To be read before Maggid begins:

The Passover Haggadah asks us to imagine ourselves as having personally been delivered from Egypt — to quite literally see ourselves in the story. This year, as we recount the Israelites’ journey from despair to hope, and from constriction to a moment of new possibilities, let us lift up the voices of the Jews of Ukraine.

**Grisha G.**  
**JDC Volunteer in Odesa, Ukraine**

On February 24th, I knew it was time to act. I said, “I can’t stay at home. Let’s do something. Let’s deliver something. I can’t drive, but I’ll learn.”

At first, there were just three or four of us; later, other volunteers joined. And in a month, it was a well-organized process with its headquarters at the JDC-supported Beit Grand Jewish Community Center (JCC). More than a year later, we’re still here, delivering food and offering emotional support to those who need it.

Passover is about freedom — and volunteerism is the same. Volunteering is the freedom to act and do what you want. If you like chatting, you keep someone company; if you’re good at crafts, you make something with your hands; if you love children, you run a children’s program.

JDC has been, and is, our support. It’s given me the opportunity to help my community, and it has always supported all of my ideas.

We young people need to volunteer because we are the future. When I see my friends — friends who don’t just talk, but act — I see that life’s worth living if I can have them by my side.

Together, we’ll move mountains.

**Raisa E.**  
**Refugee in Chişinău, Moldova**

Mykolaiv is my hometown, and I can still see it now — its straight, wide streets. When the crisis began, we were horrified. For many months, there was no drinking water. And as winter approached, there was no heating — our apartment was freezing.

That’s when we turned to JDC, who helped us arrive safely in Moldova and establish a new life.
When I’m out and about here in Chișinău, I get lost so easily — my daughter literally leads me by the hand. “Mom, don’t walk over there,” she tells me. “There are cars over there — be careful.”

“Someday I’ll be led like this, too,” she says. That’s how life goes.

Conflict is nothing new to me. My father died in the Second World War, and my family suffered. Now we’re in the midst of another kind of crisis.

Life here is divided between before and after. We’ll never have the life we had before. But the main thing is to keep your spirit, to love and appreciate your family — and clear skies.

I just want to return home. And I want to thank all those who help us. We say that all G-d’s children are our brothers — I count JDC among them.

Olena S.
Jewish Communal Professional in Lviv, Ukraine

Everything should be mutual. If people help me, I should help them back. I’ll do anything I can to help. And since February 24th of last year, my life has come full circle — I’ve been an internally displaced person (IDP) since 2014, and now I’m providing assistance to other IDPs in this new crisis.

When the crisis began, I opened my home to those fleeing conflict. I kept them company and gave them food. If they needed to shower, sleep, or eat — no problem. Whatever was needed, I gave it to them.

What is the highest form of tzedakah (charitable giving)? You can’t just give someone something; you have to provide them with a job so that they can be independent. You have to help them feel free. JDC gave me all of this: I live thanks to their support.

Years ago, when I came to Lviv, the first thing I asked was whether there was a JDC-supported Hesed social welfare center here. JDC welcomed us well and connected my daughter Vira and me to case managers. Then I asked whether the Hesed choir needed a musician. They told me they had music programs. Eventually, I got a job as the ensemble head.

This past winter, my daughter — a member of JDC’s Active Jewish Teens (AJT) program — and I attended a respite for Ukrainian families at Szarvas, the JDC-Lauder international Jewish summer camp in Hungary. We spent 13 magical days at Szarvas, and my daughter made so many new friends: It was just what we needed. And at the end of the program, we all sang together.

Music is our life. When we sing, the music helps us with everything. You can overcome anything with optimism in your soul, in your music.

We have to believe in goodness, sing, and keep going.