

Off The Pulpit

October 15, 2015

Please see the bottom of Rabbi Wolpe's column for his prayer for Israel.

Why Me?

A psychiatrist received the following postcard from a vacationing former patient: "Having a wonderful time. Why?"

It is a good question. I have often observed that people come to my office when bad things happen and wonder why God permitted this difficulty in their lives. But far less often do I hear, "You know, I was born to loving parents in the richest country in the world. Why me?"



It is natural to assume that we deserve all the blessings given to us but the trials and tragedies are undeserved. Yet so much of our good fortune is in fact unearned. If you have a functioning brain, it is a gift. If you were born into a loving family, it is a gift. If you have never gone hungry, been caught in a natural disaster, on and on — you have been extravagantly blessed. Surely that merits wondering why?

It merits something else as well, gratitude and a sense of responsibility. We should not feel guilty for good fortune, but we should be grateful and try to spread it to others. The answer to blessing is prayer and tzedakah. If we practice both, that may be the answer to the question, why me?

El Maleh Rachamim -- Compassionate God,
We pray not to wipe out haters but to banish hatred.
Not to destroy sinners but to lessen sin.
Our prayers are not for a perfect world but a better one
Where parents are not bereaved by the savagery of sudden attacks
Or children orphaned by blades glinting in a noonday sun.
Help us dear God, to have the courage to remain strong, to stand fast.
Spread your light on the dark hearts of the slayers
And your comfort to the bereaved hearts of families of the slain.
Let calm return Your city Jerusalem, and to Israel, Your blessed land.
We grieve with those wounded in body and spirit,
Pray for the fortitude of our sisters and brothers,
And ask you to awaken the world to our struggle and help us bring peace.