



The hashkeveinu prayer asks God for protection during the night and that we might wake up to life renewed. We are, far removed from our ancestors' fears of the evening. Electric lights, cars to drive in at night, safe roads and modern medical care mean that we don't have the same primal fear as our ancestors did. Two Jewish folktales that tell about the origins of this prayer get to the root of the fear we once felt. One relates that the Israelites prayed haskevienu when they waited, terrified behind their doors in Egypt as the Angel of Death passed by during the last plague. The other, that they prayed it their first night in the wilderness under the stars where wild beasts circled in the darkness.

This Sunday marks the five-year anniversary of the report from the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The Commission worked for two years to discover what happened to Wabanaki families in the child welfare system, recommend improvement and illuminate the path towards healing and cooperation. The Commission helped to bring to light the continued separation of native families as children were forced into foster care and separated from their communities and culture.

At this time in our service when we acknowledge the terrors that await us during the night and ask for God's protection, we take time to acknowledge that we are on the traditional territories and treaty lands of the people of the Wabanaki confederacy and we remember the wrongs done to their families when they were separated and give thanks for the opportunity to bring those stories to light. I'd like to share some quotes from the commission report that acknowledge the trauma and think about how to move forward with hope.ⁱ

With gratitude to Rabbi Erica Asch of Temple Beth El in Augusta, who offered this prayer on Friday, June 12, 2020 on the occasion of the anniversary of the report of the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

ⁱ Rabbi Asch offered quotes, which are featured in the Commission's report. To access these quotes, you can find the report by going to - www.mainewabanakireach.org/maine_wabanaki_state_child_welfare_truth_and_reconciliation_commission