When in times of darkness, I turn to my Judaism. I turn to my community, to God, and to Torah—in the broadest sense of the word. The weekly Torah portion, relaying the mythical words of our ancestors, give me perspective and comfort. I seek out the Holy One in prayer, in the beauty of nature, in our Jewish people's indomitable resilience and in the love of those around me. Still, there is another deep source of Torah in my life: the writings of J.R.R. Tolkien.

It seems strange to write about 'The Lord of the Rings' when the world is aflame, but I remember three years ago, in the deepest despair of the pandemic, as the winter of 2020 was drawing to a close with not yet a vaccine in our arms, I decided to re-watch (and re-read) the trilogy. It was close to Hanukkah time; that lonely, dark period where all we could do was stare through each other's windows at our lit candles. Yet, I found comfort in the shadowy journey of Frodo, Sam, Merry and Pippin to Bree's inn, 'The Prancing Pony', where the

our lives. We may be marching on an unlit path, full of dangers, through this quest called life, but then, there is shelter from the storm, however temporary. In the winter season, with the waning light and the biting cold, Hanukkah very much feels like that first stopover, to offer us comfort and reprieve. A festival of warmth and light, of resilience and mission. A reprieve from the ever-present heaviness that lies about our hearts.

We feel that heaviness all too keenly. I will heartily admit to many tears and even more prayers as of late. I pray for the hostages to be released, rendered safely unto their families. 'Pidyon hashivu'im', the redemption of captives, is a time-tested and important mitzvah in our tradition. I cannot imagine what the 240 hostages and their loved ones are going through; the sheer horror is unimaginable. My broken heart turns to the 1400 massacred; Jewish Israelis alongside Palestinian Israelis and foreign nationals alike, brutally murdered in Hamas' pogrom. And my heart