

## Until the Rising of the Sun: Collective Courage in Minneapolis, Minnesota

In dark of night, they fled the land of their oppression, passing into the wilderness that would lead them to their promised land. Scarcely had they passed through the swirling waters at the edge of the desert when they found themselves under attack. They knew the path to freedom would be hard, but they couldn't predict the vicious force their adversary would unleash. וַיִּבֹּא עֲמֹלֵק וַיִּלְחָם עִם־יִשְׂרָאֵל, "And Amalek made war against [the People of] Israel" (Ex. 17:8).

The Amalekites were brutal, targeting the weakest of the Hebrew refugees. The aged and the young, the vulnerable and slow fell prey to warriors hunting them from the rear. "Remember what Amalek did to you" (Deut. 25:17) the Torah urgently insists, for they are the fiercest foes our people ever faced.

My friends, I cannot tell you Amalek has returned. But the stories I heard from those I met last week in Minneapolis, Minnesota are frighteningly familiar. A five-year-old child snatched in view of his mother though his parents have followed the law.<sup>1</sup> An elementary school warning its families of agents distributing flyers promising them food and urging them, "for your safety, do not respond to these offers."<sup>2</sup> Doctors and nurses begging ICE agents to stay away from hospitals, where their hovering presence deters patients, including pregnant women, from receiving care.<sup>3</sup> These scenes and countless more are documented in the news, shared through social media, and passed around by word of mouth. A barrage of attacks has hounded the immigrant population of Minneapolis, establishing a new arena of near-military shock and awe.

The Department of Homeland Security, under direction of the President himself, has deployed in Minneapolis thousands of agents from ICE and CBP. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Protection – agencies we were promised would investigate only the most heinous of criminals – have been granted unprecedented authority, immunity, and firepower. To put this operation in perspective: During the immigration crackdown in Chicago last fall, DHS sent 300 extra agents here, where they made 4,500 arrests.<sup>4</sup> In Minneapolis, a city one-sixth the population of Chicago, there are ten times as many officers, who've made 2,500 arrests so far.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2026/01/23/us/liam-conejo-ramos-ice-wwk>

<sup>2</sup> <https://meidasnews.com/news/minnesota-elementary-school-sends-urgent-message-as-ice-sends-flyers-offering-food-support-to-families>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ajmc.com/view/ice-presence-in-minnesota-health-care-settings-threatens-access-to-essential-medical-care>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.chicagotribune.com/2025/12/28/chicago-immigration-operation-midway-blitz-2/>

Here in Chicago, DHS was engaged in law enforcement – it was scary and intense and pushed the boundaries of a reasonable execution of constitutional power. But Minneapolis crosses the line into something more threatening than even the violent revelry we saw here.

Fueled by racist prejudice against Somali-Americans and eager for political retribution against his former electoral opponent, President Trump has unleashed the power of the federal government against a city and a state that have done nothing wrong but disagree with him. Operation Metro Surge is a display of military might, designed to intimidate and scare people the President doesn't like; it stinks of authoritarianism, demagoguery, and petty revenge, and people of good conscience are right to oppose it.

So that's why I went. Heroes just like Renee Macklin Good, citizens who routinely impede the unjust occupation of their city, called for aid – and with the backing of my family, my colleagues, and my community, I was able to respond. I was one of six hundred clergy who showed up less than one week later. Astoundingly, another six hundred clergy had to be turned away because we had reached the group's capacity. We faith leaders, from Alaska to Florida and quite a lot from Minnesota, came together on the coldest days in seven years<sup>5</sup> to voice our opposition to the federal government's brutal tactics.

Let me tell you what I saw. Most powerfully, I saw people of different opinions and beliefs coming together in their shared commitment to defend the dignity of immigrants. Among the Jews, rabbis and cantors of different denominations ate and prayed and marched together. Advocates for a ceasefire in Gaza stood alongside passionate pro-Israel Zionists, reflecting a political détente between other progressive groups as well. Indeed, the organizers who called us together – founded as a pro-queer alternative to another social justice group – worked with colleagues and neighbors whose priorities and strategies they typically oppose. Clarity of purpose held us together, for only as a coalition that recognizes the larger threat to our democracy can we hope to overcome the injustices that currently abound.

And here's what I learned: resistance is possible and powerful. Neighbors have organized elaborate networks of support to provide mutual aid for those in need. Immigrants afraid to buy groceries regularly receive food, medicine, diapers, and more from strangers committed to their wellbeing. Others routinely go out of their way to make immigration enforcement hard. They blow whistles, blare horns, and capture videos, all in the effort to lawfully impede the brutality imposed on this once-peaceful town. And I was awed to behold a rally of 50,000 people marching in negative 20-degree weather as 700 businesses joined a massive general strike. In incidents small and large, one-on-one and myriad-by-myriad, acts of generosity and goodness chip away at the antagonism trained against those who seek in America a peaceful and prosperous life.

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2026/01/22/extreme-cold-warning-coldest-air-mass-in-7-years-for-much-of-minnesota>

I was inspired, friends – deeply inspired by what I saw. At the Minneapolis airport, I supported more than 100 local clergy who submitted themselves for arrest as they shut down a lane of traffic at Terminal 1. Their message to Delta not to comply with DHS was a reminder that there is much that *could* be done by major players in our society to turn the tide against these policies. I was inspired as well by the breadth and depth of those who attended, moved by the personal stories of visitors and locals whose motivations were pure and whose concerns about federal overreach are supremely well-founded.

And most of all, I have been inspired by the results of these acts of resistance and protest, particularly following the heinous killing of the VA ICU nurse Alex Pretti, whose tragic death underscored the unsustainability of this federal crackdown. It appears that policy may shift, that Congress might intercede, that the conscience of the nation may be stirred and its citizens spurred to act. I bore witness in Minnesota to bravery and determination, and we are beginning see its impact across the country. Change is possible, and the power of democracy remains alive, when the vulnerable band together, give aid to one another, and lift up their voices as one.

I am proud to be in a community that stands committed to this cause. I have been enormously moved by the outpouring of support I've received from members of this congregation and beyond. By happenstance, our board of directors was scheduled to meet the Monday after I returned, and our leaders have endorsed not only my trip to Minneapolis but also our congregation's commitment to ongoing and meaningful action.

We stand united and aligned in this struggle for justice and peace. We are committed to decency and democracy, ready to speak out when the vulnerable need our help. And since there is still much to do, it is vitally important that we stand ready to protest, organize, advocate, and give whenever the chance arrives.

After all, look at what the Torah teaches us about Amalek's defeat. As Joshua battles the army in the valley of Rephidim, Moses looks on from above. Imbued with the power of God, Moses, we read, would hold up his hands, causing Israel to prevail. "But whenever he let down his hand, Amalek grew strong" (Ex. 17:11). Eventually, Moses's brother Aaron and cousin Hur<sup>6</sup>, stand on either side, holding his arms aloft. "Thus his hands remained steady until the setting of the sun" (Ex. 17:12).

From this we learn how we, too, can prevail. The story teaches us that even a superhero with the power to halt the coming of night – as a midrash portrays Moses<sup>7</sup> – cannot succeed alone. Only with mutual support can justice have its day. We need not be Moses above or Joshua below – the humble Hur is model enough for our ability to hold one another up. The struggle will be long, and I'm afraid there's a long wilderness road beyond, but hope must ever be at our back. Torah teaches us, and my experience in Minneapolis confirms, that collective courage steadies us through the darkest night. We hold each other's arms aloft until the battle for dignity is won and the sun rises on a

---

<sup>6</sup> Hur was from the tribe of Judah while Moses was a Levite. So they are really only *very distantly* "cousins." The term is used here rhetorically.

<sup>7</sup> See Midrash Tanhuma, B'shalach 28 (via Rashi)

land of freedom promised to all. As our Haftarah concludes: “May those who love You be as the sun rising in might” (Judges 5:31).

May we see this dawn speedily and soon.