

## Invocation at the Inauguration of Governor Janet T. Mills

Rabbi Erica Asch

January 2, 2019

Tonight, in this room and across the state, the citizens of Maine gather to witness a change of leadership. From the new immigrant trying to learn English, to the small business owner who worked through the holidays. From the parent who hopes that education is a way for their child to get ahead, to the child wondering how to afford care for aging parents. From the lobsterman hoping for a good haul, to the small town mayor and school superintendent trying to balance the budget. Mainers are looking forward with hope and optimism and some trepidation to this new year. We have work to do.

In the text *Viyikra Rabbah* (4:6) a collection of rabbinic stories, we read of a parable told by Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. “A group of men were on a ship far from land. One of them took a drill and started drilling underneath him. The others were shocked. They said to him, 'What are you doing?' He replied, 'What do you care? Is it not only underneath *my* area that I am drilling?' They replied, 'But the water will rise and flood all of us on this ship.’”

I pray in the Jewish tradition:

*Eloheinu v'lohai avoteinu v'imoteinu*—our God and God of our ancestors.

May we, the citizens of the state of Maine, remember we are all on the same ship. We are a diverse community with many stories and passions, but we all rise or fall together.

We ask your blessings upon our governor elect.

May the one who blessed the daughters of Zelophahad with a vision of a just society and the tenacity to fight for that vision, bless her with the patience and will to stick to her principles.

May the one who blessed Batyah with compassion for a supposed enemy, bless her with a spirit of curiosity and caring for all people, no matter what their background.

May the one who blessed Esther with the courage of her convictions and the ability to stand up for her people, bless her with the power to speak her mind and stand up for the people of Maine.

May the one who blessed Miriam with a dancing spirit, bless her with many moments of joy and love.

May the one who blessed Bruriah with the wisdom to be the only female scholar in a study hall run by men, bless her with insight, toughness and humor as she becomes our first female governor.

In the Jewish tradition, we have a beautiful prayer we recite on special occasions, or for new experiences. We recite this prayer tonight for the first day of a new administration, a new day for the state of Maine, and a historic first for women.

*Baruch atah adonai, eloheinu melech ha'olam*, praised are you God, Ruler of the universe,  
*shehecheyanu*, who has given us life—the most precious of all gifts  
*vekiymanu*, who has sustained us—who has kept us whole on our journey  
*vehigi'anu lazman hazeh*, who has brought us to this time of joy and hope.  
Amen.