

HIGH HOLY DAY SUPPLEMENT



Bethesda-Chevy Chase Jewish Community Group

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On this day, let us be like Moses, heavy of tongue, who had to struggle over each sound. On this day when we shall say more words than on another day in the year, we strive to find one sentence, phrase, word, or letter that will begin here on earth and reach to the heavens.

Michael Strassfeld

Reuven and Shimon

When the people of Israel crossed through the Red Sea, they witnessed a great miracle. Some say it was the greatest miracle that ever happened. On that day they saw a sight more awesome than all the visions of the prophets combined. The sea split and the waters stood like great walls, while Israel escaped to freedom on the distant shore. Awesome. But not for everyone.

Two people, Reuven and Shimon, hurried along among the crowd crossing through the sea. They never once looked up. They noticed only that the ground under their feet was still a little muddy—like a beach at low tide.

‘Yucch!’ said Reuven, “there’s mud all over this place!”

“Blecch!” said Shimon, “I have muck all over my feet!”

“This is terrible,” answered Reuven. “When we were slaves in Egypt, we had to make our bricks out of mud, just like this!”

“Yeah,” said Shimon. “There’s no difference between being a slave in Egypt and being free here.”

And so it went, Reuven and Shimon whining and complaining all the way to freedom. For them there was no miracle. Only mud. Their eyes were closed. They might as well have been asleep.

Lawrence Kushner

A REBBE’S PROVERB

If you always assume
the person next to you
is the Messiah
waiting for some simple human kindness—

You will soon come to weigh your words
and watch your hands.

And if he or she chooses
not to reveal her or himself
in your time—

It will not matter.

Danny Siegel

TURNING

To everything there is a season,
And an appointed time for every purpose
Under heaven.

Now is the time for turning.

The leaves are beginning to turn
From green to red and orange.

The birds are beginning to turn
And are heading once more towards the South.

The animals are beginning to turn
To storing their food for the winter.

For leaves, birds, and animals
Turning comes instinctively.
But for us turning does not come so simply.

It takes an act of will
For us to make a turn.

It means breaking with old habits.
It means admitting that we have been wrong;
And this is never easy.

It means losing face;
It means starting all over again;
And this is always painful.

It means saying: "I am sorry."
It means admitting that we have the ability to change;
And this is always embarrassing.

These things are terribly hard to do.
But unless we turn, we will be trapped forever
In yesterday's ways.
God, help us to turn—

From callousness to sensitivity,
From hostility to love,

From pettiness to purpose,
From envy to contentment,

From carelessness to discipline,
From fear to faith.

Turn us around, Adonay, and bring us back towards you.
Revive our lives, as at the beginning.

And turn us towards each other, God.
For in isolation there is no life.

*Adapted from New Prayers for the High Holy Days,
Edited by Rabbi Jack Reimer*

SHOFAROT READING

Connections are made slowly, sometimes they grow underground.
You cannot tell always by looking what is happening.
More than half a tree is spread out in the soil under your feet.
Penetrate quietly as the earthworm that blows no trumpet.
Fight persistently as the creeper that brings down the tree.
Spread like the squash plant that overruns the garden.
Gnaw in the dark and use the sun to make sugar.

Weave real connections, create real nodes, build real houses.
Live a life you can endure: make love that is loving.
Keep a tangling and interweaving and taking more in,
A thicket and bramble wilderness to the outside but to us
Interconnected with rabbit runs and burrows and lairs.

Live as if you liked yourself, and it may happen:
Reach out, keep reaching out, keep bringing in.
This is how we are going to live for a long time: not always,
For every gardener knows that after the digging, after the
planting,
After the long season of tending and growth, the harvest comes.
Marge Piercy

"HAYOM HARAT OLAM: THIS IS THE BIRTHDAY OF THE WORLD. WHAT WERE YOU LIKE WHEN YOU WERE NEW?"

During a break in a lecture one day, a little boy, about five years old, came up to me and asked with great wonder. "Hey, mister, what were you like when you were new?" What a powerful and deep question that was.

I was most grateful that he had asked, and I appreciated the originality of the question. Children are like a breath of fresh air as they express how they see the world. We have much to learn from them.

In answer to the little boy I said that when all was *new*, "I was full of love and innocence, just like you." But the truth is that I continued to ponder the boy's question for days. With thanks to this child, I began to wonder when I, like so many others, lost that feeling of being full of love and innocence. I reminded myself that the newborn infant is the essence of innocence, full of love, light, faith, trust, and happiness.

Love and innocence fly out the window the moment we begin judging others or ourselves. As we recapture that innocence the moment we stop making judgments. In my daily meditations I pictured that little boy. I let his image remind me that every day can be a newly experienced birth, where I once again view everything with the newness of a child.

Hayom Harat Olam—This is the birthday of the world. Let us begin again with the newness of children. Let us begin again with the cleanness and the hope and the optimism that this New year brings.

1. L'Shana tovah tee-ka-tay-vu
V'tay-cha-tay-mu

2. Achat sha'altee may'et Adonai
Otah avakesh

Shivtee b'Vayt Adonai
Kol y'may chai-yai

Lachazot b'no'am, b'no'am Adonai

3. Yisra'el *the Jewish people*
V'oraita *and the Torah*
Kudsha Brich Hu X2 *and God, may God be blessed*
Chad hu *are all one*

Torah ora X2 *The Torah lights our way*
Halleluya X2 X4 *Praise God*

4. Torah, Torah, Torah, X2
Torah tzeevah lanu Moshe X2

Torah, Torah,
Torah, Torah, X2
Torah tzeevah lanu Moshe

5. Mishebayrach by Debbie Friedman
Mishebayrach avotaynu *Mishebayrach imotaynu*
M'kor habracha l'imotaynu *M'kor habracha l'avotaynu*
May the Source of Strength Bless those in need of healing
Who blessed the ones before us with *refu'ah shlyamah*—
Help us find the courage the renewal of body,
To make our lives a blessing, the renewal of spirit,
And let us say Amen. And let us say Amen.

PRAYER OF ANCIENT ORIGINS

Prayer of ancient origins, in mystic chant,
Protecting us since ancient times from impulsive oaths,
Pouring forth, tradition has supposed, from the anguished
lips of secret Jews.

Long ago, in one forbidding land after another
Our mothers masqueraded in a faith forced on them by
tyrants,
Our fathers prayed from their cellars that God would
annul their alien vows,
And help them find the hard way back to their ancestral
truth.

Kol Nidrey reminds us, who do not have to hide,
How many fearful cellars we inhabit
That close us off from full acceptance of the Jewish faith,
That muffle our acceptance of our parents' pledge at Sinai,
Forced on them by no one,
Freely made in the sunlight of the day.

Now at nightfall
May we hear within the mystic chant
The hidden origins of our birth into the Jewish people,
And may we be protected from every impulse to betray
our heritage,
to masquerade as someone who we never were
and cannot be.

Prayer of ancient anguish,
Let it form our lips into the anguish of the Jew
We have not dared to be,
Let its painful strains seize hold of our inconstant hearts
Till tears of grief pour forth
For all the alien vows we've sworn,
For all the hard ancestral truths we've casually denied,
For all we've turned our backs to since our faith began.

What lies within the cellars of our souls tonight?
O hidden origins!
O mystic chant!
O Kol Nidrey!

UNETANEH TOKEF

We shall affirm the mighty holiness of this day, a day of awe and dread, for upon it is God's rule exalted, and the holy throne established in covenantal love.

When we really begin a new year it is decided,
And when we actually repent it is determined:

Who shall be truly alive,

And who shall merely exist;

Who shall be tormented by the fire of ambition,
And whose hopes shall be quenched by the waters of failure;

Who shall be pierced by the sharp sword of envy,

And who shall be torn by the wild beast of resentment;

Who shall hunger for companionship,

And who shall thirst for approval;

Who shall be shattered by storms of change,

And who shall be plagued by the pressures of conformity;

Who shall be strangled by insecurity,

And who shall be beaten into submission;

Who shall be content with their lot,

And who shall go wandering in search of satisfaction;

Who shall be serene,

And who shall be distraught.

But *Tshuvah*, *Tefillah* and *Tzedakah*,

Repentance, Prayer and Just Action,

Have the power to change

The character of our lives.

Therefore let us repent, pray, and do right,

So that this may be a genuinely new year of life.

On Doing Wrong

If we say, "I will sin and repent, then I will sin again and repent again," we are not in a position to repent.

Likewise, if we say, "I will sin, and the Day of Atonement will atone for me," the Day of Atonement will not atone for us.

For transgressions between a person and God, the Day of Atonement atones; but for the transgressions between one person and another, the Day of Atonement does not atone unless the wrongdoer has first become reconciled with the person wronged.

INTERPRETIVE VERSION: UNETANEH TOKEF

Let us ask ourselves hard questions

For this is the time for truth.

How much time did we waste

In the year that is now gone?

Did we fill our days with life

Or were they dull and empty?

Was there love inside our home

Or was the affectionate word left unsaid?

Was there a real companionship with our children

Or was there a living together and a growing apart?

Were we a help to our mates

Or did we take them for granted?

How was it with our friends:

Were we there when they needed us or not?

The kind deed: did we perform it or postpone it?

The unnecessary gibe: did we say it or hold it back?

Did we live by false values?

Did we deceive others?

Did we deceive ourselves?

Were we sensitive to the rights and feelings

Of those who worked for us?

Did we acquire only possessions

Or did we acquire new insights as well?

Did we fear what the crowd would say

And keep quiet when we should have spoken out?

Did we mind only our own business

Or did we feel the heartbreak of others?

Did we live right,

And if not,

Then have we learned, and will we change?

Jack Reimer

VIDUI / CONFESSIONAL OF OUR SINS

We have acted wrongly,
 we have been untrue,
 and we have gained unlawfully
 and have defamed.
 We have harmed others,
 we have wrought injustice,
 we have zealously transgressed,
 and we have hurt
 and have told lies.
 We have improperly advised,
 and we have covered up the truth,
 and we have laughed in scorn.
 We have misused responsibility
 and have neglected others.
 We have stubbornly rebelled.
 We have offended,
 we have perverted justice,
 and we have kept ourselves from change.
 We have reached out to evil,
 we have shamelessly corrupted
 and have treated others with disdain
 Yes, we have thrown ourselves off course
 And we have tempted and misled.



An Appendix to the Vision of Peace
 by Yehuda Amichai

Don't stop after beating swords
 Into ploughshares, don't stop! Go on beating
 And make musical instruments out of them.
 Whoever wants to make war again
 Will have to turn them into ploughshares first.

“THE MEANING OF LIFE”

Before his death, the Chassidic master Rabbi Zusya of Hanipol, said, “In the world to come, they will not ask me, ‘Why were you not Moses?’ They will ask me, ‘Why were you not Zusya?’”

Martin Buber, *Tales of the Chasidim*

EACH OF US IS AN AUTHOR

“You open the Book of Remembrance, and it speaks for itself.

For each of us has signed it with deeds.”

This is the sobering truth,
 Which both frightens and consoles us:

Each of us is an author,
 Writing, with deeds, in life's Great Book.
 And to each You have given the power
 To write lines that will never be lost.

No song is so trivial,
 No story is so commonplace,
 No deed is so insignificant,
 That You do not record it.

No kindness is ever done in vain;
 Each mean act leaves its imprint;
 All our deeds, the good and the bad,
 Are noted and remembered by You.

So help us to remember always
 That what we do will live forever;
 That the echoes of the words we speak
 Will resound until the end of time.

May our lives reflect this awareness;
 May our deeds bring no shame or reproach.
 May the entries we make in the Book of Remembrance
 Be ever acceptable to You.

AN ANONYMOUS MEDIEVAL HEBREW POEM
 Translated by Rabbi Sharon Cohen-Anisfeld
 Music by Rabbi Judith Kummer

So take care of your soul, my friend.
 She is turquoise, agate, and jasper.
 Her light is like the light of the sun.
 Like the light of seven mornings in one.
 Like the light of seven mornings.

And inside of you, my friend.
 Lives a spark of the Most High.
 Let it burn, but not devour.
 Let it shine in the morning hour.
 Let it shine in the morning.

So awaken yourself, my friend.
 For each night your soul arises to heaven.
 To give account for all you've done
 Before the Maker of the morning sun,
 Before the maker of morning.

May you lie down in peace, my friend.
 May you rise up full of wonder.
 Wrap yourself in the One,
 Morning after morning,
 Morning after morning.

So refresh your weary soul.
 Your only one, perfect and pure.
 If you do not keep your own soul alive,
 How will you welcome the morning light?
 How will you welcome the morning?

Listen to the One,
 The song of the morning stars.
 Listen to the One,
 The song of the morning stars.
 Let the One open your heart.

Before the gate has been closed
 before the last question is posed,
 before I am transposed.
 Before the weeks fill the gardens,
 before there are no more pardons,
 before the concrete hardens.
 Before all the flute-holes are covered,
 before things are locked in the cupboard,
 before the rules are discovered.
 Before the conclusion is planned,
 before God closes the hand,
 before we have nowhere to stand.

Yehuda Amichai

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