

Nediv Lev: With a Willing Heart, after the Attack on the Synagogue in Michigan 15 March 2026

Emma there as a very special moment for me here yesterday evening. Four of our teenager educators were with you in this room. Ella, your friend since before you were born, was standing by your side, prompting you on the stages for practicing your Torah blessings. Evie was following you with a vocalised text, to check for mistakes. Talya was dressing and undressing the scroll. Lily was listening from the back.

These were four former students who now teach in our programme because they have chosen it. They are what I would call, *nediv lev*. (Exodus 35:3)

Volunteers. Or *nasa liban* (v.21) their hearts are lifted up, they *want* to do it. I would bet money on the fact that each and everyone of these young people not imagine they would want to volunteer before they reach this stage or a later stage and think, I want to do it.

Look around at the others who are *nediv lev*. Sam who is working the sound desk. Sam, is I think 15. The choir, every one of them who are here singing at every significant moment, they want to do this. they are *nediv lev*. The people who put food on plates and arrange the fruit and the cookies, who pour out the juice. All *nediv lev*. The person who handed you your book as you came in.

The people who show up to Council meetings who check the accounts. Who make difficult decisions, the hard choices that are part of leadership. All *nediv lev*.

I'm not going to mention every single type of volunteer in our community.

The point is, everyone is here because their hearts are moving them to be part of this. As Progressive Jews, we teach you to be able to make that choice, no one is using the language of demand.

The heart, the desire the choice is to be here, because our way of Jewish living is rooted in freedom. Since the birth of the European Enlightenment our Reform and Liberal ancestors demanded that everyone of us should grow up in a Jewish life in which we can be free. More significant than this, it does not rest on whether you are a boy or a girl. And your sex will not confine you to a set of gender roles,

leaving the Torah to be read by men and the kiddush, the food and drink, to the women.

Choosing means stepping freely into the community. It means leaving behind that momentary invisibility, in which nobody knows you are Jewish.

For you and your friends, it means putting on the uniform of a Jewish school.

It might mean wearing a kippah. Choosing to put on rather than take off, a Magen David, a Jewish star. That action is significant because no matter how free we want to be, there is no Jewish being outside of the community. You are needed. Every Jewish adult here counts, man or woman.

This is a point of vulnerability. Just two days ago, a man undertook a terrorist attack against a North American Reform synagogue. He did not succeed. His attack was not a success because the community he chose to hurt was ready. They, like us, have proper security.

They were *psychologically* ready. And they were *spiritually* ready as well. Because every one of those 12000 members of that community knew and know what it is to be *nediv lev*. To step forward out of the background of the world and to be seen, as the Jews we are. It means making the choice to be visible because you are free to do so. We do not take that freedom lightly, especially you Emma, who are the granddaughter of Jews who lived in a time and a place, the Soviet Union where there was not that freedom.

It means the use of freedom as our ancestors did. They gave the most precious thing they have. Their skills the gold their blue, their purple, their scarlet thread. The earrings and brooches that they took off their ears and their clothing. Today that is no place in the world where we believe that God's presence can dwell. There is only an empty space. And so we give the most precious thing we have. Which is **time**. And we create instead of a mishkan, a holy space, this time, holy time. Shabbat. Which cannot be made with things. Can only be created through an openness to a different dimension, when holiness comes into the world.

And we teach that it could only come into the world through our actions. Most especially when we are together as a community. Which as progressive Jews we understand to be entirely voluntary, because we are **nediv lev**. Not commanded not compelled, but here willingly, standing out outside the background of the world. Creating holiness. This is what prepares us. And this is what compels us.

That is why this moment is so significant. We see another young person become Jewishly adult, prepared to take this upon herself her own choice. Who knows

where it will lead? All we can say is we bring you here, together with your friends who have guided and taught you helped you and sustained you. As your teacher and your rabbi, I say to you, *we trust you*. To bring your own *chochma*, unique wisdom or skill to the building of this palace in time, this *kehillah*, this community