cross the Sea of Fire, of terror and anxiety, is actually here in the seder. The song *Dayenu*

קַח סִיפָּה
וַחַצֵּה אֶת יַם הָאֵשׁ
(כל שושנה, זלדה)

is one that we say every year and have done so for many hundreds of years, in almost every Jewish household. It's a song that gives us the capacity to know the secret of gratitude, even from the depths of tragedy.

In *Dayenu*, we express gratitude for every stage that brought about the Exodus, including those stages that contain a measure of fear, anxiety, and disaster. *Dayenu* expresses gratitude even for the redemption that has yet to arrive. But we pause, as it were, within each stage of the redemption and consider it as worthy of our gratitude.

I invite myself and all of us to consider what we can be thankful for, even amidst the adversity surrounding us. And to draw strength and faith from that ancient hymn, from that song that was sung with gusto in every generation, even when it was very, very difficult.