

# Supplementary Readings for both Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur

Themes:

- Interpretive Prayers
- *Teshuvah*
- *Heshbon Hanefesh*
- Evil
- Connecting to God
- Forgiveness
- Israel Peace
- Verses to Sing



# RECONSTRUCTING JUDAISM

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We are grateful for the efforts of Rabbi Amy Loewenthal for producing this excerpt in tandem with the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association under the leadership of Rabbi Elyse Wechterman.

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# Supplementary Readings for both Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur

Themes:

- Interpretive Prayers

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## INTERPRETIVE VERSION: UNETANEH TOKEF

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 happy, and who miserable;

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 wander in search of satisfaction;

Who shall be serene,  
And who shall be distraught;

Who shall be at ease,  
And who shall be afflicted with anxiety;

Who shall be poor in their own eyes,  
And who shall be rich in tranquility.

But *teshuvah*, *tefilah* and *tzedakah*  
Have the power to change the character of our lives.

May we resolve, then, to turn from our accustomed ways  
And to behave righteously  
So that we may truly begin a new year.

Stanley Rabinowitz (Adapted)

## 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 Riemer

## ALTERNATIVE AL HET

We sin against God when we sin against ourselves;  
for our failures of truth, we ask forgiveness;  
for pretending to emotions we do not feel;  
for using the sins of others to excuse our own;  
for denying our responsibility for our own misfortunes;  
for refusing to admit our share in the troubles of others;  
for condemning in our children the faults we tolerate in ourselves;  
for condemning in our parents the faults we tolerate in ourselves;  
for passing judgment without knowledge of the facts;  
for remembering the price of things but forgetting their value;  
for teaching our children everything but the meaning of life;  
for loving our egos better than the truth.

וְעַל כָּל־מַעֲלֹתֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵי סְלִיחוֹת סְלַח לָנוּ: מְחַל לָנוּ: כַּפֶּר־לָנוּ: ←

Ve'al kulam eloha seliḥot selah lanu. Meḥal lanu. Kaper lanu. ↪

We sin against God when we sin against ourselves;  
for our failures of love we ask forgiveness;  
for using people as stepping stones to advancement;  
for confusing love and lust;  
for withholding love to control those we claim to love;  
for hiding from others behind an armor of mistrust;  
for treating with arrogance people weaker than ourselves;  
for condescending towards those whom we regard as inferiors;  
for shunting aside those whose age is an embarrassment to us;  
for giving ourselves the fleeting pleasure of inflicting lasting  
hurts;  
for cynicism which eats away our faith in the possibility of love.

וְעַל כָּלֵם אֱלֹהֵי סְלִיחוֹת סִלַּח לָנוּ: מְחַל לָנוּ: כַּפֶּר-לָנוּ:

Ve'al kulam eloha seliḥot selah lanu. Meḥal lanu. Kaper lanu.

Chaim Stern (Adapted)

*The community is seated.*



For the sins which we have sinned against you by misuse of ourselves:

By neglecting and overindulging our bodies, for “the body is not less the handiwork of God than the soul,”

And by neglecting mitzvot which nourish our souls,

By failing to study Torah,

And also by failing to think and to use the capacities of our minds.

All these sins, God of forgiveness, grant us the strength to confront honestly, the wisdom to analyze correctly, and the will to abandon completely, as we return to you.

For the sins which we have sinned against you and against those we love by the misuse of our capacity to love:

By using others as objects or tools,

And by placing our own status and pride before the needs of others.

By failing to use, with understanding and love, our power as employers and leaders, parents and teachers.

And by failing to accept with respect and love the authority of parents and teachers, employers and leaders,

By failing to perform acts of kindness, and visits to the sick and to mourners,

And by not being sensitive to others who turn to us in their need.

By forming intimate relationships without love as their basis,

And also by failing to deepen love continually throughout our committed relationships.

All these sins, God of forgiveness, grant us the strength to confront honestly, the wisdom to analyze correctly, and the will to abandon completely, as we return to you and to those we love.

For the sins which we have sinned against you and against our community by misuse of words:

By speaking dishonestly  
And by breaking promises,  
By gossiping and slandering,  
By criticizing others quickly and destructively,  
By keeping silent when we should have spoken  
And also by failing to praise and to thank others.

All these sins, God of forgiveness, grant us the strength to confront honestly, the wisdom to analyze correctly, and the will to abandon completely, as we return to you, to those we love, and to our community.

For the sins we have sinned against you, against our people, and against the universe you have created, by misuse of our powers:

By failing to help our own people, everywhere in the world,  
And by forgetting Hiroshima and Auschwitz,  
By not accepting the responsibilities of citizenship in our nation and in the international community.

And by not recognizing the fragility of our planet and the unity of all life.

By not working enough against war, poverty, violence, racism, and the dehumanization of our society.

And also by not resisting the pollution and destruction of the natural world.

All these sins, God of forgiveness, grant us the strength to confront honestly, the wisdom to analyze correctly, and the will to abandon completely, so that we may use all our powers for good. Help us to return in joy to you, so that we may feel united in spirit with those we love, with our community and our people, with all humanity, with your universe, and with you.

Ruth Brin (Adapted)

ALTERNATIVE AL HET

For the wrong we did before You by listening to voices at odds  
with what we knew was right;  
For the wrong we did before You by not listening to voices  
telling us unpleasant truths;  
For the wrong we did before You by closing our ears to the poor  
and the hungry;  
For the wrong we did before You by not working at  
relationships;  
For the wrong we did before You by making no time for those  
who needed us;  
For the wrong we did before You by abusing our health;  
For the wrong we did before You by unnecessary anger;  
For the wrong we did before You by giving in to bullies;  
For the wrong we did before You by talking of others' failings  
behind their backs instead of face to face;

וְעַל כָּל־אֵלֶּיךָ סְלִיחוֹת סְלַח לָנוּ: מְחַל לָנוּ: כַּפֹּר־לָנוּ:

Ve'al kulam eloah seliḥot selah lanu. Meḥal lanu. Kaper lanu.

For all these wrongs, O God of forgiveness, forgive us, wipe the  
slate clean, grant us atonement.  
For the wrong we did before You by forgiving in Jews what we  
condemn in others;  
For the wrong we did before You by forgiving in others what we  
condemn in Jews;  
For the wrong we did before You by taking Israel for granted;  
For the wrong we did before You by polluting our environment;  
For the wrong we did before You by cutting ourselves off from  
people of other races and cultures;  
For the wrong we did before You by being afraid of others'  
disabilities; ↵

For the wrong we did before You by callous treatment of those  
with whom we live;  
For the wrong we did before You by callous treatment of those  
with whom we work or study;

וְעַל כָּל־מַעֲלֹתֵינוּ סְלִיחוֹת סְלַח לָנוּ: מְחַל לָנוּ: כַּפֹּר-לָנוּ:

Ve'al kulam eloah seliḥot selah lanu. Meḥal lanu. Kaper lanu.

For all these wrongs, O God of forgiveness, forgive us, wipe the  
slate clean, grant us atonement.

For the wrong we did before You by ignoring the everpresent  
threat of war;

For the wrong we did before You by bearing grudges;

For the wrong we did before You by indulging in excessive  
luxuries;

For the wrong we did before You by giving less *tzedakah* than  
we could afford;

For the wrong we did before You by manipulating others for our  
own gain;

For the wrong we did before You by making those we love feel  
guilty;

For the wrong we did before You by ignoring important issues in  
our own community and country;

For the wrong we did before You by being ashamed to act  
morally in public;

וְעַל כָּל־מַעֲלֹתֵינוּ סְלִיחוֹת סְלַח לָנוּ: מְחַל לָנוּ: כַּפֹּר-לָנוּ:

Ve'al kulam eloah seliḥot selah lanu. Meḥal lanu. Kaper lanu.

For all these wrongs, O God of forgiveness, forgive us, wipe the  
slate clean, grant us atonement.

*We are seated.*

אבינו מלכנו, מקורנו אלהינו



הננו ועננו  
כי אין בנו מעשים



עשה עמנו  
צדקה וחסד

Deal with us in righteousness

והושיענו

and love and save us.

*A Woman's Meditation*

When men were children, they thought of God as a father;  
When men were slaves, they thought of God as a master;  
When men were subjects, they thought of God as a king.  
But I am a woman, not a slave, not a subject,  
not a child who longs for God as father or mother.

I might imagine God as teacher or friend, but those images,  
like king, master, father or mother, are too small for me now.

God is the force of motion and light in the universe;  
God is the strength of life on our planet;  
God is the power moving us to do good;  
God is the source of love springing up in us.  
God is far beyond what we can comprehend.

Ruth Brin

## INTERPRETIVE VERSION

We acknowledge as true and trustworthy that there is but one universal God, and that to God's service Israel stands eternally committed.

We recognize in God the power that has enabled us to triumph over defeat, persecution and oppression.

It was God who redeemed us from Egyptian bondage, and delivered us from the despotism of the pharaohs.

For God wills that we be free to use our powers in holy service, and be not bound to the arbitrary rule of any mortal.

Whenever human rulers usurp divine authority, and exploit the people, those tyrants' hearts are hardened, their own arrogance writes their doom.

Therefore we will never be discouraged nor dismayed when unrighteous powers rise up to destroy us.

Though enemy hosts pursue us, we shall remember how our ancestors were saved at the Sea of Reeds.

We therefore repeat the words of triumph with which they gave thanks for their deliverance:

1945 Reconstructionist Prayer Book (Adapted)

(Congregation sings *מי כמכה*, page 727)

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COMMENTARY. Two beautiful *berahot* complete the liturgical framework of the Shema in the evening service. The first of these is called *Ge'ulah*—"Redemption." Recalling the Exodus from Egypt, it thematically echoes the third paragraph of the Shema. Moreover, it identifies the sovereign God, named in the Shema's credo, as the power that freed Israel from slavery. Its vivid, here-and-now recollection of the escape from Egyptian bondage invites and challenges Israel to claim the redemption as a personal experience in each generation and to hear echoes of that ancient triumph over tyranny in each modern-day struggle for freedom, in every attempt to move toward the messianic future.

S.S.

גַּם בְּדוֹר יְתוּמִים  
לֹא עֲזָבוּנוּ חֲסֵדָיו  
וַיִּקְבֹּץ נִדְחֵינוּ מִקְצוֹת תְּבַל:  
כָּאֵז גַּם עָתָה  
מוֹצִיא אֶת עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל  
מִכַּף כָּל אוֹיְבָיו  
לְחֵירוֹת עוֹלָם:  
הַמַּעֲבִיר בְּנָיו בֵּין גִּזְרֵי יָם סוּף  
שֶׁם רָאוּ אֶת גְּבוּרָתוֹ  
שִׁבְחוּ וְהוֹדוּ לְשִׁמּוֹ  
וּמִלְכוּתוֹ בְּרָצוֹן קִבְּלוּ עֲלֵיהֶם:

מֹשֶׁה וּמַרְיָם וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לָךְ עָנוּ שִׁירָה בְּשִׂמְחָה רַבָּה וְאָמְרוּ כֻלָּם:

DERASH. Rabbi Judah said: [At the sea] each tribe said to the other, “You go into the sea first!” As they stood there bickering, Nahshon ben Aminadav jumped into the water. Meanwhile Moses was praying. God said to him, “My friend is drowning—and you pray!” “What can I do?” Moses asked. [God responded as it says in the text,] “Speak to the people of Israel and tell them to go! Raise your staff....” Talmud Sotah 37a

NOTE. Biblical references include Job 9:10, Psalms 66:9.



## ALTERNATIVE VERSION

It is up to us  
to hallow Creation,  
to respond to Life  
with the fullness of our lives.

It is up to us  
to meet the World,  
to embrace the Whole  
even as we wrestle  
with its parts.

It is up to us  
to repair the World  
and to bind our lives to Truth.

Therefore we bend the knee  
and shake off the stiffness that keeps us  
from the subtle  
graces of Life  
and the supple  
gestures of Love.

With reverence  
and thanksgiving  
we accept our destiny  
and set for ourselves  
the task of redemption.

Rami M. Shapiro

\* \* \*

And then all that has divided us will merge  
And then compassion will be wedded to power  
And then softness will come to a world that is harsh and unkind  
And then both men and women will be gentle  
And then both women and men will be strong  
And then no person will be subject to another's will  
And then all will be rich and free and varied  
And then the greed of some will give way to the needs of many  
And then all will share equally in the Earth's abundance  
And then all will care for the sick and the weak and the old  
And then all will nourish the young  
And then all will cherish life's creatures  
And then all will live in harmony with each other and the Earth  
And then everywhere will be called Eden once again.

Judy Chicago

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# Supplementary Readings for both Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur

Themes:

- *Teshuvah*

## MEDITATIONS

היכי דמי בעל תשובה אמר רבי יהודה כגון שבאת לידו דבר  
עבירה פעם ראשונה ושניה וניצלה הימנה:

How is one proved a repentant sinner? Rav Judah said, "If the object which caused the original transgression comes before the repentant sinner on two occasions and the sinner keeps away from it."

Talmud Yoma 86b



הלא תראה החוט של משי כמה הוא חזק כשיכפיל פעמים רבות  
וכבר ידעת כי עיקרו מחלוש שבדברים והוא ריר התולעת ונראה  
החבל הגדול של ספינה כשממששין בו זמן ארוך הולך הלוך  
וחסור עד אשר יפסק וישוב חלוש מכל חלוש וכמו כן ענין  
הקטנות והגדלות בעבירות עם ההתמדה ובקשת המחילה. ועל  
כן דמה אותם הכתוב בו כמו שנאמר (ישעיה ה) הוי משכי העון  
בחבלי השוא וכעבות העגלה חטאה:

Observe a silken cord. How strong it becomes when it is doubled over many times, though its origin is the weakest of things—a worm's mucus. Note also how a ship's cable, when used for a long time, becomes the weakest of the weak. So it is with the grave and light character of transgressions. They become grave only if one persists in them and light if one beseeches forgiveness for them. Thus it says in Scripture, "Woe to them who draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope." (Isaiah 5:18)

Bahya ibn Pakuda, *Hovot Halevavot*, 7.7



Sin involves a disturbance in the relation between us and God, and atonement implies the poise, solace and encouragement that come with the restoration to a better relationship. From the point of view of ethical religion, the same remains true. If we identify God with that aspect of reality which confers meaning and value on life and elicits from us those ideals that determine the course of human progress, then the failure to live up to the best that is in us means that our souls are not attuned to the divine, that we have betrayed God.

Mordecai M. Kaplan



The sacramental efficacy of the ritual of atonement is nil, and its symbolic power of no value, unless the sense of sin leads us to seek the reconstruction of our personalities in accordance with highest ethical possibilities of human nature; only then can we experience *teshuvah*, the sense of returning to God.

Mordecai M. Kaplan



And you wait, await the one thing  
that will infinitely increase your life;  
the gigantic, the stupendous,  
the awakening of stones,  
depths turned round toward you.

The volumes in brown and gold  
flicker dimly on the bookshelves;  
and you think of lands traveled through,  
of paintings, of the garments  
of women found and lost.

And then all at once you know: that was it.  
You rise, and there stands before you  
the fear and prayer and shape  
of a vanished year.

Rainer Maria Rilke



Awe is an intuition for the creaturely dignity of all things and their preciousness to God; a realization that things not only are what they are but also stand, however remotely, for something absolute. Awe is a sense for the transcendent, for the reference everywhere to God, who is beyond all things. Awe enables us to perceive in the world intimations of the divine, to sense in small things the beginning of infinite significance, to sense the ultimate in the common and the simple; to feel in the rush of the passing the stillness of the eternal.

Abraham Joshua Heschel (Adapted)



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 any other 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



אָנִי מִתְפַּלֵּל מִתּוֹךְ הַלֵּב סְדוּר  
קְרוּעַ שׁוּלִיִּם וְכָל הַמַּלִּיִּם הַחֲסֵרוֹת אָנִי  
רוֹאֵן מִתְעוֹפְפוֹת כְּבָר זִמְן רַב מִתְעוֹפְפוֹת  
וּמִבְקָשׁוֹת מְנוּחַ לְכַף הַרְגֵּל אֵיךְ  
אָבִיא לָהֵן מְזוֹר וְלֵב  
סְדוּרֵי אָכּוּל שׁוּלִיִּם  
אֲזוּל וְעָרָם

I pray a siddur from my heart,  
one with torn edges, and all its missing words  
I see have long since vanished, flying away  
and seeking a resting-place. How  
shall I bring a bandage for them  
when my heart's siddur with eaten edges  
still goes naked?

Amir Gilboa



Forgiveness opens a series of questions, painful questions, that constitute the central challenge within human life. All of the apparent dilemmas, however, finally meet in a single issue: Will I be in relation to others, or will I refuse that relation?

All religious traditions declare that forgiveness is always a possibility. In the words of one *ḥadīth*: “One who approaches near to me one span, I will approach one cubit; and one who approaches near to me one cubit, I will approach one fathom; and whoever approaches me walking, I will come running, and one who meets me with sins equivalent to the whole world, I will greet with forgiveness equal to it.” (From the *Mishkat al-masabih* quoted in *Islamic Spirituality*, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, ed.) What is the way to that approach? And why does the open door appear to us as shut?

It is the closed door, of course, that brings the need for forgiveness. Estrangement makes us feel the loss of bonds we may hardly have noticed before. The loss of friendship or alienation from a family member—that sense of being cut off from the vital current of life—creates suffering.

This suffering can be the fire that refines, that brings the drives of the ego in contact with a deeper self, that ultimately starts us “walking,” bringing us to the first steps of the exchange that is called forgiveness.

Experiencing the pain of the estrangement without and the fragmentation within is an integral part of forgiveness. This pain must not be avoided. Avoidance of any part of our lives on any level leads away from the unifying grace of forgiveness. Rage and sadness have to be faced in order to forgive, yet people try to live without facing that. Indeed a person cannot find redemption until she/he sees the flaws in her/his soul and tries to efface ↪



them. Nor can a people be redeemed until it sees the flaws in its soul and tries to efface them. But whether it be a person or a people, whoever shuts out the realization of her/his flaws is shutting out redemption.

A person chooses death by not forgiving. There is a sense in which you can destroy yourself by not saying yes to the reality that actually exists. Forgiveness is the great yes. Acting in accordance with the highest ideals of our tradition, I do not have a choice whether or not I should forgive you, I only have a choice whether or not I will. And I must if I want to be alive.

Lorraine Kišly and Martin Buber (Adapted)



“O God, create for me a pure heart, and renew within me a just spirit.”

Psalms 51:12

With the New Year, we have a chance for newness within our hearts, a newness that can change the course of our lives. But change is often frightening, and sometimes we are not sure that we are indeed ready for it. “What will this new heart be like?” we wonder. “How will this purified heart change the persons we are?” “Will the very structure of our lives change as our spirits are renewed?” So much uncertainty comes with change. As we stand at the threshold of a New Year, we pray for the valor to face uncertainty, the courage to truly change what needs to be changed, and the faith to welcome the new spirit that is within us.

Leila Gal Berner



## *A Reconstructionist Understanding of Sin and Salvation*

What are we to do about our sins? In the first place, we must not permit them to lead to self-hate or self-contempt. We must be able to see good in ourselves. We must believe that we have within us something that reflects the goodness that exists in the world. Most of our moral failures are due to a distrust of our capacity for virtue. We, all of us, have ideals of the man or woman we should like to be. Let us see in the very fact that we project that ideal for ourselves the evidence that it must have some affinity with what we really are. This is the image of God in us. Though it may be obscured by our sins, if we can see it at all, we must come to live that ideal so much that we find satisfaction in removing the moral stains which obscure it.

Nothing that we can say or think can really undo what has been done. The past can never be relived and it always conditions the present and future. Therein lies the inexorable reality of sin. Having failed, however, does not mean that we are failures, for the future lies before us with its infinite possibilities.

In our discouragement, many of us brood over our incapacity for good behavior, instead of trying to find out what bad consequences of our acts make them sinful, and how we may put our conduct on the right track so that it will not lead to wreckage of our abiding purposes. If, instead of thinking of our sin as though it were a taint on our ego, we regard it as a form of bad behavior in our relations to the world about us, a disposition to wrong-doing rather than wrong-being, we will not brood about what has already been done, but try to learn from our experience how to do better.

In this way we answer the paradox of sin by a sort of paradox of salvation. We use our experience of sin in order to attain virtue. The power of *teshuvah*, that is turning in the direction of the will to moral achievement, converts what were willful sins into virtues.

Mordecai M. Kaplan



Understand the words of Hillel as a guide for entry into the New Year:

אם אין אני לי מי לי?

“If I am not for myself, who is for me?...” This may refer to *tikun haneshamah*/repair of the soul. If I do not engage in the deeply personal work of inward turning (*teshuvah*), no one else can do it for me.

וכשאני לעצמי מה אני?

“And when I am only for myself, what am I?...” This may refer to *tikun ha'olam*/repair of the world. If each of us is *only* self-focused, then ultimately what are we? What makes us human is our relationship to others; what make us human is our “response-ability,” our understanding of responsibility—to ourselves and to the world.

ואם לא עכשיו אימתי?

“And if not now, when?” What better time than at the birth of a New Year to begin the journey toward self-repair (*tikun haneshamah*) and world-repair (*tikun ha'olam*).

Leila Gal Berner



The theme of the *Yamim Nora'im* is *teshuvah*/turning. This suggests being in motion, in process. Our deepest efforts to redirect our lives require sustained attention and vigilance; how much easier to have a single defining moment of change! But Rosh Hashanah is the beginning of the new year, not the year itself. Today we begin to move.

Richard Hirsh



# תשובה

Repentance is one of the ultimate spiritual realities at the core of Jewish faith. Its significance goes far beyond the narrow meaning of contrition or regret for sin, and it embraces a number of concepts considered to be fundamental to the very existence of the world.

Certain sages go so far as to include repentance among the entities created before the world itself. The implication of this remarkable statement is that repentance is a universal, primordial phenomenon; in such a context it has two meanings. One is that it is embedded in the root structure of the world; the other, that before we were created, we were given the possibility of changing the course of our lives. In this latter sense repentance is the highest expression of our capacity to choose freely—it is a manifestation of the divine in us. By repenting, we can extricate ourselves from the binding web of our lives, from the chain of causality that otherwise compels us to follow a path of no return.

Repentance also comprises the notion that we have a measure of control over our existence in all dimensions, including time. Time flows in one direction; it is impossible to undo or even to alter an action after it has occurred and become an “event,” an objective fact. However, even though the past is “fixed,” repentance admits of an ascendancy over it, of the possibility of changing its significance in the context of the present and the future. This is why repentance has been presented as something created before the world itself. In a world of the inexorable flow of time, in which all objects and events are interconnected in a relationship of cause and effect, repentance is the exception: it is the potential for something else.

Adin Steinsaltz



The Maggid of Dubno taught his disciples that ritual performance alone was insufficient for *teshuvah*. Specifically, listening to the sound of the shofar is but a means to a higher end. To illustrate this point, he told the following parable:

A man came to a big city for the first time and lodged in an inn overnight. Awakened in the middle of the night by the loud beating of drums, he inquired drowsily, “What is this all about?” Informed that a fire had broken out and that the drum beating was the city’s fire alarm, he turned over and went back to sleep.

He reported the incident to the village authorities on his return home. “They have a wonderful system in the big city. When a fire breaks out, people beat their drums and before long the fire burns out.” Excited, they ordered a supply of drums and distributed them to the population. Several weeks later, when a fire broke out in the village, there was a deafening explosion of beating drums, and while the people waited expectantly for the flames to subside, their homes burned to the ground.

A visitor passing through the village, when told the reason for the ear-splitting din, mocked the simple residents. “Idiots! Do you think that a fire can be put out by beating drums? The drums are no more than an alarm for people to wake up and extinguish the fire themselves.”

The Maggid continued. “So it is with us. We sound the shofar to extinguish the fires of sin and evil that burn within us. But the shofar is merely an alarm to rouse us from our moral slumber. Our task is to search our deeds and turn from our accustomed ways to remake our lives ourselves.”

Alexander A. Steinbach (Adapted)



According to tradition, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are *Yamim Nora'im*, days of awe, solemn days. The Jews who label themselves “secularist” or “agnostic” are baffled by these holidays. The basic trouble is that the very terminology of the Holy Days—sin, repentance, forgiveness, sovereignty of God—sounds alien to the secularist. It is, at best, an echo out of the remote past. And the fact is that for many in the synagogue, too, these words are no longer meaningful and do not correspond to genuine experience. But if there is an ethical-humanist dimension to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, then it should be possible to invest this terminology with contemporary significance and provide a reason for regarding these Holy Days as a common possession of all Jews.

There is a wonderful Hebrew-Yiddish phrase, *heshbon hanefesh*. The phrase connotes a taking stock of one’s soul, an inner accounting, a sitting-in-judgment upon oneself. As we make our *heshbon hanefesh*, we confess our failure to span the gap between conscience and conduct, between the standards we profess and the actions we perform. We remember what we should have done and did not do. This chasm between *believing* and *living* may or may not always be surmountable, but the refusal to try to span it is *sin*, and the will to bridge it, or at least to narrow it, is *atonement* and *redemption*. Sin is the gap between our promise and our conduct, between our standards and our actions.

The Sovereignty of God is symbolic of the oneness of humanity in freedom, righteousness, and dignity. And if God is what is best and highest within us, reaching out to what is best and highest in the universe, then God is not in Heaven, but is a power in the world and in us for transforming ourselves and the world in preparation for the Kingdom.

Israel Knox (Adapted)



פעם אחת אמר רבינו משל. אדם תעה כמה ימים ביער ולא היה יודע איזוהי דרך נכונה. פתאום ראה אדם אחר הולך לקראתו. באה שמחה גדולה בלבו, עתה בוודאי ידע הדרך הנכונה. כיון שפגעו זה בזה שאל אותו אחי אמור לי היכן הדרך הנכונה, זה כמה ימים אני תועה. אמר לו אחי אף אני איני יודע, שאף אני תועה כאן כבר ימים הרבה, אלא אומר לך בדרך שהלכתי אני אל תלך אתה, שבדרך זו תועים. ועכשיו נחפש דרך חדשה. כן אנחנו, דבר זה אני יכול לומר לכם, שבדרך שהלכנו עד עכשיו אין לנו ללכת, שבדרך זו תועים. אלא עכשיו נחפש דרך חדשה.

Rabbi Ḥayim of Zans was wont to tell the following parable:

A sojourner had been wandering about in a forest for several days, not knowing which was the right way out. Suddenly he saw someone approaching him. His heart was filled with anticipation. "Now I will learn which is the right way," he thought. When they neared one another, he asked, "Please, tell me which is the right way out of this forest. I have been wandering about for several days."

Said the other to him, "I do not know the way out either, for I too have been wandering about here for many, many days. But *this* I can tell you: do not take the way I have been going, for that will lead you astray. Now let us look for a new way together."

S. Y. Agnon



רשות לכל אדם נתונה, אם רצה להטות עצמו לדרך טובה ולהיות צדיק, הרשות בידו: ואם רצה להטות עצמו לדרך רעה ולהיות רשע, הרשות בידו: הוא שכתוב בתורה: "הן האדם היה כאחד ממנו לדעת טוב ורע": אלא כל אדם ראוי לו להיות.... צדיק כמשה רבנו או רשע כירבעם או חכם או סכל או רחמן או אכזרי או כילי או שוע... ואין לו מי שיכפהו ולא גוזר עליו ולא מי שמושכו לאחד משני הדרכים.... זה החוטא הוא הפסיד את עצמו:

אסור לאדם להנהיג עצמו בדברי חלקות ופתי ולא יהיה אחד בפה ואחד בלב — אלא תוכו פברו והענין שפילב הוא הדבר שפפה: ואסור לגנב דעת הבריות ואפלו דעת הנכרי: פיצד?... לא יסרהב בחברו שיאכל אצלו והוא יודע שאינו אוכל; ולא ירבה לו בתקרבת והוא יודע שאינו מקבל; ולא יפתח לו חביות שהוא צריך לפתחן למכרן כדי לפתותו שבשביל פבורו פתח וכן כל פיוצא בו:... אלא שפת אמת וריח נכון ולב טהור:

Free will is given to every human being. If we wish to incline ourselves toward goodness and righteousness, we are free to do so; and if we wish to incline ourselves towards evil, we are also free to do that. As the Torah says (Genesis 3:22), "Humanity is unique in knowing good and evil..." We each decide whether to make ourselves... learned or ignorant, compassionate or cruel, generous or miserly.... No one forces us, no one decides for us, no one drags us along one path or the other.... Those who err must take responsibility for themselves.

Smooth speech and deception are forbidden to us. Our words must not differ from our thoughts; the inner and outer person must be the same. What is in the heart should be on the lips. We are forbidden to deceive anyone, Jew or non-Jew, about



anything. For example, one must not urge food on another knowing that the other cannot eat it. One must not offer gifts that cannot be accepted. A storekeeper opening a bottle in order to sell its contents must not pretend to be opening it in honor of a particular person, and the like....Honest speech, integrity and a pure heart—that is what is required of us.

Moses Maimonides (Hilhot Teshuvah 5:1-2, Hilhot De'ot 2:6)



כיון דחב בר נש קמי קודשא בריך הוא זמנא חדא, עביד רשימו. וכד חב ביה זמנא תניינא, אתתקף ההוא רשימו יתיר. חב ביה זמנא תליתאה, אתפשט ההוא כתמא.

A sin leaves a mark; repeated, it deepens the mark; when committed a third time, the mark becomes a stain. Zohar



אם משים אדם נגד אור השמש בחלון מחיצות קלות וקלושות לרוב מאד הן מאפילות כמו מחיצה אחת עבה ויותר: וככה ממש הוא בנמשל בכל עונות שאדם דש בעקביו ומכל שכן המפורסמות מדברי רבינו זכרונם לברכה שהן ממש כעבודה זרה וגילוי עריות ושפיכות דמים: והמספר בגנות חבירו היא לשון הרע השקולה כעבודה זרה וגילוי עריות ושפיכות דמים: וכל הכועס כאילו עובד עבודה זרה וכן מי שיש בו גסות הרוח:

If one places many thin and threadbare sheets in front of the window, they have the same effect in screening the light of the sun as one heavy blanket. Similarly it is not only the serious sins such as idolatry, debauchery, and bloodshed which act as a screen between the Divine Light and the soul, but also the lesser offenses, such as indulging in slanderous talk, flying into a rage, pride, and many such offenses.

Shneur Zalman

אֵל תֹּאמַר שְׂאִין תְּשׁוּבָה אֶלָּא מֵעֲבֻרֹת שְׂיִישׁ בְּהֵן מַעֲשֵׂה פְּגוּן זְנוּת  
וְגִזְל וְגִנְבָּה :

אֶלָּא פְּשֵׁם שְׂצָרִיף אָדָם לְשׁוּב מֵאֵלוּ כֶּף הוּא צָרִיף לְחִפְשׁ בְּדַעוֹת  
רְעוֹת שְׂיִישׁ לוֹ וְלְשׁוּב מִן הַפַּעַס וּמִן הָאִיבָה וּמִן הַקְּנָאָה וּמִן  
הַהַתּוּל וּמִרְדִּיפַת הַמָּמוֹן וְהַכְּבוֹד וּמִרְדִּיפַת הַמֵּאֲכָלוֹת: מִן הַכֹּל  
צָרִיף לְחֹזֵר בְּתְשׁוּבָה :

וְאֵלוּ הָעוֹנוֹת קְשִׁים מְאֹדָן שְׂיִישׁ בְּהֵן מַעֲשֵׂה שְׂבוּזְמֵן שְׂאָדָם נִשְׁקַע  
בְּאֵלוּ קִשָּׁה הוּא לְפָרֵשׁ מֵהֶם: וְכֵן הוּא אוֹמֵר: "יַעֲזֹב רָשָׁע דְּרָכּוֹ  
וְאִישׁ אֶן מַחֲשַׁבְתִּיר":

Do not think that people are obliged to repent only for transgressions involving acts, such as stealing and robbing and promiscuity. Just as individuals must turn in repentance from such acts, so must they personally search out their evil thoughts and turn in repentance from anger, from hatred, from jealousy, from mocking thoughts, from over-concern with money or prestige, and from gluttony. From all these thoughts a person must turn in repentance. They are more serious than transgressions involving acts, for when a person is addicted to them, it is difficult to give them up. Thus it is said: "Let the wicked forsake their way, the unrighteous their thoughts." (Isaiah 55:7)

Moses Maimonides (Hilhot Teshuvah 7:3)



*Teshuvah*/turning need not be a dramatically large change to be significant. A subtle shift now, of even just a fraction of a degree out of 360, can take one on a vastly different path over the course of a life's trajectory.

Betsy Platkin Teutsch



לעולם יראה אדם עצמו כאילו חציו חייב וחציו זכאי עשה מצוה אחת אשריו שהכריע עצמו לכף זכות עבר עבירה אחת אוי לו שהכריע את עצמו לכף חובה.... רבי אלעזר ברבי שמעון אומר לפי שהעולם נידון אחר רובו והיחיד נידון אחר רובו עשה מצוה אחת אשריו שהכריע את עצמו ואת כל העולם לכף זכות עבר עבירה אחת אוי לו שהכריע את עצמו ואת כל העולם לכף חובה:

Each one of us should always consider ourselves evenly balanced, that is, half sinful and half righteous. If we perform one mitzvah we should be joyous, for we have tilted the scales towards righteousness. If we commit one sin we should be remorseful, for we have tilted the scale toward sinfulness....

Rabbi Elazar ben Shimon said: "Inasmuch as the world is judged in accordance with the majority of *its* deeds, and we individuals are judged in accordance with *our* deeds, if we perform one mitzvah, happy are we, for we have tipped our own scales and the scales of the world toward merit. If we commit one sin, woe unto us, for we have tipped the scales toward sinfulness for ourselves and for the world."

Talmud Kiddushin 40a,b



מְכַסֶּה פְּשָׁעָיו לֹא יִצְלִיחַ וּמוֹדֶה וְעֹזֵב יִרְחָם:

One who covers up transgressions will not prosper, but one who confesses and forsakes them shall obtain mercy.

Proverbs 28:13



רָחֲצוּ הַזְכוֹי הַסִּירוּ רָע מֵעֲלֵיכֶם: ... דְּרֹשׁוּ מִשְׁפָּט אֲשֶׁר־יִחְמוֹץ  
שָׁפְטוּ יְתוֹם רִיבוּ אֶלְמָנָה: ... אִם יִהְיֶה חֲטָאֵיכֶם כַּשָּׁנִים כַּשָּׁלֶג  
יִלְבִּינּוּ אִם-יֵאדְמוּ כַתּוֹלָע כַּצֶּמֶר יִהְיוּ:

Put away your evil doings.... Seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.... Though your sins be like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Isaiah 1:16-18



שׁוּבוּ אֵלַי וְאֶשׁוּבָה אֲלֵיכֶם אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת....

Return to me, and I will return to you, says the GOD of hosts....

Malachi 3:7



חֲטָאת וְאָשָׁם וְדַאי מְכַפְּרִין מִיְתָה וְיוֹם הַכְּפוּרִים מְכַפְּרִין עִם  
הַתְּשׁוּבָה: הַתְּשׁוּבָה מְכַפֶּרֶת עַל עֲבֵרוֹת הַקְּלוֹת עַל עֲשֵׂה וְעַל לֹא  
תַעֲשֵׂה וְעַל הַחֲמוּרוֹת הִיא תּוֹלָה עַד שְׂיָבֵא יוֹם הַכְּפוּרִים וְיִכַּפֵּר:

Repentance accomplishes atonement for lesser transgressions against both positive and negative commands in the Torah, while for graver transgressions it suspends punishment until Yom Kippur comes and accomplishes atonement.

Mishnah Yoma 8:8



הָאָמַר: אָחַטָא וְאָשׁוּב, אָחַטָא וְאָשׁוּב — אֵין מְסַפִּיקִין בְּיָדוֹ  
 לַעֲשׂוֹת תְּשׁוּבָה; אָחַטָא, וְיוֹם הַכַּפּוּרִים מְכַפֵּר — אֵין יוֹם  
 הַכַּפּוּרִים מְכַפֵּר: עֲבֵרוֹת שְׁבִין אָדָם לְמָקוֹם — יוֹם הַכַּפּוּרִים  
 מְכַפֵּר; עֲבֵרוֹת שְׁבִין אָדָם לְחֵבְרוֹ — אֵין יוֹם הַכַּפּוּרִים מְכַפֵּר עַד  
 שְׂרִיצָה אֶת חֵבְרוֹ:

If one says, “I will sin and repent, sin and repent,” there will be no repentance. “I will sin and Yom Kippur will accomplish atonement,” then Yom Kippur will accomplish no atonement. For transgressions between a person and God, Yom Kippur accomplishes atonement, but for transgressions between two people, Yom Kippur accomplishes atonement only if the offender has appeased the offended person...

Mishnah Yoma 8:9



אָמַר הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּנֵי פִתְחוֹ לִי פִתַּח אַחַד שֶׁל  
 תְּשׁוּבָה כְּחֵדָה שֶׁל מַחַט וְאֲנִי פּוֹתַח לָכֶם פִּתְחִים שְׂיִהְיוּ עֲגָלוֹת  
 וְקַרְנֵיּוֹת נִכְנָסוֹת בּוֹ:

The *Kadosh Baruch Hu* said to Israel, “My children, show me an opening of repentance no larger than the eye of a needle, and I will widen it into openings through which wagons and carriages can pass.”

Song of Songs Rabbah 5:2.2



Four main reasons are given for the command to fast on Yom Kippur.

*Fasting as a penance.* By fasting on Yom Kippur, we show contrition for the wrong we have done and good we have failed to do.... When we fast for our sins, we are saying in so many words, we do not want to be let off lightly; we deserve to be punished.

*Fasting as self-discipline.* Fasting on Yom Kippur serves a potent reminder of the need of the self-discipline which leads to self-improvement.

*Fasting as a means of focusing the mind on the spiritual.* By fasting on Yom Kippur, the needs of the body are left unattended for twenty-four hours and Jews give all their concentration to the things of the spirit.

*Fasting as a means of awakening compassion.* By fasting we are moved to think of the needs of others and to alleviate their suffering.

Louis Jacobs



Every time I listen to your pain  
instead of telling you how to fix it  
I make a sacrifice.  
I used to be a magician  
who diverted himself from his problems  
by focusing on someone else's.  
You might have been impressed by my cleverness  
but it did not help either of us.  
At last I have been reduced to silence.  
My silence can be a mirror for you.  
May this offering of emptiness  
give you room to heal.

Seth D. Riemer



As scholars have often noted, there is a basic difference between the orientation of the biblical *Yom Hakippurim* and Yom Kippur after the destruction of the Temples. In biblical times, Yom Kippur served the function of cleansing the Sanctuary, the abode of God, of any impurity...

Our Yom Kippur focuses on the behavior of the individual in his or her personal life and on the interaction of the community of Jews. Nevertheless, the motivation behind the biblical Yom Kippur is worth holding in mind. We must scrutinize our own lives carefully at least once each year so that we do not allow unwanted behavior to become so rigid that it will be too difficult to undo. We must repair the wounds we have inflicted before they develop into permanent ones. We must recharge our communities with a devotion to that which is godly and holy lest we lose all sight of our purpose.

Edward Greenstein



The Talmud records these words of Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi: “One person may acquire eternal life after many years of effort, and another acquires it in a single instant.”

For some of us, the road to reconciliation is incremental: we assign a series of tasks to ourselves, and gradually but steadily accomplish one after another after another, until we reach our goal.

For some of us, years of self-neglect, complacency, and defeat are suddenly overcome in one moment of insight, in one experience of the holy, in one unexpected moment of victory, in one unanticipated moment of anguish.

Each life is a story of moments: a moment in which a chance remark awakens an unexpected insight; a moment of solitude that results in a renewed sense of responsibility; a moment of atonement that yields eternity; and a moment of awareness that yields hope.

Richard Hirsh



When asked the reason for his leniency in permitting the sick to eat during Yom Kippur, Rabbi Ḥayim of Brisk replied, “It’s not that I am lenient when it comes to Yom Kippur, but I am strict when it comes to saving a life.” For those who are physically well, fasting on Yom Kippur is a mitzvah that nourishes our souls. However, for those of us who are physically frail, the mitzvah incumbent upon us is to nourish our bodies, so that we may live. *Teshuvah* (inward turning) can only occur where life allows for the turning.

Leila Gal Berner



Repentance is not just a psychological phenomenon, a storm within a human teacup, but is a process that can effect real change in the world, in all the worlds. Every human action elicits certain inevitable results that extend beyond their immediate context, passing from one level of existence to another, from one aspect of reality to another. The act of repentance is, in the first place, a severance of the chain of cause and effect in which one transgression follows inevitably upon another. Beyond this, it is an attempt to nullify and even to alter the past. This can only be achieved when we subjectively shatter the order of our own existence. The thrust of repentance is to break through the ordinary limits of the self. Obviously this cannot take place within the routine of life; it [must] be an ongoing activity throughout life. Repentance is thus something that persists; it is an ever-renewed extrication from causality and limitation.

Adin Steinsaltz



## MEDITATIONS / AMIDAH ALTERNATIVES

Something is very gently,  
invisibly, silently,  
pulling at me—a thread  
or net of threads  
finer than cobweb and as  
elastic. I haven't tried  
the strength of it. No barbed hook  
pierced and tore me. Was it  
not long ago this thread  
began to draw me? Or  
way back? Was I  
born with its knot about my  
neck, a bridle? Not fear  
but a stirring  
of wonder makes me  
catch my breath when I feel  
the tug of it when I thought  
it had loosened itself and gone.

Denise Levertov

The day has come  
To take an accounting of my life.

Have I dreamed of late  
Of the person I want to be,  
Of the changes I would make  
In my daily habits,  
In the way I am with others,  
In the friendship I show companions,  
Woman friends, man friends, my partner,  
In the regard I show my father and mother,  
Who brought me out of childhood? ↪

I have remained enchained too often to less than what I am.  
But the day has come to take an accounting of my life.

Have I renewed of late  
My vision of the world I want to live in,  
Of the changes I would make  
In the way my friends are with each other  
The way we find out whom we love  
The way we grow to educated people  
The way in which the many kinds of needy people  
Grove their way to justice?

I, who am my own kind of needy person, have been afraid  
of visions.  
But the day has come to take an accounting of my life.

Have I faced up of late  
To the needs I really have—  
Not for comforts which shelter my unsureness,  
Not for honors which paper over my (really tawdry) self,  
Not for handsome beauty, in which my weakness masquerades,  
Nor for unattractiveness in which my strengths hide out—

I need to be loved.  
Do I deserve to be?  
I need to love another.

Can I commit my love?  
Perhaps its object will be less than my visions  
(And then I would be less)  
Perhaps I am not brave enough  
To find new vision  
Through a real and breathing person. ↪

I need to come in touch with my own power,  
Not with titles,  
Not possessions, money, high praise,  
But with the power that is mine  
As a child, of the Power that is the universe  
To be a comfort, a source of honor,  
Handsome and beautiful from the moment I awoke this  
    morning  
So strong  
That I can risk the love of someone else  
So sure  
That I can risk to change the world  
And know that even if it all comes crashing down  
I shall survive it all—  
Saddened a bit, shaken perhaps,  
Not unvisited by tears  
But my dreams shall not crash down  
My visions not go glimmering.  
So long as I have breath  
I know I have the strength  
To transform what I can be  
To what I am.

Richard N. Levy

“Where is the place of God’s glory?” : אֵיִה מְקוֹם כְּבוֹדוֹ

“Where is the dwelling of God?”

This is the question with which the Rabbi of Kotzk surprised a number of learned Jews who happened to be visiting him.

They laughed at him: “What a thing to ask! Is not the whole world full of God’s glory?”

Then he answered his own question:

“God dwells wherever people let God in.”

Martin Buber (Adapted)

We Jews are a community based on memory. A common memory has kept us together and enabled us to survive. This does not mean that we based our life on any one particular past, even on the loftiest of pasts; it simply means that one generation passed on to the next a memory which gained in scope—for new destiny and new emotional life were constantly accruing to it—and which realized itself in a way we can call organic. This expanding memory was more than a spiritual motif; it was a power which sustained, fed, and quickened Jewish existence itself.

Martin Buber

According to the Kabbalah, redemption is not an event that will take place all at once at “the end of days” nor is it something that concerns the Jewish people alone. It is a continual process, taking place at every moment. The good deeds of men and women are single acts in the long drama of redemption, and not only the people Israel but the whole universe must be redeemed.

There is longing for peace in the hearts of men and women. But peace is not the same as the absence of war. Peace among people depends upon a relationship of reverence for each other. Peace will not come until people return out of their exile from each other, and Sarah and Hagar, Jacob and Esau, can embrace upon peaceful shores. Peace will not come until we search out the holy sparks of godliness that have gone astray in the wicked, and bring them back to their true selves.

Peace will not come until we see the flaws in our own selves and struggle to efface them, until each of us realizes our individual uniqueness, and we each attune our very special selves to their perfection.

Peace will not come until we renounce excessive self-concern and allow our hearts to be moved enough by the misery of our fellows to dare what must be dared.

Abraham Joshua Heschel (Excerpted and Adapted)

*Additional meditations may be found on pages 1-20.*

## TESHUVAH IN MIDRASH

One who says, time after time,  
“I’ll sin, but later I’ll do *teshuvah*,”  
will not have the opportunity to do *teshuvah*.  
Or: “I’ll sin, but Yom Kippur will bring atonement,”  
Yom Kippur will not effect atonement.  
For wrongful acts that one has done toward God,  
Yom Kippur will bring atonement,  
but for a wrongful act between one person and another,  
Yom Kippur will not effect atonement  
till one gains forgiveness from the person wronged.  
Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah explained this verse of Torah:

“From all your wrongful acts  
before the FOUNT OF MERCY  
you shall be cleansed”—

Leviticus 16:30

for wrongful acts that one has done toward God,  
Yom Kippur will bring atonement,  
but for a wrongful act between one person and another,  
Yom Kippur will not effect atonement  
till one gains forgiveness from the person wronged.

Rabbi Akiba said: Happy are you, O people Israel!  
Who is the one before whom you are cleansed?  
Who is the one who cleanses you?  
It is your heavenly Creator!

As is written: “I shall sprinkle over you  
pure waters, and you shall be clean.  
From all of your impurities, from all of your idolatries,  
I’ll make you clean.”

Ezekiel 36:25

And it is written:

“The hope of Israel / Israel’s purifying water  
is THE FOUNT OF LIFE!”

Jeremiah 17:13

Just as waters of a mikvah purify your sins,  
so does the blessed Holy One wash clean  
the people Israel.

Mishnah Yoma 8:9

## תשובה

האומר: "אחטא ואשוב, אחטא ואשוב" – אין מספיקין בידו לעשות תשובה; אחטא ויום-הכפורים מכפר – אין יום-הכפורים מכפר. עברות שבין אדם למקום – יום-הכפורים מכפר, עברות שבין אדם לחברו – אין יום-הכפורים מכפר, עד שירצה את-חברו. את זו דרש רבי אלעזר בן-עזריה: "מכל חטאתיכם לפני יהוה תטהרו" – עברות שבין אדם למקום יום-הכפורים מכפר, עברות שבין אדם לחברו – אין יום-הכפורים מכפר, עד שירצה את-חברו.

אמר רבי עקיבא: אשריכם, ישראל, לפני מי אתם מטהרים ומי מטהר אתכם? – אביכם שבשמים! שנאמר: "וזרקתי עליכם מים טהורים וטהרתם מכל טמאותיכם ומכל-גלוליכם אטהר אתכם"; ואומר: "מקנה ישראל יהוה" – מה מקנה מטהר את-הטמאים, אף הקדוש-ברוך-הוא מטהר את-ישראל.

Rabbi Abbahu bar Ze'ira said:

Great is *teshuvah*,

for it existed in the world before Creation,

as it says: "Before the mountains came to birth,

you, God, gave the human being ability to change

and to be humble."

Soḥar Tov 90; Genesis Rabbah 1.4 (quoting Psalms 90:23)

Two things are both near to you and far,

both far from you and near:

*Teshuvah* is near to you, yet far,

and far from you, yet near.

And death is near to you, yet far,

and far from you, yet near.

Ecclesiastes Rabbah 8.18

"Open up to me my sister!"—

Rabbi Yasa said: "The blessed Holy One

declared to Israel: Open up to me, my children,

a gate of *teshuvah* narrow as a needle's eye,

and I shall open up for you a gateway

wide enough for wagons and for coaches to come through.

Song of Songs Rabbah 25.2; Yalkut Shimoni on Song of Songs 5:2

"Outside, the stranger need not lodge."—

or the blessed Holy One views no being as unworthy;

rather, all are received by God.

In every hour, the gates are open,

and whoever seeks to enter may come in.

Exodus Rabbah 19.4 (quoting Job 31:32)

## תשובה

אמר רבי אבהו בר זעירא: גדולה תשובה שקדמה לבריאת העולם  
שנאמר בט"רם הרים ילדו... תשב אנוש עד דכא:

שני דברים קרובים לך ורחוקים ממך. רחוקים ממך וקרובים לך:  
תשובה קרובה לך ורחוקה ממך. רחוקה ממך וקרובה לך מיתה  
קרובה לך ורחוקה ממך. רחוקה ממך וקרובה לך:

רבי יסא אמר: אמר הקדוש-ברוך-הוא לישראל: בני פתחו לי  
פתח של תשובה כחדה של מחט ואני פותח לכם פתח שיהיו  
עגלות וקרונות נכנסות בו:

"בחוץ לא-ילין גר" – שאין הקדוש-ברוך-הוא פוסל לבריה  
אלא לכל הוא מקבל: השערים נפתחין בכל-שעה וכל-מי שהוא  
מבקש לכנס יכנס:



Rabbi Ḥama son of Rabbi Ḥaninah said:  
Great is *teshuvah*, for it brings healing to the world,  
as it is said: “I shall heal their affliction [*meshuvatam*],  
yes, willingly I’ll show them love!”

Talmud Yoma 86a (quoting Hosea 14:5)

Rabbi Abbahu said:  
In a place where people doing *teshuvah* stand,  
even the wholly righteous cannot stand,  
as it is said: “Shalom! Shalom!”  
Peace be to all, both far and near!”  
—first to those who are far,  
and only afterward, to those who are near.

Talmud Berahot 34b (quoting Isaiah 57:19)

## תשובה

אמר רבי חמא ברבי חנינא: גדולה תשובה שמביאה רפאות לעולם שנאמר ארפא משובתם אהבם נדבה:

רב אבהו אמר: במקום שבעלי-תשובה עומדים צדיקים גמורים אינם עומדים שנאמר שלום שלום לרחוק ולקרוב — לרחוק תחלה ואחר-כך לקרוב:

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COMMENTARY. A controversy existed among the rabbis about who is closer to God—Jews who have not sinned or those who have sinned and done *teshuvah*. Perhaps for some of the rabbis Hama's *midrash* was just a bit of hyperbole to motivate the discouraged to action. But how close to God can one stand who has never been tempted and therefore never developed the broken-heartedness, honesty and strength of will that true turning requires? The act of *teshuvah* brings a self-awareness that can create intimate new links to the divine. D.A.T.

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 flying 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 easily.

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 recognizing 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.

Therefore, may we find the strength 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 trust.

May we turn ourselves around and toward all that is noble,

true and life-affirming to revive our lives, as at the beginning.

Then may we turn toward one another,

For in isolation there is no life.

Jack Riemer (Adapted)

*On the Pulse of Morning*

A Rock, A River, A Tree  
Hosts to species long since departed,  
Marked the mastodon,  
The dinosaur, who left dried tokens  
Of their sojourn here  
On our planet floor,  
Any broad alarm of their hastening doom  
Is lost in the gloom of dust and ages.

But today, the Rock cries out to us, clearly, forcefully,  
Come, you may stand upon my  
Back and face your distant destiny,  
But seek no haven in my shadow.  
I will give you no hiding place down here.

You, created only a little lower than  
The angels, have crouched too long in  
The bruising darkness  
Have lain too long  
Face down in ignorance.  
Your mouths spilling words

Armed for slaughter.  
The Rock cries out to us today, you may stand upon me,  
But do not hide your face.

Across the wall of the world,  
A River sings a beautiful song. It says,  
Come, rest here by my side. ↪

Each of you, a bordered country,  
Delicate and strangely made proud,  
Yet thrusting perpetually under siege.  
Your armed struggles for profit  
Have left collars of waste upon  
My shore, currents of debris upon my breast.  
Yet today I call you to my riverside,  
If you will study war no more. Come,  
Clad in peace, and I will sing the songs  
The Creator gave to me when I and the  
Tree and the Rock were one.  
Before cynicism was a bloody scar across your  
Brow and when you yet knew you still  
Knew nothing.  
The River sang and sings on.

There is a true yearning to respond to  
The African, the Native American, the Sioux,  
The Catholic, the Muslim, the French, the Greek  
The Irish, the Rabbi, the Priest, the Sheik,  
The Gay, the Straight, the Preacher,  
The privileged, the homeless, the Teacher.  
They hear. They all hear  
The speaking of the Tree.

They hear the first and last of every Tree  
Speak to humankind today. Come to me, here beside the River.  
Plant yourself beside the River.

Each of you, descendant of some passed  
On traveller, has been paid for.  
You, who gave me my first name, you, ↩

Pawnee, Apache, Seneca, you  
Cherokee Nation, who rested with me, then  
Forced on bloody feet,  
Left me to the employment of  
Other seekers—desperate for gain,  
Starving for gold.

You the Ashanti, the Yoruba, the Kru, bought  
Sold, stolen, arriving on the nightmare  
Praying for a dream.  
Here, root yourselves beside me.  
I am that Tree planted by the River,  
Which will not be moved:  
I, the Rock, I, the River, I, the Tree  
I am yours—your passages have been paid.  
Lift up your faces, you have a piercing need  
For this bright morning dawning for you.  
History, despite its wrenching pain,  
Cannot be unlived, but if faced  
With courage, need not be lived again.

Lift up your eyes upon  
This day breaking for you.  
Give birth again  
To the dream.

Women, children, men,  
Take it into the palms of your hands,  
Mold it into the shape of your most  
Private need. Sculpt it into  
The image of your most public self.  
Lift up your hearts  
Each new hour holds new chances  
For a new beginning. ↪

Do not be wedded forever  
To fear, yoked eternally  
To brutishness.

The horizon leans forward,  
Offering you space to place new steps of change.  
Here, on the pulse of this fine day  
You may have the courage  
To look up and out and upon me, the  
Rock, the River, the Tree, your country.  
No less to Midas than the mendicant.  
No less to you now than the mastodon then.

Here, on the pulse of this new day  
You may have the grace to look up and out  
And into your sister's eyes, and into  
Your brother's face, your country  
And say simply  
Very simply  
With hope—  
Good morning.

Maya Angelou

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## *In Praise of The Living*

*Yitgadal veyitkadash shemey raba*

This profound praise of the living  
Praise for the generous gift of life.

Praise for the presence of loved ones,  
the bonds of friendship, the link of memory.

Praise for the toil and searching,  
the dedication and visions, the ennobling aspirations.

Praise for the precious moorings of faith,  
for courageous souls, for prophets, psalmists, and sages.

Praise for those who walked before us,  
the sufferers in the valley of shadows,  
the steadfast in the furnace of hate.

Praise for the God of our fathers,  
the Source of all growth and goodness,  
the Promise of which we build tomorrow.

*Yitgadal veyitkadash shemey raba*

This, the profound praise we offer.  
Praise for the generous gift of life.

Harvey J. Fields

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KAVANAH. Our relationship to those who have come before us does not end at the time of their death. The relationship continues, taking many forms. It can continue through our experience of universal sadness. It can continue through our sense of noble righteousness. It can continue through our understanding of the integrity of memory. It can continue through our surrender to pure joy. Kaddish affirms that our connection with our loved ones is continuous and everlasting. D.B.

# Supplementary Readings for both Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur

Themes:

- *Heshbon Hanefesh*

# הַגִּיזוֹן הַלֵּב

## MEDITATIONS / AMIDAH ALTERNATIVES

In the time of your life, live—so that in that good time there shall be no ugliness or death for yourself or for any life your life touches.

Seek goodness everywhere, and when it is found, bring it out of its hiding place and let it be free and unashamed.

Place in matter and in flesh the least of the values, for these are the things that hold death and must pass away.

Discover in all things that which shines and is beyond corruption.

Encourage virtue in whatever heart it may have been driven into secrecy and sorrow by the shame and terror of the world.

Ignore the obvious, for it is unworthy of the clear eye and the kindly heart.

Be the inferior of no one, nor of anyone be the superior. Remember that everyone is a variation of yourself. No one's guilt is not yours, nor is anyone's innocence a thing apart...

In the time of your life, live—so that in that wondrous time you shall not add to the misery and sorrow of the world, but shall smile to the infinite delight and mystery of it.

William Saroyan

A man went from village to village, everywhere asking the same question, "Where can I find God?" He journeyed from rabbi to rabbi, and nowhere was he satisfied with the answers he received, so he would pack his bags, and hurry on to the next village. Some of the rabbis replied, "Pray, and you will find God." But the man had tried to pray, and knew that he could not. And some replied, "Study and you will find God." But the more he read, the more confused he became, and the further he seemed from God. Others replied, "Forget your quest. God is within you." But the man had tried to find God within himself and failed. ↪

One day, the man arrived wearily at a very small village set in the middle of a forest. He approached a woman who was tending some chickens. She asked whom he could be looking for in such a small place, and she did not seem surprised when he told her that he was looking for God. She showed him to the rabbi's house.

When he went in, the rabbi was studying. He waited a moment, but impatient to be off to the next village if he could not be satisfied, he interrupted. "Rabbi—how do I find God?" The rabbi paused, and the man wondered which of the many answers he had already received he would be told this time. But the rabbi simply said, "You have come to the right place. God is in this village. Why don't you stay a few days; you might find God here."

The man was puzzled. He did not understand what the rabbi could mean. But the answer was unusual, and so he stayed. For several days, he strode round and round, asking all the villagers where God was that morning, but they would only smile and ask him to have a meal with them. Gradually, he got to know them and even helped with some of the village work. Every now and then he would see the rabbi by chance, and the rabbi would ask him, "Have you met God yet?" The man would smile, and sometimes he understood and sometimes he did not understand. For months he stayed in the village, and then for years. He became part of the village and shared in all its life. He went to *shul* with the villagers every Friday night. Sometimes he knew why he prayed, and sometimes he didn't. And sometimes he really said prayers, and sometimes only words. And then he would return with one of them for a *Shabbos* meal, and when they talked about God, he was always assured that God was in the village, though he wasn't quite sure where or when God could be found. Gradually, he too began to believe that God was in the village, though he wasn't quite sure where. He knew, however, that sometimes he had encountered God. ↪

Time passed and the rabbi came to him and said, “You have met God now, have you not?” And the man responded, “I think that I have. But I am not sure why I met God, or how, or when. And why is God in this village only?”

So the rabbi replied, “God is not a person or a thing. You cannot meet God in that way. When you came to our village, you were so absorbed in your question that you could not recognize an answer when you heard it. Nor could you recognize God when you met God, because you were not really looking for God. Now that you have stopped pursuing God, you have found God. Now you can return to your town if you wish.”

So, the man went back to his town, and God went with him. And the man knew that God was within himself and within other people. And other people knew it too, and sometimes they would ask him, “Where can we find God?” And the man would always answer, “You have come to the right spot. God is in this place.”

Jeffrey Newman

If you have no past you have no future either, you are a foundling in this world, with no father or mother, without tradition, without duties to what comes after you, the future, the eternal. If you serve only yourself, you measure and weigh everything against yourself—there is nothing for you to strive towards. You have moods, but no character; desires, but no will—no great love, no great hate—you [merely] flirt with life....

I. L. Peretz

Our commitment to the redeeming deed applies, in the first place, to life within the human community. We take it as our task to enhance each person's potential for realizing the divine image, remembering that each of us bears a portrait unique and vital to the wholeness of God. But how clear can that portrait be when its bearer is suffering from hunger? Or from political oppression? Or from domestic bondage? Or when the person is hurting self and others, due to a compulsion from which it seems impossible to break free? If we are going to enhance the divine image in this world, we must work to maximize human freedom, always remembering that it was only after we came out of bondage that we were able to look toward God's mountain.

That commitment to freedom also includes helping people to create the sorts of lives and social structures to allow that freedom a lasting and secure home. Our Judaism lives in those two essential moments when we discover God. *We celebrate (and guard) our freedom, knowing God at the Sea, and we build a community that lives in God's presence, knowing God at the mountain...* Religious humanism, as I understand it, means a realization that the task is ours to do; we no longer wait for the divine hand, separate from our own, to come and save. This acceptance of responsibility is itself a sacred act for us. We seek to accept, with deeply humbling gratitude, the role of actor for divine compassion in the world of physical reality. The voice of God *does* speak to us at Sinai, but it is none other than the voice of Moses. The hands and feet of God *do* bring redemption, but they are none other than our own limbs, offered by us to our Maker in order to fulfill their true purpose.

Arthur Green

*Additional meditations can be found on pages 1-20.*

*Avinu Malkenu is on page 451, Kaddish Titkabal is on page 461.*

בְּסֵפֶר חַיִּים בְּרָכָה וְשָׁלוֹם וּפְרֻנָּסָה טוֹבָה נִזְכָּר וְנִפְתָּב לְפָנֶיךָ אֲנַחְנוּ  
וְכָל-עַמֶּךָ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל לְחַיִּים טוֹבִים וְלְשָׁלוֹם:

In the book of life, blessing, peace, and proper sustenance, may we be remembered and inscribed, we and all your people, the house of Israel, for a good life and for peace.



## THE PROMISE OF THIS DAY

Look to this day,  
For it is life,  
The very life of life.  
In its brief course lie all  
The realities and verities of existence,  
The bliss of growth,  
The splendor of action,  
The glory of power—

For yesterday is but a dream,  
And tomorrow is only a vision.  
But today, well lived,  
Makes every yesterday a dream of happiness  
And every tomorrow a vision of hope.

Look well, therefore, to this day.

Sanskrit Proverb

## A GUIDE TO GREETINGS

During the month of Elul, the traditional greetings are *Shanah tovah* (“A good year”); or *Leshanah tovah tikatevu* (“May you be inscribed for a good year [in the Book of Life]”); or *Leshanah tovah umetukah tikatevu* (“May you be inscribed for a good and sweet year”); or—less common—*Ketivah tovah* (“A good inscription [in the Book of Life]”).

The appropriate response: *Gam leha* (feminine *lah*)—“The same to you.”

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, some people add to the above: *Leshanah tovah tikatevu vetehatemu* (“May you be inscribed and sealed for a good life”). Others use these greetings only through the first night of Rosh Hashanah; after that, it would be indelicate to suggest that a person is not already inscribed in the Book of Life, for on Rosh Hashanah all the righteous are so inscribed—only those whose records are closely balanced between good and bad have their fate postponed until Yom Kippur.

On Yom Kippur (and until Hoshana Rabah) the greeting is *Gemar hatimah tovah* (“A good final sealing [to you]!”) or *Hatimah tovah* (“A sealing for good!”).

Michael Strassfeld



Where are you? Whether God's question is addressed to Adam or to some other person, God does not expect to learn something God does not know...

Adam hides himself to avoid rendering accounts, to escape responsibility for his way of living. Every person hides for this purpose, for everyone is Adam and finds himself in Adam's situation. To escape responsibility for his life, he turns existence into a system of hideouts. And in thus hiding again and again from "the face of God," he enmeshes himself more and more deeply in perversity. A new situation thus arises, which becomes more and more questionable with every day, with every new hideout.

Adam finally faces the Voice, perceives his enmeshment, and avows: "I hid myself." This is the beginning of the way. The decisive heartsearching is the beginning of the way in life; it is, again and again, the beginning of a human way.

Martin Buber (Adapted)

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COMMENTARY. *Seliḥot* prayers derive their name from the Hebrew word סליח/pardon. Some communities traditionally recited *Seliḥot* prayers at dawn throughout the month of Elul, which precedes Rosh Hashanah. Other communities began the penitential recitations much closer to Rosh Hashanah—on the Saturday night at least three days before the holiday. Contemporary communities continue the practice of reciting *Seliḥot* on that Saturday night even if they have dispensed with the practice of reciting them at dawn on subsequent days.

D.A.T.

A new year approaches, and we prepare to see ourselves, not in the mirror of our vanity, nor in the opinion of our neighbors, but in the light of our highest ideals, that which we call Sacred.

We are not at one with ourselves or with our neighbors. Our problems, pride and impatience separate us from the atonement we seek. Yet without that atonement, we are maimed in mind and spirit. The burden of old quarrels, whose cause we scarcely remember, weighs upon us. So too, do the broken friendships and promises, the appeals we denied, the requests we refused, and all the opportunities for good we rejected.

This *Seliḥot* night, we confirm our need for reconciliation and atonement to repair our fractured lives. In silence we remember our sins, our failings and mistakes.

וְעַל כָּל־אֵלֹוֹהַּ סְלִיחוֹת סְלַח לָנוּ: מְחַל לָנוּ: כַּפֹּר-לָנוּ:

Ve'al kulam eloah seliḥot selah lanu. Meḥal lanu. Kaper lanu.

For all these sins, we seek forgiveness, pardon and atonement.

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COMMENTARY. The traditional *Seliḥot* service is dominated by *piyutim*, liturgical poems, many of which are recited only on *Seliḥot* night. These *piyutim* are difficult to understand, and many contemporary Jews experience them as unedifying and sometimes theologically objectionable. The *Seliḥot* prayers worked well for Jews who were already in a penitential mood and were familiar with this liturgy as well as that of the entire High Holy Day season. In our time, substantial reframing of the *Seliḥot* service has become necessary in order to address contemporary needs and issues.

D.A.T.

# Supplementary Readings for both Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur

Themes:

- Evil

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## BIBLICAL VERSES ON EVIL AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Woe to those who say of evil, "It is good,"  
and of good, "It is evil,"  
who put darkness in the place of light,  
and light in the place of darkness,  
who put bitterness in the place of sweetness  
and sweetness in the place of bitterness.  
Woe to those who see themselves as wise,  
and who account themselves as clever.  
Woe to those who become mighty when they're full of wine,  
and think themselves heroic when they've mixed  
their drink,  
who give preference to the wicked for a bribe,  
and withhold justice from the good.  
They have a mouth, but cannot speak,  
they have eyes, but cannot see.  
They have ears, but cannot hear,  
they have a nose, but cannot smell.  
They have rebelled against the light,  
and have not recognized its path,  
and have not dwelt along its roads.  
To all of them, the morning is a darkness,  
truly, they are intimate with terror's shade.  
But evil's light shall be extinguished,  
its fire's flame shall never shine,  
the light shall darken in its tent,  
its lamp shall go dead where it shines.  
The wicked grope in darkness where no light exists,  
they cast about like drunkards in a haze. ↩

וְלָטוֹב רַע  
 וְאוֹר לְחֹשֶׁךְ שְׁמַיִם מִר לְמַתוֹק  
 וּמַתוֹק לְמָר:  
 וְנִגְדַּד פְּנִיָּהֶם נְבוּנִים:  
 וְאַנְשֵׁי-חַיִּל לְמִסָּךְ שֹׁכֵר:  
 וְצַדִּיקַת צַדִּיקִים יִסְּרוּ מִמֶּנּוּ:  
 עֵינַיִם לָהֶם וְלֹא יֵרְאוּ:  
 אֶף לָהֶם וְלֹא יִרְיחוּן:  
 לֹא הִפְּרִירוּ דְרָכָיו  
 כִּי-יִכִּיר בַּלְהוֹת צְלָמֹת:  
 וְלֹא-יִגַּה שְׂכִיב אִשׁוּ:  
 וַיִּרֹּץ עָלָיו יְדָעָה:  
 וַיִּתְּעַם בְּשֹׁכֹר: ←

הוּי הָאִמְרִים לָרַע טוֹב  
 שְׁמַיִם חֹשֶׁךְ לְאוֹר  
 הוּי חֲכָמִים בְּעֵינֵיהֶם  
 הוּי גְבוּרִים לְשִׁתוֹת יַיִן  
 מְצַדִּיקֵי רָשָׁע לַעֲקֹב שֶׁחַד  
 פֶּה-לָהֶם וְלֹא יִדְבְּרוּ  
 אַזְנֵיִם לָהֶם וְלֹא יִשְׁמָעוּ  
 הֵמָּה הָיוּ בְּמַרְדֵי-אוֹר  
 וְלֹא יִשְׁבּוּ בְּנִתְיַבְתּוֹ:  
 כִּי יַחֲדוּ בִּקְרָ לְמוֹ צְלָמֹת  
 גַּם אוֹר רָשָׁעִים יְדָעָה  
 אוֹר חֹשֶׁךְ בְּאֶהְלוֹ  
 יִמְשְׁשׁוּ-חֹשֶׁךְ וְלֹא-אוֹר

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COMMENTARY. The rabbis often created new prayers by anthologizing biblical verses. Michael Strassfeld employed this technique in creating this *piyut*-like meditation on human evil and its consequences. D.A.T.

And I shall banish from their midst  
the voice of joy, the voice of happiness,  
the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride,  
the sound of the handmill and the light of the lamp.  
Yes, all the lights amid the heavens  
I shall blacken over you,  
and I shall place a darkness on your land,  
says THE ALMIGHTY God.  
So listen, you who cannot hear,  
and you who cannot see, lift up your gaze.

Isaiah 5:20-23; Psalms 115:5-6; Job 24:13, 17; 18:5-6; 12:25; Jeremiah 25:10; Ezekiel 32:8; Isaiah 42:18.

קול שֶׁשׁוֹן וְקוֹל שֶׁמָּחָה  
קול רַחִים וְאוֹר נֵר:  
אֶקְדִּירֵם עָלַיָּךְ  
נָאֵם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה:  
וְהַעֲוִרִים הַבָּיִטוּ לְרֵאוֹת:

וְהֶאֱבַדְתִּי מֵהֶם  
קוֹל חֲתָן וְקוֹל כַּלָּה  
כָּל-מְאֹרֵי אוֹר בְּשָׁמַיִם  
וְנִתְּתִי חֶשֶׁךְ עַל אֶרֶץ  
הַחַרְשִׁים שְׁמָעוּ



# Supplementary Readings for both Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur

Themes:

- Connecting to God

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## SHIREY SHAḤAR/MORNING SONGS

*One of the following introductory poems may be added here.*

### I

Morning I will seek you,  
my fortress rock, each day.  
My song of dawn and dusk  
before you I shall lay.  
I stand before your greatness,  
with trembling I'm fraught,  
because your eyes can enter  
my heart's most secret way.

What can be done, by heart  
or tongue, what can one do or say?  
And how much strength lies deep  
within my body as I pray?  
And yet you find it good  
—mere human song—and so,  
I thank you for as long as shall  
your lifebreath in me play.

Solomon ibn Gabirol

## שִׁירֵי שַׁחַר

*One of the following introductory poems may be added here.*

### I

שַׁחַר אֲבַקֶּשֶׁךָ צוּרֵי וּמִשְׁגָּבֵי  
אֶעֱרֹךְ לְפָנֶיךָ שַׁחֲרֵי וְגַם עֶרְבֵי:  
לְפָנַי גִּדְלָתְךָ אֶעֱמַד וְאֶבְהִיל  
כִּי עֵינֶיךָ תִּרְאֶה כָּל-מַחְשְׁבוֹת לְבָבִי:  
מֵה-זֶה אֲשֶׁר יוּכַל הַלֵּב וְהַלְשׁוֹן לַעֲשׂוֹת  
וּמֵה-כֹּחַ רוּחֵי בְּתוֹךְ קִרְבֵי:  
הִנֵּה לְךָ תִּיטֵב זְמַרְת אָנוּשׁ עַל-כֵּן  
אוֹדְךָ בְּעוֹד תְּהִיָּה נִשְׁמַת אֱלֹהֵי בִי:

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שַׁחַר אֲבַקֶּשֶׁךָ / Morning I will seek you. The *Shaharit* service, as its name implies, was originally meant to be recited at dawn. Our tradition views the two daily times of change of light as sacred hours to be appreciated with prayer and inner quiet. Though our morning service usually begins long after sunrise, we should try to preserve something of that special memory of dawn's quiet blessing as we begin our prayer. A.G.

## II

My heart's a place for you, as you are mine.

Remembering you, I hail, nighttime, daytime,  
I praise you, Holy One, my crown divine,  
cure of my soul, to my thirst quench sublime.

I walk amid your light, unto your room,  
and from your precious glow my clothes I find,  
and, happy serving you, my place assume,  
in dread filled joy of you, perfect and kind.

My God, glory and love around me bloom,  
my wish is seeing you, outside dream's time,  
for you my passion burns, my whole life through,  
my want is to ascend, these heavens climb.

Anonymous

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לבבי מקומך / My heart's a place for you, as you are mine. The journey to God is a journey inward rather than upward. We think more easily of a God who dwells within the human soul than we do of one in the sky or on a mountain. Here the poet reminds us that while God is indeed in us, we are also "inside" God. The Hebrew word *makom* or "place" is one of our ancient names for the divine. "God is the place of the world," said the rabbis, "but the world is not God's place," meaning that the divine cannot be contained within the finite. In the spirit of this poem, we might choose to say that the inwardness with which we seek God and the inwardness with which the divine seeks us is the same inwardness. A.G.

## II

לְבָבִי מְקוֹמָךְ וְאַתָּה מְקוֹמִי  
 בְּזִכְרוֹךְ אֱהִלֵּל בְּלֵילִי וַיּוֹמִי:  
 שְׁבַחְךָ קְדוֹשִׁי עֲטֹרַת לְרֹאשִׁי  
 וְרַפְאוֹת לְנַפְשִׁי וְשִׁקּוּי לְעַצְמִי:

מְהִלָּךְ בְּאוֹרְךָ לְנֶכַח דְּבִירְךָ  
 וַיְמַהוּד יְקַרְךָ לְבוֹשִׁי וְעַצְמִי:  
 וְאַשְׁמַח בְּעַבְדְּךָ בְּעַמְדִי לְנִגְדְּךָ  
 וְאַשְׁמַח בְּפַחְדְּךָ בְּחַסְדְּךָ שְׁלוֹמִי:

אֱלֹהֵי כְבוֹדְךָ סְבִיבֵי וְחַסְדְּךָ  
 וְחַפְצֵי רְאוּתְךָ וְלֹא בְחִלּוֹמִי:  
 לְךָ תֵּאָוֶתִי בְּחַיֵּי וּמוֹתִי  
 וְחַפְצֵי עֲלוֹתִי לְגַבְהֵי מְרוֹמִי:

### III

You knew me long before you fashioned me,  
and as long as your breath lives in me, you shall  
preserve me.

Would I have any place to stand were you to push me on?  
Would I have power to walk were you to hold me back?  
What can I say other than thoughts your hand has shaped  
in me?

What can I do unless you shall enable me?  
I seek you in this hour of desire: Please answer me!  
May your desire, like a shield, surround me.  
So raise me up to hasten early to your dwelling place,  
to bless your Name alone, please waken me!

Yehudah Halevi

## III

וְכֹל עוֹד רוֹחֵךְ בִּי תִצְרְנִי	יִדְעָתָנִי בְּטוֹרָם תִּצְרְנִי
וְאִם לִי מִהֶלֶךְ אִם תִּעְצְרְנִי	הִישׁ לִי מִעַמָּד אִם תִּהְדַּפְּנִי
וְמָה אוֹכֵל עֲשֵׂה עַד תִּעְזְרְנִי	וְמָה אִמַּר וּמַחְשַׁבִּי בְיָדְךָ
וְכִצְנָה רְצוֹנְךָ תִּעְטְרְנִי	דְּרָשְׁתִּיךָ בְּעֵת רְצוֹן עֲנֵנִי
וְאֵת שְׁמֶךָ לְבָרֵךְ עוֹרְרֵנִי:	הַקִּימְנִי לְשִׁחַר אֶת־דְּבִירְךָ

DERASH. Each of us is bombarded daily with messages that if we accomplish this or buy that, we will become who we want to be. Such messages belie another reality about our lives. Sickness, accident, war, randomness, and hundreds of other circumstances are at least partly beyond our control. When we are honest with ourselves, we recognize not only our own power, but our finitude, the extraordinary contemporary achievements from which we benefit, and our fragility. Often, I am not in control of my own destiny. Passing through the valley of fear, I come to seek hope and trust. In my smallness, I seek the Source of all life. Now I am ready to begin!

D.A.T.



#### IV

I call to you, please answer me, divine one!  
Incline your ear to me, and listen to my prayer.  
May I, with justice, come to see your face,  
May I awake with satisfaction to behold your form!

For I have trusted in you, GUIDING ONE,  
and I have said: You are my God!  
Please hear my supplication when I call to you,  
when I raise up my hands in homage to your holy place.  
ETERNAL ONE, my God, I have cried out to you,  
and you have healed me.  
To you, RESTORING ONE, I call,  
to my protector I lay out my supplication.

Let your face's light shine on your servant,  
help me with your love!  
For in you, ABUNDANT ONE, I place my hope,  
may you give answer, sovereign one, my God.  
Please hear my prayer, ETERNAL ONE, please hearken to my  
cry,  
and to my tearful plea do not be deaf!  
Hear, O HIDDEN ONE, deal graciously with me,  
SUPERNAL ADVOCATE, become a help for me.

I rejoiced when people said to me:  
Let's go forth to the house of GOD!  
I take joy in all that you have said,  
like one who comes into great wealth.  
Please hear, my sovereign, my God,  
the sound of my prayer's cry,  
for truly, I now pray to you.  
ILLUMINATOR of the dawn, please hear my voice;  
my morning prayer I offer you, and wait with expectation. ↪

## IV

אָנִי קָרָאתִיךָ כִּי־תַעֲנֵנִי אֵל הַט־אָזְנֶךָ לִי שְׁמַע אִמְרָתִי:  
 אָנִי בְצָדֶךָ אֶחְזֶה פְּנֶיךָ אֲשַׁבְּעָה בְּהַקִּיץ תִּמְוַנְתֶּךָ:  
 וְאָנִי עָלֶיךָ בְּטַחְתִּי יְהוָה אִמְרָתִי אֱלֹהֵי אָתָּה:  
 שְׁמַע קוֹל תַּחֲנוּנֵי בְּשׁוּעֵי אֵלֶיךָ בְּנִשְׁאֵי יָדַי אֶל־דְּבִיר קִדְשֶׁךָ:  
 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי שׁוֹעָתִי אֵלֶיךָ וַתִּרְפְּאֵנִי:  
 אֵלֶיךָ יְהוָה אֶקְרָא וְאֶל־אֲדֹנָי אֶתְחַנֵּן:  
 הָאִירָה פְּנֶיךָ עַל־עַבְדְּךָ הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי בְּחַסְדֶּךָ:  
 כִּי־לָךְ יְהוָה הוֹחֲלָתִי אָתָּה תַעֲנֶה אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהֵי:  
 שְׁמַעַה תִּפְלָתִי יְהוָה וְשׁוּעָתִי הֲאִזִּינָה אֶל־דְּמַעְתִּי אֶל־תַּחֲרָשׁ:  
 שְׁמַע־יְהוָה וְחַנּוּנֵי יְהוָה הֵיחָה עֵזֶר לִי:  
 שְׁמַחְתִּי בְּאִמְרִים לִי בֵּית יְהוָה גִּלְךָ:  
 שֵׁשׁ אָנֹכִי עַל־אִמְרָתְךָ כְּמוֹצֵא שְׁלָל רָב:  
 הִקְשִׁיבָה לְקוֹל שׁוּעֵי מַלְכֵי וְאֱלֹהֵי כִּי־אֵלֶיךָ אֶתְפַּלֵּל:  
 יְהוָה בִּקְרָתְשָׁמַע קוֹלִי בִּקְרָתְךָ אֶעֱרֹךְ־לְךָ וְאֶצְפֶּה: ←

Eleha adonay ekra ve'el adonay ethanan.

Shema adonay veḥoneni adonay heyey ozer li. ←

I cry out to you that you might answer, God.  
Incline your ear to me, and listen to my utterance.  
My feet are standing on the straight path,  
and in company of others I now bless THE OMNIPRESENT.

Psalms 17:6, 15; 31:15; 28:2; 30:3, 9; 31:7; 38:16; 39:13; 30:11; 122:1; 119:162; 5:3-4; 26:12

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KAVANAH. Public worship aids us by liberating personality from the confining walls of the individual ego. Imprisoned in self, we easily fall prey to morbid broodings. Interference with career, personal disappointment and disillusionment, hurts to vanity, the fear of death—all these tend so to dominate our attention that our minds move in a fixed and narrow system of ideas, which we detest but from which we see no escape. With a whole wide world of boundless opportunities about us, we permit our minds, as it were, to pace up and down within the narrow cell of their ego-prisons. But participation in public worship breaks through the prison of the ego and lets in the light and air of the world. Instead of living but one small and petty life, we now share the multitudinous life of our people. Against the wider horizons that now open to our ken, personal cares do not loom so large. Life becomes infinitely more meaningful and worthwhile when we become aware, through our participation in public worship, of a common life that transcends our individual selves.

M.M.K. (Adapted)

אָנִי קָרָאתִיךָ כִּי־תַעֲנֵנִי אֵל הַט־אֲזַנְךָ לִי שְׁמַע אִמְרָתִי:  
רַגְלֵי עֲמֹדָה בְּמִשׁוֹר בְּמִקְהֵלִים אֲבָרְךָ יְהוָה:

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שמחתי באמרים לי בית יהוה נלך / I rejoiced when people said to me: Let's go forth to the house of GOD! This is indeed how we want to feel when given the opportunity to attend synagogue and be part of a community of prayer. Yet there are so many reasons why we stay away: a lack of knowledge or skill that makes us feel incompetent, the press of other responsibilities or opportunities, the difficulty in becoming spiritually engaged through public worship, and simply falling out of the habit. Then, when it comes time "to go forth to the house of GOD," instead of rejoicing we experience anxiety. This is a season for seeking a path that will led toward rejoicing at the opportunity to worship. R.H.

KAVANAH. When we worship in public we know our life is part of a larger life, a wave of an ocean of being—the first-hand experience of that larger life which is God. M.M.K.

V

My God, you have prepared my tongue,  
and in your wisdom you have placed  
into my mouth these prayerful songs,  
surpassing every worldly craft in grace.  
And you have given me a singer's throat,  
with which I call out sweetly, never hoarse;  
since dawn of life, you have prepared my foot  
toward you alone to set its course.  
My every instinct you have purified  
like wool as white as snow,  
and never have you cast aside  
my heart to wander as sleepwalkers go.  
Be now my refuge, and my secret place,  
as yesterday, and every future day.  
Protect me now, in your abundant grace,  
my God, do not delay!

Solomon ibn Gabirol

אֱלֹהֵי וַתְּבַחַר  
 בְּפִי טוֹב מִמְסָחַר  
 בְּקָרְאִי לֹא נָחַר  
 צַעֲדֵי מִמְשָׁחַר  
 כְּמוֹ צֶמֶר צָחַר  
 לְבָבִי בִי סָחַרְחַר  
 כְּאֶתְמוֹל וּכְמָחָר  
 אֱלֹהֵי אֵל תִּאֲחָר:

לְשׁוֹנֵי כּוֹנְנֹת  
 בְּשִׁירִים שִׁשְׁמֹת  
 וְלִי גֵרוֹן תִּתֶּה  
 וְנִגְדָה כּוֹנְנֹת  
 וַיִּצְרֵי הַלְבַּנֹּת  
 וְלִכֵּן לֹא שִׁתֶּה  
 הִיָּה סִתְרֵי עֵתֶה  
 מִגְנֵי אֶתֶה

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NOTE. Solomon ibn Gabirol was an eleventh-century Sephardic poet and philosopher.

## VI

As the heart yearns for the waters of a brook,  
so yearns my heart for you, O God.  
My soul now thirsts for God, the living God.  
When might I come to see the face of God?  
My tears have been my food both day and night,  
whenever people said to me: "Where is your God?"  
These things I call to mind, and I pour out my soul,  
as I now pass amid the crowd,  
making my way with them up to the house of God,  
amid the sound of jubilation and thanksgiving,  
amid the roar of celebration.  
Why are you downcast, my soul,  
why do you sigh within me?  
Place hope in God!  
For soon I shall again give thanks  
to God, whose presence is my saving force!

Psalms 42:2-6

## VI

כָּאֵל תַּעֲרֹג עַל־אֶפְיֻקֵי־מַיִם  
 בֶּן נַפְשֵׁי תַעֲרֹג אֲלֶיךָ אֱלֹהִים:  
 צָמְאָה נַפְשֵׁי לֵאלֹהִים לְאֵל חַי  
 מִתִּי אָבֹוא וְאֶרְאֶה פְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים:  
 הִי־תֶהֱלֵי דַמְעֹתַי לְחֶם יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה  
 בְּאָמַר אֵלַי כֹּל־הַיּוֹם אֵיךְ אֲלֶהֱיָךְ:  
 אֱלֹהִים אֲזַכְּרֶה וְאֶשְׁפָּכָה עָלַי נַפְשֵׁי  
 כִּי אֶעֱבֹר בְּסֶף אַדְדָּם עַד־בֵּית אֱלֹהִים  
 בְּקוֹל־רִנָּה וְתוֹדָה הַמּוֹן חוֹגֵג:  
 מִה־תִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה נַפְשֵׁי  
 וְתִהְיֶה עָלַי  
 הוֹחֲלֵי לֵאלֹהִים כִּי עוֹד אוֹדְנֹו  
 יִשְׁוֹעוֹת פְּנֵיו:

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KAVANAH. As the pilgrim in the psalm ascends toward the Temple, surrounded by a celebrating throng, loneliness and sadness well up from within. While the pilgrim longs for a sense of serenity, meaning and security as the time for making an offering draws near, an inner struggle takes place—a struggle to feel hope, become ready to offer real thanks, and experience the possibility of redemption. “Let my thirst be quenched,” the psalmist cries, “by the waters of salvation.”

H.L/D.A.T.



## PRELUDE TO THE AMIDAH

### *Prayers I*

Don't let me fall  
Like a stone that drops on the hard ground.  
And don't let my hands become dry  
As the twigs of a tree  
When the wind beats down the last leaves.  
And when the storm rips dust from the earth  
Angry and howling,  
Don't let me become the last fly  
Trembling terrified on a windowpane.  
Don't let me fall.  
I have so much prayer,  
But as a blade of Your grass in a distant, wild field  
Loses a seed in the lap of the earth  
And dies away,  
Sow in me Your living breath,  
As You sow a seed in the earth.

Kadya Molodowsky  
(translated by Kathryn Hellerstein)



...And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and the mind of man;  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things....

William Wordsworth

כעלמך ולעלבך  
 Drawn by your  
 love, I come  
 into your house  
 ואני גרב חסדך  
 אבוא, ביתך;  
 עוֹלָם.

שוֹיֵתִי

הַיּוֹם הַרְרַת עוֹלָם.

וּדְתֵאמֹר שׁוּבוּ  
 בְּנֵי אָדָם: לִמְנוּחַי  
 יָמִינוּ כֵּן הוֹדַע וּנְבִיא  
 לִכְבֹּב חֲכָמָה: שׁוּבָה  
 יְהוָה עַד-מֹתִי וְהִנַּחֵם  
 עַל-עַבְדֶּיךָ: שִׁבְעֵנוּ  
 בַּבִּקְרָה חֲסִדְךָ וְנִגְנָה  
 וְנִשְׁמָחָה כְּלַיִמֵּינוּ  
 וַיְהִי נַעַם ה' עֲלֵינוּ

הַשִּׁיבֵנו  
 יְהוָה  
 אֱלֹהֵינוּ

הַיּוֹם הַרְרַת עוֹלָם.

AS YOU HAVE DONE OF OLD!

A sovereign on high,  
 Great power who  
 reigns, who calls to  
 each era, reveals  
 hidden things, the  
 purest of speech, who  
 discerns heaven's  
 spheres, who guides  
 constellations

and seasons, and years.

הַיּוֹם הַרְרַת עוֹלָם:

וּנְשׁוּבָה  
 הַדָּשׁ  
 יָמִינוּ  
 כְּקִדְשׁ

הַשִּׁיבֵנו  
 יְהוָה  
 אֱלֹהֵינוּ

מֶלֶךְ עֲלֵינוּ

גְּבוּרָה בְּגִבּוֹרֹת  
 קוֹרָא הַדּוֹרוֹת  
 גּוֹלִיָּה נִסְתָּרוֹת  
 אִמְרוֹתֵינוּ שְׁהוֹרוֹת  
 יוֹדַע סְפִירוֹת  
 לַתְּנַצְאוֹת מִזְרוֹת  
 לַעֲדֵי יַעַד יִמְלִיךְ  
 מֶלֶךְ עֲלֵינוּ

הַיּוֹם הַרְרַת עוֹלָם:

RETURN US, ETERNAL ONE

Before you  
 every secret is  
 uncovered, the  
 whole multitude of  
 mysteries since the  
 world began. All is  
 revealed and known  
 before you

יהוה - your watchful eye  
 reaches beyond all generations.

לְנִגְדֵי  
 תָמִיד

וּנְשׁוּבָה  
 הַדָּשׁ  
 יָמִינוּ  
 כְּקִדְשׁ

RETURN US, ETERNAL ONE

הַיּוֹם הַרְרַת עוֹלָם  
 Today the world is born!

*The following Introduction to the Amidah is recited when chanting part or all of the Amidah aloud. If both a Shaḥarit and Musaf Amidah will be chanted aloud, this introduction is used for Musaf.*

*The silent Amidah begins on the next page.*

## OHILAH LA'EL / INTRODUCTION TO THE AMIDAH

I yearn for God,  
I seek God's face,  
I ask of God the power of expression, so that  
I might sing, amid my people, of God's power.  
I express my joy in God's creative acts.  
I know that thoughts are human, but that poetry belongs to  
God.  
I ask of you, my sovereign, open my lips—then shall  
I tell your glory!  
May my words of prayer, and my heart's meditation  
be seen favorably, PRECIOUS ONE, my rock, my champion.

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COMMENTARY. Our search for a Jewish way in which to speak about life as an ongoing religious quest inevitably brings us back to the psalmist, and especially to those passages where the author of the Psalms cries out to “seek My face,” “to behold the beauty of God,” or “to dwell in God's courts.” We shudder, of course, at such a fully anthropomorphic concept of God. If God has a face, we tend to believe, surely it is a projection of the human face. It is we who take the mysterious and faceless One of the universe and make it into a humanlike deity. But I also do not believe the matter is quite that simple. *Our need to create God, I believe, comes out of the deepest recesses of ourselves, the place within us that also knows, in a way we cannot fully articulate, that God created us.* We are but an effulgence of the One, a ray of that light called Y-H-W-H. From deep within us, there wells up a need to testify to that truth, to construct a reality that will remind us of our hidden source. We are created in the image of God, if you will, and we are obliged to return the favor. *So the face is our gift to God. But the light that shines forth from that face and radiates with love—that surely is God's gift to us.*

A.G. (Adapted)

The following Introduction to the Amidah is recited when chanting part or all of the Amidah aloud. If both a Shaḥarit and Musaf Amidah will be chanted aloud, this introduction is used for Musaf.

The silent Amidah begins on the next page.

## אוֹחִילָה לְאֵל

אוֹחִילָה לְאֵל  
אֶחְלָה פָּנַי  
אֲשַׁאֲלָה מִמֶּנּוּ מַעֲנֵה לְשׁוֹן:  
אֲשֶׁר בִּקְהַל עַם אֲשִׁירָה עֲזוֹ  
אֲבִיעֵה רִנָּנוֹת בְּעַד מִפְעָלָיו:  
לְאָדָם מַעֲרִכֵי־לֵב וּמִיְהוּה מַעֲנֵה לְשׁוֹן:  
אֲדַנִּי שְׁפַתִּי תִפְתַּח וּפִי יִגִּיד תְּהִלָּתְךָ:  
יְהִי לְרִצּוֹן אֲמַר־יִפִּי וְהִגִּיוֹן לְבִי לְפָנֶיךָ יְהוּה צוּרִי וְגֹאֲלִי:

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KAVANAH. In the Hebrew original, all but two lines of this prayer commence with the letter *aleph*—the marker in future-tense verbs of the first-person subject, “I.” Even when the speaker of the Hebrew text is not referring directly to the self, the self persists, so to speak, as an echo—in a sense, as the necessary precondition of all prayer. Here, the worshipper struggles to make his or her private prayer *public*, knowing that even this public utterance will be stamped with the indelible marks of the self. But only when the prayer achieves true mutuality, only when it is completed and received by the One addressed, whose name is likewise *Aleph*, can the worshipper truly say: “I am.” J.R.

תהלתך...אדני / I ask of you...glory! (Psalms 51:17).  
יהיו לרצון...וגאלי / May...champion (Psalms 19:15).

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 toward 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 easily. 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 over again; and this is always painful. It means saying: I am sorry. It means recognizing that we have the ability to change.

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, O God, and bring us back toward you.  
Revive our lives, as at the beginning.

And turn us toward each other, God,  
for in isolation there is no life.

Jack Riemer (Adapted)

## *Prayers II*

I still don't know whom,  
I still don't know why I ask.  
A prayer lies bound in me  
And implores a god,  
And implores a name.

I pray  
In the field  
In the noise of the street,  
Together with the wind when, it runs before my lips,  
A prayer lies bound in me,  
And implores a god,  
And implores a name.

איך ווייס נאָך ניט צו וועמען,  
איך ווייס נאָך ניט פאַרוואָס איך בעט,  
אַ תפילה ליגט באַ מיד געבונדן,  
און בעט זיך צו אַ נאָט  
און בעט זיך צו אַ נאָמען.  
איך בעט  
אין פעלד,  
אין רעש פון נאָט,  
מיט ווינט צוזאמען, ווען ער לויפט מיר פאר  
אַ תפילה לינט באַ מיד געבונדן,  
און בעט זיך צו אַ נאָט  
און בעט זיך צו אַ נאָמען.

Kadya Molodowsky (Translated by Kathryn Hellerstein)

# Supplementary Readings for both Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur

Themes:

- Forgiveness

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matching left-right pages when  
viewing in two page display



Bless, O my soul, THE OMNIPRESENT ONE,  
and all my inner self, God's holy name!  
Bless, O my soul, THE FOUNT OF LIFE,  
do not forget the gifts God has bestowed  
—the one who pardons all your wrongs,  
who heals all your afflictions,  
who restores your life from peril of destruction,  
who adorns you with a crown of love and mercy,  
who fills you with the beauty of God's goodness,  
so that, like the phoenix, you are renewed,  
your youth restored.

THE ALMIGHTY ONE acts righteously,  
brings justice to all who are oppressed.  
God made known to Moses the ways of God,  
to all children of Israel, divine deeds.  
Merciful and gracious is THE ANCIENT ONE,  
slow to grow angry, great in lovingkindness.  
God does not quarrel with us long,  
nor bear a grudge forever.  
God does not deal with us according to our wrongs,  
and not according to our sins does God bestow our lot.  
But rather, as high as heaven is above the earth,  
so does God's love abound for those in awe.  
As far as East from West has God removed from us  
the stigma of our wrongs.  
Like the love of parent for a child, so is the love  
of THE ABUNDANT ONE for those in awe of God.  
For God knows our inner nature,  
remembering that we are made of dust.  
The human being's days are like the chaff,  
like flowers of the field—one blossoms for a time,  
but when the fury of the wind comes over us,  
the very ground disowns us. ↪

בְּרַכֵּי נַפְשֵׁי אֶת־יְהוָה וְכָל־קִרְבֵי אֶת־שֵׁם קְדוֹשׁוֹ:  
 בְּרַכֵּי נַפְשֵׁי אֶת־יְהוָה וְאֶל־תִּשְׁכַּחֵי כָּל־גְּמוּלוֹיו:  
 הַסֵּלַח לְכָל־עֲוֹנוֹכֵי הָרַפָּא לְכָל־תַּחֲלוּאֵיכִי:  
 הַגּוֹאֵל מִשַּׁחַת חַיִּיכִי הַמְעַטְרֵכִי חֶסֶד וְרַחֲמִים:  
 הַמְשַׁבֵּיעַ בְּטוֹב עֲדִיךָ תַתְּחַדֵּשׁ כַּנֶּשֶׁר נַעוּרַיִכִי:  
 עֲשֵׂה צְדָקוֹת יְהוָה וּמִשְׁפָּטִים לְכָל־עֲשׂוּקִים:  
 יוֹדִיעַ דְּרָכָיו לְמֹשֶׁה לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲלִילוֹתָיו:  
 רַחֲמִים וַחֲנוּן יְהוָה אֲרַךְ אַפָּיִם וְרַב־חֶסֶד:  
 לֹא־לִנְצַח יָרִיב וְלֹא לַעֲוֹלָם יִטּוֹר:  
 לֹא כַחֲטָאֵינוּ עָשָׂה לָנוּ וְלֹא כַעֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ גָּמַל עָלֵינוּ:  
 כִּי כַגְּבֹהַ שָׁמַיִם עַל הָאָרֶץ גָּבַר חֶסְדּוֹ עַל־יִרְאָיו:  
 כַּרְחֹק מִזֶּרֶח מִמַּעַרְב הִרְחִיק מִמֶּנּוּ אֶת־פִּשְׁעֵינוּ:  
 כַּרְחִם אָב עַל־בָּנִים רַחֵם יְהוָה עַל־יִרְאָיו:  
 כִּי־הוּא יָדַע יִצְרָנוּ וְכוֹר כִּי־עָפָר אָנָּחֵנוּ:  
 אָנוּשׁ כְּחֹצֵיר יָמָיו כְּצִיץ הַשָּׂדֶה בֵּן יָצִיץ:  
 כִּי רוּחַ עֲבָרָה־בוּ וְאֵינָנוּ וְלֹא־יִפְיָרְנוּ עוֹד מִקוֹמוֹ: ←

Barehi nafshi et adonay vehol keravay et shem kodsho.

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COMMENTARY. This psalm begins with praise of God for salvation that the author has experienced. While reflecting on God's greatness, the psalmist becomes aware of human smallness and frailty, then comes to the recognition that divine love allows us to transcend our frailty. God's love is an invitation to partake in eternity. The psalmist accepts the invitation and concludes as he began, but with the meaning of the praise transformed.

J.A.S.

Yet the kindness of THE EVERLASTING ONE  
toward those in awe of God  
endures from one eternity to another,  
God's righteousness persists throughout all generations,  
for those who keep God's covenant,  
those who remember and enact what God has taught.  
THE OMNIPRESENT ONE in heaven has prepared a seat of rule,  
God's sovereignty has come to reign in every place.  
Bless THE OMNIPRESENT, you who serve and struggle  
on behalf of God, you who do God's will,  
you who listen to God's word as it is voiced.  
Bless THE OMNIPRESENT, all you multitudes of heaven,  
you who minister to God, and enact God's will.  
Let all God's creatures bless THE OMNIPRESENT,  
in every place, affirm God's rule.  
Bless, O my soul, THE OMNIPRESENT ONE!

Psalm 103



Find words in you to offer  
and return to THE COMPASSIONATE.

וְחָסַד יְהוָה מֵעוֹלָם וְעַד-עוֹלָם עַל-יִרְאָיו וְצַדִּיקָתוֹ לְבָנֵי בָנִים  
לְשִׁמְרֵי בְרִיתוֹ וּלְזִכְרֵי פְקֻדָּיו לַעֲשׂוֹתָם:  
יְהוָה בִּשְׁמַיִם הִכִּין כְּסֵאוֹ וּמַלְכוּתוֹ בְּכֹל מְשָׁלָה:  
בָּרְכוּ יְהוָה מִלְּאֲכָיו גִּבְרֵי כַח עֲשֵׂי דְבָרוֹ  
לְשִׁמְעַ בְּקוֹל דְּבָרוֹ:  
בָּרְכוּ יְהוָה כָּל-צְבָאָיו מְשַׁרְתָּיו עֲשֵׂי רְצוֹנוֹ:  
בָּרְכוּ יְהוָה כָּל-מַעֲשָׂיו בְּכָל-מְקוֹמוֹת מְמַשְׁלָתוֹ  
בָּרְכֵי נַפְשֵׁי אֶת-יְהוָה:



קחו עמכם דברים ושובו אל-יהוה:

Kehu imahem devarim veshuvu el adonay.

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קחו...יהוה / Find...COMPASSIONATE (Hosea 14:3).

All-merciful and gracious God:

We have done wrong before you—  
please be kind to us!

Atonement's fount and source,  
Bold searcher of the heart,  
Going deep into all things,  
Deliberate and just are your words.

We have done wrong before you—  
please be kind to us!

How lovely are your wonders,  
Wonderful, your deeds!  
Zealous in memory of your covenant,  
How carefully you search the inner self!

We have done wrong before you—  
please be kind to us.

The Good One who bestows all good,  
You know all hidden things,  
Conquering our wrongful acts.  
Law and justice are your garb.

We have done wrong before you—  
please be kind to us. ↩

רַחֲמֵי יְחַנּוּן

חָטְאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ רַחֲמֵי עָלֵינוּ:

אֲדוֹן הַסְּלִיחוֹת

בּוֹחֵן לְכַבוֹת

גּוֹלֶה עֲמוּקוֹת

דּוֹבֵר צְדָקוֹת

חָטְאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ רַחֲמֵי עָלֵינוּ:

הַדּוֹר בְּנַפְלְאוֹת

וְרַב הַעֲלִילוֹת

זוֹכֵר בְּרִית אָבוֹת

חֹקֵר כְּלִיּוֹת

חָטְאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ רַחֲמֵי עָלֵינוּ:

טוֹב וּמְטִיב לְבְרִיּוֹת

יוֹדֵעַ כָּל-נִסְתָּרוֹת

כּוֹבֵשׁ עֲוֹנוֹת

לוֹבֵשׁ צְדָקוֹת

חָטְאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ רַחֲמֵי עָלֵינוּ: ←

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COMMENTARY. Saying we have done wrong is not only an acknowledgment of failure. It also contains the recognition that we know what is right. Living in a community concerned with doing good, being good, and trying to do better, we each internalize a moral compass that can guide us if we are prepared to listen for its still, small voice. The still, small voice inside us connects us to the transcendent reality that is far beyond us. In addressing the Transcendent One, we honor and validate our moral compass. We have done wrong. We are prepared to be directed by our compass toward atonement.

D.A.T.

Majestic, filled with good,  
Nothing but awesome is your praise,  
So ready to forgive are you,  
One who responds in time of trial.

We have done wrong before you—  
please be kind to us!

Power of all saving deeds,  
Surveying all that is to be,  
Calling to generations yet to come.  
Roaming the heaven's cloud-filled heights,  
Sure to hearken to all prayers,  
Thorough and flawless your knowledge of all!

We have done wrong before you—  
please be kind to us!

מְלֵא זְכוּת  
נִזְרָא תְהִלֹּת  
סוּלַח עֲוֹנוֹת  
עוֹנָה בְצָרוֹת

חָטְאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ יְיָ רַחֵם עָלֵינוּ:

פוֹעֵל יְשׁוּעוֹת  
צוֹפֵה עֲתִידוֹת  
קוֹרָא הַדּוֹרוֹת  
רוֹכֵב עֲרְבוֹת  
שׂוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלוֹת  
תְּמִים דְּעוֹת.

חָטְאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ יְיָ רַחֵם עָלֵינוּ:



Gentle God, you are reluctant to grow angry,  
rightly are you called a God of mercy.  
You have shown the path of *teshuvah*,  
of return to you.

May you remember the abundance  
of your mercy and your lovingkindness,  
today and every day,  
for the seed of those who love you.

May you turn in mercy toward us,  
for you hold all the mercy in the world.  
May we rush to seek your presence with our prayers,  
according to what you made known of old.

Return to us, leaving behind your anger,  
as it is written in your Torah,  
and may we find refuge in your sheltering presence,  
as on the day when THE ETERNAL ONE descended in a cloud.

May you pass over our transgressions,  
and erase our guilt, as on the day  
when your Presence became manifest  
to Moses in the second giving  
of the Tablets of your Law.

May you hear our cry,  
and hearken to our utterance of prayer,  
as, on that day, you called the name of THE ETERNAL,  
as it is told:

“THE OMNIPRESENT passed before him and declared...”

אל אָרְךָ אַפִּים אָתָּה וּבַעַל הַרְחָמִים נִקְרָאתָ וְדָרְךָ תְּשׁוּבָה הוֹרִיתָ:  
גְּדַלְתָּ רַחֲמֶיךָ וַחֲסִדֶיךָ תִּזְכֹּר הַיּוֹם וּבְכָל-יּוֹם לְזָרַע יִדְיָיִךְ: תִּפְּן  
אֵלֵינוּ בְּרַחֲמִים כִּי אַתָּה הוּא בַּעַל הַרְחָמִים:

בְּתַחֲנוּן וּבְתַפִּלָּה פָּנִיךָ נִקְדָּם כְּהוֹדְעַת לְעֵנוּ מִקְדָּם: מִחְרוֹן אַפְךָ  
שׁוֹב כָּמוֹ בְּתוֹרַתְךָ כְּתוֹב וּבְצִל כְּנַפְיֶךָ נַחֲסָה וְנִתְלוֹנָן כְּיוֹם וַיֵּרֶד  
יְהוָה בְּעָנָן: תִּעְבֹּר עַל פְּשַׁע וְתִמְחָקָה אִשָּׁם כְּיוֹם וַיִּתְיַצֵּב עִמּוֹ שָׁם  
תִּאֲזִין שׁוֹעֲתָנוּ וְתִקְשָׁב לָנוּ מֵאֲמָר כְּיוֹם וַיִּקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה: וְשָׁם  
נֵאמַר: וַיַּעֲבֹר יְהוָה עַל-פָּנָיו וַיִּקְרָא ←

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יהוה...נחסה/and may...presence. Based on Psalms 36:8.

וַיֵּרֶד יְהוָה בְּעָנָן /THE ETERNAL ONE descended in a cloud. This refers to the events of Exodus 34: 1-7, when God gave Moses the Ten Commandments for a second time, and proclaimed the Thirteen Attributes of Divine Mercy. These lines are a principal motif throughout the High Holiday services because they stress the slowness of God to anger, the willingness of THE ETERNAL ONE to extend mercy to the thousandth generation of those who love the divine and follow in God's ways. Occurring as they do not long after the sin of the Golden Calf (Exodus 32), these verses thus stress, in the High Holiday context, God's readiness to forgive even a grievous wrongdoing if one's repentance is genuine. The rabbinic excerpting pointedly omitted the second half of Exodus 34:7, which, like Exodus 20:5, had been a more admonitory warning of punishment "up to the third and fourth generation" for those who sin (changing venakkeh lo' yenakkeh, "but will not hold innocent," to venakkeh, "and making clean"), thus radically revising the biblical concept of retributive justice to a far more unconditional emphasis on God's unlimited power to forgive. J.R.

וַיַּעֲבֹר...ויקרא /THE OMINIPRESENT...declared (Exodus 34:6).

*We rise.*

ADONAY ADONAY, God loving and gracious,  
patient, and abundant in kindness and truth,  
keeping kindness for a thousand ages,  
forgiving sin and rebellion and transgression,  
making pure!

May you forgive our sins and our wrongdoing,  
may you claim us as your own!

THE FOUNT OF LIFE!

I am the One before the human being goes astray.

THE FOUNT OF MERCY!

I am the One after the human being goes astray,  
God!

My quality of mercy is extended to all nations.  
Merciful!

To one who merits it.  
And gracious!

Even toward one who does not merit it.  
Slow to grow angry!

Delaying anger even toward the wicked, who can change.  
Abundant in my love!

To those in need of love.  
And truth!

To reward the ones who do My will.  
Keeping love until the thousandth generation!

When a person does good deeds.  
Forgiving sin!

Even for one who acts deliberately.  
And wrongdoing!

Even for those rebelling, and provoking God.  
And transgression!

For the one who acts merely by oversight.  
Making clean!

For those who turn toward God. ↪

We rise.

יהוה יהוה אל רחום וחנון ארך אפים ורב־חסד ואמת נצר חסד  
לאֱלֹפִים נשא עון ופָּשַׁע וְחַטָּאָה וְנִקְיָה:

וְסִלַּחַת לַעֲוֹנֵינוּ וְלִחַטָּאתֵנוּ וְנַחֲלָתָנוּ:

אני הוא קדם שייחטא האדם	יהוה
אני הוא לאַחר שייחטא האדם	יהוה
מדת הרחמים גם לגוים	אל
למי שיש לו זכות	רחום
למי שאין לו זכות	וְחַנוּן
מאריך אף לרשעים אולי ישובו	אָרֶךְ אַפַּיִם
לנצרכי חסד	וְרַב חֶסֶד
לשלים שכר לעושי רצונו	וְאֵמֶת
בשָׂאָד עוֹשֶׂה טוֹב	נֹצֵר חֶסֶד לְאֱלֹפִים
לעושה בְּזֵדוֹן	נִשָּׂא עוֹן
המורדים להכעיס	וְפָשַׁע
העושה בשגגה	וְחַטָּאָה
לשבים ←	וְנִקְיָה

Adonay adonay el rahum veḥanun ereḥ apayim verav hesed  
ve'emet notzer hesed la'alafim nosev avon vafesha veḥata'ah  
venakey. ←

NOTE. This prayer was first placed in this location by Jules Harlow in the 1972 Rabbinical Assembly *mahzor*. The Hebrew, by Mosheh Hakohen Niral of the 18th century, uses rabbinic sources, including Talmud Rosh Hashanah 17b. The prayer is a commentary on the thirteen attributes of God (Exodus 34:6-7) that are a major refrain throughout the liturgy of the Days of Awe. The commentary explores the connection between the verses, the process of *teshuvah* and the nature of God. D.A.T.

יהוה...ונחלתנו / ADONAY...own (Exodus 34:6-7, 9).

Forgive us, our creator, for we have done wrong,  
grant pardon to us, sovereign, for we have transgressed  
for you, ETERNAL ONE, are good and merciful,  
abundant in your steadfast love  
to all who call on you!

*We are seated.*



Just like the lump of clay  
held in the sculptor's hands:  
at will, the sculptor stretches it,  
at will, the sculptor makes it small.  
And so are we in your hands,  
and so let love preserve;  
look to your covenant,  
and do not let your anger serve.

Just like the piece of stone  
held in the mason's hands:  
at will, the mason picks it up,  
at will, the mason cuts.  
And so are we in your hands,  
you give life and take it away;  
look to your covenant,  
and do not let your anger sway.

Just like the axe's blade  
held in the blacksmith's hands:  
at will, it is plunged into the fire,  
at will, it is taken out.  
And so are we in your hands;  
you feed the needy and the poor,  
look to your covenant,  
and let your anger rule no more. ↪

סֵלַח לָנוּ אֲבִינוּ כִּי חֲטָאנוּ מְחַל לָנוּ מִלְפָּנוּ כִּי פָשַׁעְנוּ: כִּי־אַתָּה  
אֲדֹנָי טוֹב וְסֵלַח וְרַב־חֶסֶד לְכָל־קוֹרְאֶיךָ:

*We are seated.*



כִּי הִנֵּה כַחֲמֵר בְּיַד הַיּוֹצֵר בְּרִצּוֹתוֹ מְרַחֵב וּבְרִצּוֹתוֹ מְקַצֵּר: בֵּן  
אֲנַחְנוּ בְּיַדְךָ חֶסֶד נּוֹצֵר לְבָרִית הַיֵּט וְאֵל תִּפְּן לַיֵּצֵר:

כִּי הִנֵּה כְּאֶבֶן בְּיַד הַמְּסִתֵּת בְּרִצּוֹתוֹ אוֹחוֹ וּבְרִצּוֹתוֹ מְכַתֵּת: בֵּן  
אֲנַחְנוּ בְּיַדְךָ מְחִיָּה וּמְמוֹת לְבָרִית הַיֵּט וְאֵל תִּפְּן לַיֵּצֵר:

כִּי הִנֵּה כַגְּרֹזֶן בְּיַד הַחֲרֹשׁ בְּרִצּוֹתוֹ דִּבֵּק לְאוֹר וּבְרִצּוֹתוֹ פָּרַשׁ: בֵּן  
אֲנַחְנוּ בְּיַדְךָ תּוֹמֵךְ עֲנֵי וְרֹשׁ לְבָרִית הַיֵּט וְאֵל תִּפְּן לַיֵּצֵר: ←

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יָדָךְ לְכָל־קוֹרְאֶיךָ / for...you! (Psalms 86:5).

KAVANAH. The image of God as potter and humans as unmolded clay is problematic for some of us. We humans don't want to think of ourselves as so unformed, so susceptible to manipulation by an inscrutable and distant God. But if we consider this prayer as a metaphor for partnership, we note that any artisan, no matter how skilled, cannot produce a thing of beauty unless the raw material is good. If we think of God as helping us to make our lives a thing of beauty, we may joyfully offer the raw material that is ourselves to God.

L.G.B.

COMMENTARY. A Hebrew pun in this hymn connects *yotzer*/creator with *yetzer*/anger. Powerful forces in creative hands can bring out beauty and meaning. In anger these hands can deform or crush. We pray that the powerful connection/covenant linking us to the divine source will overpower our potential for evil and bring to light our ultimate worth.

Adina Abramowitz

DERASH. Like the raw materials of nature, we each possess potential and resistance to developing that potential. This poem invokes the power that will shape our potential for the greatest beauty, service, and goodness. We ask that the resistance to that unfolding be overcome through loving and creative relationship.

S.P.W.

Just like the wheel of the ship  
held in the pilot's hands:  
at will, the pilot turns it in,  
at will, the pilot turns it out.  
And so are we in your hands,  
O, God who blesses and forgives;  
look to your covenant,  
and in your mercy let us live.

Just like the glass  
held in the glassmaker's hands:  
at will, it is given form,  
at will, it is melted down.  
And so are we in your hands;  
you make wrongdoing pass away,  
look to your covenant,  
and don't let anger have its way.

Just like the curtain's cloth  
held in the embroiderer's hands:  
at will, it is made to lie flat,  
at will, it is gathered up.  
And so are we in your hands,  
O, God of justice and of zeal;  
look to your covenant,  
and let your anger be concealed.

Just like the silver  
held in the smelter's hands:  
at will, it is blended with a metal,  
at will, it is purified.  
And so are we in your hands,  
you who give healing to all ills;  
look to your covenant,  
and let not anger shape your will.

כִּי הִנֵּה כְּהֶגֶה בְּיַד הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּרָצוֹתוֹ אוֹחֵז וּבְרָצוֹתוֹ שֶׁלַח: כֵּן אֲנַחְנוּ  
בְּיָדָךְ אֵל טוֹב וְסֵלַח לְבָרִית הַבֵּט וְאֵל תִּפְּן לִיֶּצֶר:

כִּי הִנֵּה כְּזִכּוּכִית בְּיַד הַמְּזַיֵּג בְּרָצוֹתוֹ חוֹגֵג וּבְרָצוֹתוֹ מְמוֹגֵג: כֵּן  
אֲנַחְנוּ בְּיָדָךְ מַעֲבִיר זְדוֹן וְשֹׁגֵג לְבָרִית הַבֵּט וְאֵל תִּפְּן לִיֶּצֶר:

כִּי הִנֵּה כְּרִיעָה בְּיַד הָרוֹקֵם בְּרָצוֹתוֹ מִיֵּשֶׁר וּבְרָצוֹתוֹ מְעַקֵּם: כֵּן  
אֲנַחְנוּ בְּיָדָךְ אֵל קָנָא וְנוֹקֵם לְבָרִית הַבֵּט וְאֵל תִּפְּן לִיֶּצֶר:

כִּי הִנֵּה כְּכֶסֶף בְּיַד הַצּוֹרֵף בְּרָצוֹתוֹ מְסַגֵּס וּבְרָצוֹתוֹ מְצַרֵּף: כֵּן  
אֲנַחְנוּ בְּיָדָךְ מְמַצִּיא לְמִזוֹר תִּרְף לְבָרִית הַבֵּט וְאֵל תִּפְּן לִיֶּצֶר:

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COMMENTARY. In hundreds of ways we receive the message that we are independent individuals, that private thought and personal conscience can make us whatever we want to be. But thought and conscience are profoundly shaped by the limits and opportunities contained in the language we speak, the historical circumstances in which we live and the communities of which we are a part. So vast are the forces that shape us! We are indeed molded like clay, shaped like molten metal, chipped at like stone. However, we do have the ability to choose communities, learn languages and seek meaning. The challenge is to become aware of what is molding us so that we can place ourselves where we can be shaped by forces of transcendence and goodness. D.A.T.

COMMENTARY. This poem suggests, in a series of beautiful images, that our destiny is not ultimately shaped by our own efforts, but by a Power that often supports us and sometimes overwhelms us. So many things remain beyond our control; so many circumstances, unplanned and unanticipated, have brought us to this time, this place, this season. Before this reality, our posture is one of humility. R.H.



Remember, for our sake,  
the ancestral covenant, as you have promised:

“And I shall remember my covenant with Jacob,  
and, as well, my covenant with Isaac,  
and, as well, my covenant with Abraham;  
I shall remember them, and shall recall  
the Land I promised them.”

Leviticus 26:42

Remember, for our sake,  
the covenant of former times, as you have promised:

“And I shall remember, for their sake,  
the covenant of former times,  
whereby I brought them from the land of Egypt,  
in the sight of all the nations,  
to become their God,  
I am THE LAWGIVER!”

Leviticus 26:45

Have mercy on us, and do not destroy us, as it is written:

“For THE FOUNT OF MERCY is a God compassionate,  
who shall not let you wither, and shall not destroy you,  
nor shall God forget the covenant made with your ancestors,  
the one promised by oath to them.”

Deuteronomy 4:31

Open up our hearts to love and to revere your name,  
as it is written:

“THE BOUNTIFUL, your God, shall circumcise your hearts,  
and your children’s hearts,  
to love THE FOUNT OF LIFE, your God,  
with all your heart, with all your soul,  
that you might live.” ↩

Deuteronomy 30:6

זָכַרְלָנוּ בְרִית אָבוֹת כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתָּ:  
וְזָכַרְתִּי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי יַעֲקֹב וְאֶף אֶת־בְּרִיתִי יִצְחָק וְאֶף אֶת־בְּרִיתִי  
אֲבָרָהֶם אֲזַכֵּר וְהָאָרֶץ אֲזַכֵּר:

זָכַרְלָנוּ בְרִית רַאשׁוֹנִים כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתָּ:  
וְזָכַרְתִּי לָהֶם בְּרִית רַאשׁוֹנִים אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי־אֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם  
לְעֵינֵי הַגּוֹיִם לְהִיּוֹת לָהֶם לְאֱלֹהִים אֲנִי יְהוָה:

רַחֵם עָלֵינוּ וְאֵל תִּשְׁחִיתֵנוּ כְּמָה שֶׁכָּתוּב:  
כִּי אֵל רַחוּם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא יִרְפֶּךָ וְלֹא יִשְׁחִיתֶךָ וְלֹא יִשְׁכַּח אֶת־  
בְּרִית אֲבֹתֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לָהֶם:

מִזֶּה אֶת־לִבְכֵּנוּ לְאַהֲבָה אֶת שְׁמֶךָ כְּמָה שֶׁכָּתוּב:  
וּמֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת־לִבְּךָ וְאֶת־לִבְּךָ זִרְעֶךָ לְאַהֲבָה אֶת־יְהוָה  
אֱלֹהֶיךָ כְּכֹל־לִבְּךָ וּכְכֹל־נַפְשְׁךָ לְמַעַן חַיֶּיךָ: ←

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COMMENTARY. How can we be in a covenant with the Creator of all? How do we dare ask to be remembered with compassion? Where in our hearts is the capacity to reach out beyond the known, the limited, the failures of our lives to imagine something different? Our ancestors have bequeathed it all to us—the covenant, the memory, the compassion and the imagination. Do we dare accept our inheritance? S.P.W.

COMMENTARY. ומל יהוה אלהיך את לבבך /your God shall circumcise your hearts. Jewish tradition links circumcision to covenantal commitment and to purification. The heart, which the rabbis understood to be the seat of the intellect, is not physically circumcised but, through divine will, purified and rededicated to covenantal service. The act of circumcision creates a wound and makes the one who is circumcised vulnerable. The poet here freely offers our vulnerability, our openness to transformation, as part of our Yom Kippur prayer for purification. D.A.T.

Be present for us when we call on you, as it is written:

“And you shall seek out THE BELOVED ONE, your God,  
from where you are, and you shall find God,  
provided that you search for God  
with all your heart and all your soul.”

Deuteronomy 4:29

Blot out our sins upon this day, and purify us, as it is written:

“For on this day, atonement shall be made for you,  
to make you clean from all your wrongdoings.  
Before THE FOUNT OF MERCY, you shall all be clean.”

Leviticus 16:30



Pour out your heart like water  
in the presence of THE LIVING GOD.

Lamentations 2:19



Return us, PRECIOUS ONE, let us return!  
Renew our days, as you have done of old!

Lamentations 5:21

הַמְצֵא לָנוּ בְּבִקְשֵׁתָנוּ כְּמָה שְׂכָתוּב:  
וּבְקִשְׁתֶּם מִשָּׁם אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ וּמְצֵאתָ כִּי תִדְרֹשְׁנוּ בְּכָל־לְבָבְךָ  
וּבְכָל־נַפְשְׁךָ:

כִּפּוּר חֲטָאֵינוּ בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה וְטַהֲרָנוּ כְּמָה שְׂכָתוּב:  
כִּי־בַיּוֹם הַזֶּה יִכְפּוּר עֲלֵיכֶם לְטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם מִכָּל חֲטָאתֵיכֶם לְפָנַי יְהוָה  
תְּטַהֲרוּ:



שִׁפְחֵי כַמַּיִם לִבְךָ נִכַח פְּנֵי אֲדֹנָי:

Shifhi hamayim libeh nohah peney adonay.



הַשְׁכֵּנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ וְנִשְׁוּבָה חֲדָשׁ יַמִּינוּ בְּקֶדֶם:

Hashivenu adonay eleha venashuvah hadesh yameynu kekedem.

Answer us, our **A**ncient source,  
give answer to our call!  
Answer us, **B**lessed creator of us all,  
give answer to our call!  
Answer us, **G**reat fount of our redemption,  
please give answer to our call!  
Answer us, **D**ear one who seeks our good,  
give answer to our call!  
Answer us, **H**eavenly splendor,  
please give answer to our call!  
Answer us, **W**ith your eternal consolation,  
please give answer to our call!  
Answer us, our **Z**ealous, righteous one,  
give answer to our call!  
Answer us, our **H**oly fount of life,  
give answer to our call!  
Answer us, **T**ruе-sighted one,  
give answer to our call!  
Answer us, **Y**ou who dwell in heaven's heights,  
give answer to our call!  
Answer us, so **C**onsummate in strength,  
give answer to our call!  
Answer us, you who **L**ove the good,  
give answer to our call!  
Answer us, our **M**ightiest of sovereigns,  
give answer to our call! ↵

עֲנֵנוּ אֲבֵינוּ עֲנֵנוּ:  
 עֲנֵנוּ בּוֹרְאֵנוּ עֲנֵנוּ:  
 עֲנֵנוּ גּוֹאֲלֵנוּ עֲנֵנוּ:  
 עֲנֵנוּ דּוֹרְשָׁנוּ עֲנֵנוּ:  
 עֲנֵנוּ הוֹד וְהִדְר עֲנֵנוּ:  
 עֲנֵנוּ וְחִיק בְּנִחְמוֹת עֲנֵנוּ:  
 עֲנֵנוּ אֶף וְיִשָּׁר עֲנֵנוּ:  
 עֲנֵנוּ חַי וְקַיִם עֲנֵנוּ:  
 עֲנֵנוּ טָהוֹר עֵינַיִם עֲנֵנוּ:  
 עֲנֵנוּ יוֹשֵׁב שָׁמַיִם עֲנֵנוּ:  
 עֲנֵנוּ כְּבִיר כֹּחַ עֲנֵנוּ:  
 עֲנֵנוּ לֹא אֵל חַפְץ בְּרָשָׁע עֲנֵנוּ:  
 עֲנֵנוּ מְלַךְ מַלְכֵי הַמַּלְכִּים עֲנֵנוּ: ←

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COMMENTARY. The acrostic, which follows the order of the Hebrew alphabet, begs for an affirming response from God. Our lives are implicitly a call. We want answers in the form of relationships that connect us to others through caring. We want answers that promise economic stability and comfort. We want answers that give us a sense of security and understanding. Our very lives bespeak the plaintive calling for these things we seek. When we call to God, we are giving voice to our deepest needs and aspirations. In this community, let us find ways to sustain each other, protect each other, provide meaning and insight for each other. Only then can God's answer to our calling be present here.

D.A.T.

Answer us, our **Noble** and exalted one,  
give answer to our call!  
Answer us, **Supporter** of the falling,  
please give answer to our call!  
Answer us, **O** helper of the needy,  
please give answer to our call!  
Answer us, our **Powerful** redeemer,  
please give answer to our call!  
Answer us, **Tzadik**—our just one who does justice—  
please give answer to our call!  
Answer us, **Consoler** near at hand,  
give answer to our call!  
Answer us, **Revered**, exalted one,  
give answer to our call!  
Answer us, our **Sheltering** presence in the heavens,  
please give answer to our call!  
Answer us, **True** mainstay of the righteous,  
please give answer to our call!

The Merciful, who answers the afflicted,  
answer us!  
The Merciful, who answers the depressed of spirit,  
answer us!  
The Merciful, who answers the heartbroken,  
answer us!  
The Merciful, give answer to our call!  
Merciful One, be sparing,  
Merciful One, release us,  
Merciful One, have mercy on us!  
Now and soon and in our time!

עֲנֵנוּ גּוֹרָא וְנִשְׁגָּב עֲנֵנוּ:  
עֲנֵנוּ סוּמְךָ נֹפְלִים עֲנֵנוּ:  
עֲנֵנוּ עוֹזֵר דְּלִים עֲנֵנוּ:  
עֲנֵנוּ פּוֹדֵה וּמַצִּיל עֲנֵנוּ:  
עֲנֵנוּ צַדִּיק וּמַצְדִּיק עֲנֵנוּ:  
עֲנֵנוּ קָרוֹב לְקוֹרְאָיו עֲנֵנוּ:  
עֲנֵנוּ רֵם וְנִשְׂא עֲנֵנוּ:  
עֲנֵנוּ שׁוֹכֵן שְׁחָקִים עֲנֵנוּ:  
עֲנֵנוּ תוֹמֵךְ תְּמִימִים עֲנֵנוּ:

רַחֲמָנָא דְעָנִי לְעָנִי עֲנֵנָא: רַחֲמָנָא דְעָנִי לְמַפְיְכִי רוּחָא עֲנֵנָא:  
רַחֲמָנָא דְעָנִי לְתַבִּירִי לְבָא עֲנֵנָא: רַחֲמָנָא עֲנֵנָא: רַחֲמָנָא חוּס:  
רַחֲמָנָא פְּרוּק: רַחֲמָנָא שְׂזִיב: רַחֲמָנָא עַלן הַשְׁתָּא בְּעַגְלָא וּבְזִמְן  
קָרִיב:



This is my prayer to you, my gentle God—  
let me not stray from my life's course,  
let not my spirit fall into decay,  
and may it never cease to thirst for you,  
and for the energizing dew  
that you have sprinkled on it  
ever since my life was new.

And let my heart be open to  
the downtrodden, and to the orphaned life,  
and to all who stumble,  
and to one entangled amid hidden sorrows,  
and to one who struggles in the dark.

And bless my eyes, and let me merit  
to behold the human beauty in this world.

Deepen my senses, widen their grasp  
so they absorb a green and flowering  
and budding world, and take from it  
the secret blossoming within a silence.

Grant me the strength to yield  
the best of fruits. Let my life grow  
a wealth of word and deed steeped  
in the fountain of my being,  
without my measuring all things  
for only what they have to offer me.

And when my day shall come,  
let me slip into the land of night,  
without asking anything from others  
or from you, God.

זאת תפֿלתי לך, אֵל אֱלֹהֵי:  
שְׁמֵרֵנִי לְבַל אֲשֹׁט מִנְתִּיב חַיִּי,  
לְבַל יִמַּק רוּחִי וּלְבַל יִדַּל  
מִצְמָאוֹנוּ לְךָ וּמִן הַטֵּל  
עָלָיו הַזֹּלְפֶתָּה בְּעוֹדֵנִי רַךְ.

יְהִי לְבִי פְתוּחַ אֶל כָּל-דָּךְ,  
אֶל כָּל-יְתוּסֵי חַיִּים, אֶל כָּל-כּוֹשֵׁל  
נִפְתָּל בְּפֶתֶר וּמִגֹּשֶׁשׁ בְּצֵל.

בְּרַךְ עֵינַי, זַפְּנֵי לְרֵאוֹת  
יְפֵי אָדָם עוֹלָה בְּתִבֵּל זֹאת.

וְאֶת-חֹשֵׁי בֵי הַעֵמֶק, הַרְחִיב  
לְסַפֵּג עוֹלָם יָרֵק, נִצֵּן וְאֵב,  
לְקַלֵּט מֵהֶם סוּד הַלְבָּלוּב בְּדַמִּי.

חַנְּנֵי אֹן לְתֵת מֵיטֵב כָּל-פְּרִי,  
תְּמַצִּית חַיִּי, בְּנִיב שְׁקוּי לְשִׁדֵּי  
מְבִלֵי צְפוֹת לְגַמוּל צְפוּי בְּעַדִּי.

וּכְבוֹא יוֹמִי — לְחֶמֶק לְרֵשוֹת הַלַּיִל  
בְּלִי תְבַע מָה מֵאִישׁ וּמִמָּדָה, אֵל.

Hillel Bavli

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COMMENTARY. The poet's final words could be translated: "Let me not demand to know what, of human as of you, is God." The poem is so infused with imagery of the divine presence saturating the world and the poet—opening the eyes, the heart, and the senses to take in all that lives, and to bear fruit in kind—that by the end of this poem/prayer, the line of definition between divine and human, private and worldly, self and other, has become indistinct. Therefore the final words contain a wonderful double meaning, and the poem thus celebrates the unity of all life in God. It is a unity that allows a person to live free and undemanding because the wealth of God is everywhere.

J.R.

O, Sovereign, before you here is my desire,  
 and if I can't offer it up for spoken prayer,  
 please let me disappear, so great my shame—  
 though would that my prayer might achieve its goal!  
 When I am far from you, life is a living death,  
 and when I cling to you, my life transcends all death.  
 Teach me your ways, my Sovereign,  
 that I might return from my captivity,  
 instruct me while I still am capable of it,  
 and capable of undergoing hardship in its name.  
 And let me travel where my ancestors have gone,  
 let me encamp by their encampments,  
 residing as a welcomed stranger in a land  
 whose inner core is my inheritance.  
 My youth, till now, was lived for its sake alone,  
 but when shall I, too, act for my posterity?  
 The glimmer of eternity placed in my heart  
 impels me to search out a greater destiny.  
 How then, shall I serve my Maker now, while yet I live,  
 while prisoner of my instinct, slave to my desire?  
 How can my heart—even on a good day—  
 feel at peace, when I am not sure tomorrow will be good?  
 Behold me now, like one stripped of possessions, naked:  
 my sole clothing is your righteousness.  
 Yet even now, how can I sustain my prayer of request?  
 My sovereign, before you here is my desire.

*For Avinu Malkenu, see page 451.  
 Concluding prayers begin on page 1195.*

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COMMENTARY. It is a good custom to be in silence—to fast from social chatting (a *ta'anit dibur*) after the last public prayer on Yom Kippur night. All announcements can be made earlier. People can then sit and meditate as long as they choose, and leave in silence when they are ready. Z.S.S.

אֲדַנִּי נִגְדָךְ כָּל־תְּאוֹתַי  
וְאִם־לֹא אֶעֱלֶנָה עַל־שִׁפְתַי  
רְצוֹנְךָ אֲשַׁאלָה רָגַע וְאֶגְוַע  
וּמִי־יִתֶן וְתִבּוֹא שְׂאֵלְתִי  
בְּרַחֲמֵי מִמֶּךָ מוֹתֵי בְחַיִּי  
וְאִם־אֲדַבֵּק בְּךָ חַיִּי בְּמוֹתַי  
דְּרַכֶּיךָ אֲדַנִּי לְמִדְּנִי  
וְשׁוֹב מִמַּאֲסֵר סְכָלוֹת שְׁבוּתַי  
וְהוֹרֵנִי בְּעוֹד יֵשֶׁב־בִּי יְכָלֶת  
לְהִתְעַנּוֹת וְאֶל־תִּבְזֶה עֲנוּתִי  
וְאֶסַּע אֶל־מְקוֹם נִסְעוּ אֲבוֹתַי  
וּבְמְקוֹם תִּחַנְתֶּם תִּחַנְנֵנִי  
כִּגְר תּוֹשֵׁב אֲנִי עַל־גֹּב אֲדָמָה  
וְאוֹלָם כִּי בְּכַטְנָה נִחַלְתִּי  
נְעוּרַי עַד־הֵלֹם עָשׂוּ לְנַפְשָׁם  
וּמְתֵי גַם־אֲנִי אֶעֱשֶׂה לְבֵיתִי  
וְהָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר נָתַן בְּלִבִּי  
מִנְעֵנִי לְבַקֵּשׁ אַחֲרֵיתִי  
וְאֵיכָה אֶעֱבֹד יְצָרִי בְּעוֹדִי  
אֲסִיר יְצָרִי וְעֶבֶד תְּאוֹתַי  
וְאֵיךְ יֵיטֵב בְּיוֹם טוֹבָה לְבָבִי  
וְלֹא אֲדַע הֵיטֵב מִחֲרָתִי  
אֲנִי מִמַּעֲשִׂים שׁוֹלָל וְעָרוֹם  
וְצִדְקָתְךָ לְבָדָה הִיא כְּסוּתִי  
וְעוֹד מָה אֲאִרִּיךְ לְשׁוֹן וְאֲשַׁאל  
אֲדַנִּי נִגְדָךְ כָּל־תְּאוֹתַי:

Yehuda Halevi

For Avinu Malkenu, see page 452.  
Concluding prayers begin on page 1195.

Remember, for our sake,  
the ancestral covenant, as you have promised:

“And I shall remember my covenant with Jacob,  
and, as well, my covenant with Isaac,  
and, as well, my covenant with Abraham;  
I shall remember them, and shall recall  
the Land I promised them.”

Leviticus 26:42

Remember, for our sake,  
the covenant of former times, as you have promised:

“And I shall remember, for their sake,  
the covenant of former times,  
whereby I brought them from the land of Egypt,  
in the sight of all the nations,  
to become their God,  
I am THE LAWGIVER!”

Leviticus 26:45

Have mercy on us, and do not destroy us, as it is written:

“For THE FOUNT OF MERCY is a God compassionate,  
who shall not let you wither, and shall not destroy you,  
nor shall God forget the covenant made with your ancestors,  
the one promised by oath to them.”

Deuteronomy 4:31

Open up our hearts to love and to revere your name, as it is  
written:

“THE BOUNTIFUL, your God, shall circumcise your hearts  
and your children’s hearts,  
to love THE FOUNT OF LIFE, your God,  
with all your heart, with all your soul,  
that you might live.” ↪

Deuteronomy 30:6

זָכַרְלָנוּ בְּרִית אָבוֹת כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתָּ:  
וְזָכַרְתִּי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי יַעֲקֹב וְאָף אֶת־בְּרִיתִי יִצְחָק וְאָף אֶת־בְּרִיתִי  
אֲבָרָהֶם אֲזַכֵּר וְהָאָרֶץ אֲזַכֵּר:

זָכַרְלָנוּ בְּרִית רֵאשׁוּנִים כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתָּ:  
וְזָכַרְתִּי לָהֶם בְּרִית רֵאשׁוּנִים אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי־אֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם  
לְעֵינֵי הַגּוֹיִם לְהִיּוֹת לָהֶם יְלֵאלֹהִים אֲנִי יְהוָה:

רַחֵם עָלֵינוּ וְאֵל תִּשְׁחִיתֵנוּ כְּמָה שֶׁכָּתוּב:  
כִּי אֵל רַחוּם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ לֹא יִרְפֶּךָ וְלֹא יִשְׁחִיתֶךָ וְלֹא יִשְׁכַּח אֶת־  
בְּרִית אֲבֹתֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לָהֶם:

מוֹל אֶת־לִבְבֵנוּ לְאַהֲבָה אֶת שְׁמֶךָ כְּמָה שֶׁכָּתוּב:  
וּמַל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ אֶת־לִבְבְּךָ וְאֶת־לִבְבֵי זֵרְעֶךָ לְאַהֲבָה אֶת־יְהוָה  
אֱלֹהֵיךָ כְּכֹל־לִבְבְּךָ וּכְכֹל־נַפְשְׁךָ לְמַעַן חַיֶּיךָ: ←

Be present for us when we call on you, as it is written:

“And you shall seek out THE BELOVED ONE, your God,  
from where you are, and you shall find God,  
provided that you search for God  
with all your heart, and all your soul.”

Deuteronomy 4:29

Blot out our sins upon this day, and purify us,  
as it is written:

“For on this day, atonement shall be made for you,  
to make you clean from all your wrongdoings.  
Before THE FOUNT OF MERCY, you shall all be clean.”

Leviticus 16:30



Return us, BLESSED ONE, let us return!  
Renew our days, as you have done of old! ↪

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השיבנו...כקדם / Return...old! (Lamentations 5:21).

הַמְצֵא לָנוּ בְּבִקְשֵׁהֲנוּ כְּמָה שְׂכָתוֹב:  
וּבְקִשְׁתֶּם מִשָּׁם אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ וּמִצָּאתָ כִּי תִדְרֹשְׁנוּ בְּכָל־לְבָבְךָ  
וּבְכָל־נַפְשְׁךָ:

כִּפּוּר חֲטָאֵינוּ בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה וְטַהֲרָנוּ כְּמָה שְׂכָתוֹב:  
כִּי־בַיּוֹם הַזֶּה יִכְפּוּר עָלֵיכֶם לְטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם מִכָּל חֲטָאֵיכֶם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה  
תִּטְהָרוּ:



הַשִּׁיבָנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ וְנִשְׁוֵבָה חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקֶדֶם: ←

Hashivenu adonay eleha venashuva hadesh yameynu  
kekedem. ↪

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COMMENTARY. Why does so much of religious longing find its voice in the appeal to antiquity? What is it about the past, real or imagined, that makes it a destination of choice for the soul that seeks renewal? Why look backward instead of forward?

Perhaps the answer lies in the word *hadesh*, which means both “new” and “renew.” We cannot become the person we long to be by ignoring the persons we have been. In order to become “new” we have to “renew”—we have to recover moments of holiness, accomplishment, and integrity from our past and bring them forward into the lives we are continuously shaping. An individual—or a people—that believes it can move forward without looking backward is destined to defeat. R.H.



Remove our wrongs like smoke, and like a cloud,  
as you have promised:

“I remove your wrongs like smoke,  
your sins like clouds.

Return to me, for I have set you free!”

Isaiah 44:22

Sprinkle over us pure waters  
that we may be clean, as it is written:

“And I shall sprinkle you with purest waters,  
and you shall be clean. From all your wrongs,  
from all of your idolatries,

I make you clean.”

Ezekiel 36:25

Grant atonement for our wrongs  
this very day, that we may be clean,  
as it is written: “For on this day  
atonement shall be made for you  
for all your wrongdoings,  
before THE FOUNT OF MERCY  
you shall all be clean.”

Leviticus 16:30

Bring us to your holy mountain,  
make us joyful in your house of prayer,  
as it is written: “I shall bring you  
to my holy mountain, I shall make you joyful  
in my house of prayer. Truly, my house  
shall be called a house of prayer  
for all nations!”

Isaiah 56:7

מַחַה פְּשָׁעֵינוּ כְּעָב וְכַעֲנָן כְּאֲשֶׁר אֶמְרָתָּ: מַחֲתִי כְּעָב פְּשָׁעֶיךָ וְכַעֲנָן  
חַטָּאוֹתֶיךָ שׁוֹבָה אֵלַי כִּי גְּאֻלְתֶּיךָ: זֶרֶק עָלֵינוּ מַיִם טְהוֹרִים וְטַהֲרֵנוּ  
כְּמָה שְׁפָתוֹב: וְזַרְקָתִי עֲלֵיכֶם מַיִם טְהוֹרִים וְטַהֲרָתֶם מִכָּל  
טְמֵאוֹתֵיכֶם וּמִכָּל-גְּלוּלֵיכֶם אֲטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם: כִּפּוּר חֲטָאֵינוּ בַּיּוֹם  
הַזֶּה וְטַהֲרֵנוּ כְּמָה שְׁפָתוֹב: כִּי-בַיּוֹם הַזֶּה יִכְפּוּר עֲלֵיכֶם לְטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם  
מִכָּל חַטָּאוֹתֵיכֶם לְפָנַי יְהוָה תִּטְהַרוּ: הִבֵּיאֵנוּ אֶל הַר קְדוֹשְׁךָ וְשִׂמְחֵנוּ  
בְּבַיִת תְּפִלָּתְךָ כְּמָה שְׁפָתוֹב: וְהִבֵּיאוֹתֵם אֶל-הַר קְדוֹשִׁי וְשִׂמְחֵתֵם  
בְּבַיִת תְּפִלָּתִי... כִּי בֵּיתִי בַּיִת תְּפִלָּה יִקְרָא לְכָל-הָעַמִּים:

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KAVANAH. My sins and transgressions are not solid. They are not essential to my identity or to my innate being. They are insubstantial. They can be erased. They can be washed away by plain water. They are not who I am. Rather, I am the one who is able to ascend to the holy mountain and the house of divine prayer.  
S.P.W.

מַחַה פְּשָׁעֵינוּ / Remove our wrongs. This does not mean that we wish to deny the wrongs we have committed or pretend that they did not happen. Instead, we are summoned to boldly confront ourselves and the effects of our deeds. The Hebrew letters that we use to form the word *mehey* / remove can also mean “strike out,” “protest,” and “forewarn.” From these same letters we form the word *moah*, marrow: the innermost part of our being. Forgiveness is not a casual, passive or superficial thing: it requires that we look deeply into ourselves, and that we strike out against the human potential for wrongdoing. Only when we ourselves make it our personal commitment to take an active role in combatting evil in the world will it be possible for God to “remove our wrongs.” Then, in the very marrow of our being, our transgressions will evaporate like a mist, our sins disperse like a cloud.  
S.D.R.

# Supplementary Readings for both Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur

Themes:

- Israel Peace

We pray for Israel.

Both the mystic ideal of our ancestors' dreams.  
And the living miracle, here and now,  
Built of heart, muscle, and steel.

May she endure and guard her soul,  
Surviving the relentless, age-old hatreds.  
The cynical concealment of diplomatic deceit.  
And the rumblings that warn of war.

May Israel continue to be the temple that magnetizes  
The loving eyes of Jews in all corners:

Jews in lands of affluence and relative peace  
Who forget the glory and pain of their being  
And Jews in lands of oppression whose bloodied fists  
Beat in anguish and pride  
Against the cage of their imprisonment.

May Israel yet embrace her homeless, her own,  
And bind the ingathered into one people.

May those who yearn for a society built on human concern  
Find the vision of the prophets realized in her.  
May her readiness to defend  
Never diminish her search for peace.

May we always dare to hope  
That in our day the antagonism will end,  
That all the displaced, Arab and Jew, will be rooted again,  
That within Israel and across her borders  
All God's children will touch hands in peace.

Nahum Waldman

The man under his fig tree telephoned the man under his vine:  
“Tonight they definitely might come. Assign  
positions, armor-plate the leaves, secure the tree,  
tell the dead to report home immediately.”

The white lamb leaned over, said to the wolf:  
“Humans are bleating, and my heart aches with grief.  
I’m afraid they’ll get to gunpoint, to bayonets in the dust.  
At our next meeting this matter will be discussed.”

All the nations (united) will flow to Jerusalem  
to see if the Torah has gone out. And then,  
inasmuch as it’s spring, they’ll come down  
and pick flowers from all around.

And they’ll beat swords into plowshares and plowshares into  
swords,  
and so on and so on, and back and forth.

Perhaps from being beaten thinner and thinner,  
the iron of hatred will vanish, forever.

Yehuda Amichai

# Supplementary Readings for both Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur

Themes:

- Verses to Sing

*Select from among the following songs:*

Who is the person who wishes to live,  
who desires days to behold life's good?  
Preserve your tongue from evil,  
and your lips from uttering deceit.  
Turn away from evil, and do good,  
seek peace, and follow after it.

Psalms 34:13-15



All the world before us  
is a very narrow bridge,  
and the main thing  
is not to fear at all.

Attributed to Rabbi Nahman of Bratzlav



Pour out your heart like water  
in the presence of THE LIVING GOD.

Lamentations 2:19



Find words in you to offer  
and return to THE COMPASSIONATE.

Hosea 14:3

Select from among the following songs

אָהב יָמִים לְרֵאוֹת טוֹב:  
וּשְׁפָתֶיךָ מְדַבֵּר מִרְמָה:  
בְּקֶשׁ שְׁלוֹם וְרַדְפָּהוּ:

מִי־הָאִישׁ הַחֲפִץ חַיִּים  
נִצֹר לְשׁוֹנֵךְ מִרַע  
סוּר מִרַע וַעֲשֵׂה־טוֹב

Mi ha'ish hehafetz hayim ohev yamim lirot tov.  
Netzor leshoneha mera usfateha midaber mirmah.  
Sur mera va'asey tov bakesh shalom verodfehu.



כָּל־הָעוֹלָם כְּלוֹ גֶשֶׁר צַר מְאֹד  
וְהַעֲקָר לֹא לְפַחַד כְּלָל:

Kol ha'olam kulo geshher tzar me'od  
veha'ikar lo lefahed kelal.



שִׁפְכֵי כַמִּים לִבְךָ נִכַח פְּנֵי אֲדֹנָי:

Shifhei hamayim libekh nohach peney adonay.



קָחוּ עִמָּכֶם דְּבָרִים וְשׁוּבוּ אֶל־יְהוָה:

Kehu imahem devarim veshuvu el adonay.



Open to me, O you gateways of justice,  
Yes, let me come in, and give thanks unto Yah!

This is the gateway to ONE EVERLASTING,  
let all who are righteous come in.

Psalms 118:19-20



Behold, the days are coming,  
that I shall send forth hunger in the Land,  
not hunger for bread,  
nor thirst for water,  
but desire to hear the words of THE ETERNAL ONE.

Amos 8:11



Return us, PRECIOUS ONE, let us return!  
Renew our days, as you have done of old!

Lamentations 5:2



I lift my eyes up to the hills.  
From where does my help come?

Psalms 121:1-2



And as for me, my prayer is for you, GENTLE ONE,  
may it be for you a time of desire,  
O God, in the abundance of your love,  
respond to me in truth with your help.

Psalms 69:14



פְּתַחוּ-לִי שַׁעַר־צֶדֶק      אָבֹא-בָּם אוֹדָה יְהוָה:  
זֶה-הַשַּׁעַר לַיהוָה      צְדִיקִים יִבְאוּ בוֹ:

Pithu li sha'arey tzedek avo vam odeh yah.  
Zeh hash'a'ar ladonay tzadikim yavo'u vo.

הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים... וְהִשְׁלַחְתִּי רָעַב בְּאֶרֶץ  
לֹא-רָעַב לְלֶחֶם וְלֹא-צָמָא לְמַיִם כִּי אִם-לְשִׁמְעַ אֶת דְּבַרִּי יְהוָה:

Hiney yamim ba'im vehishlahti ra'av ba'aretz  
lo ra'av lalehem velo tzama lamayim  
ki im lishmo'a et divrey adonay.



הִשִּׁיבֵנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְנִשׁוּבָה חֲדָשׁ יִמְיָנוּ כְּקֶדֶם:

Hashivenu adonay eleha venashuva hadesh yameynenu kekedem.



אֲשָׂא עֵינַי אֶל-הַהָרִים מֵאֵין יָבֵא עֲזָרִי:

Esa eynay el heharim me'ayin yavo ezri.



וְאֲנִי תַפְלִיתִי-לָךְ יְהוָה עַת רַצוֹן אֱלֹהִים בְּרַב־חַסְדֶּךָ עֲנֵנִי בְּאֵמֶת  
יִשְׁעֶךָ:

V'ani tefilati leha adonay et ratzon elohim berov hasdeha aneni  
be'emet yisheha.



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not hunger for bread, nor thirst for water, but desire to hear the words of THE ETERNAL ONE. In ten days, we will observe the fast of Yom Kippur, denying ourselves both food and drink. These words of Amos anticipate that fast and remind us that there are other deprivations, both physical and spiritual, whose impact is no less difficult, and whose duration can be more devastating.

R.H.

Choose from among the following songs:

אַחַת שְׁאַלְתִּי / AHAT SHA'ALTI

אַחַת שְׁאַלְתִּי מֵאֵת־יְהוָה אוֹתָהּ אֶבְקֶשׁ  
שְׁבִתִּי בְּבֵית־יְהוָה כָּל־יְמֵי חַיִּי  
לְחַזוֹת בְּנֹעַם־יְהוָה וּלְבַקֵּר בְּהִיכָלוֹ:

Ahat sha'alti me'et adonay otah avakesh  
shivti beveyt adonay kol yemey hayay  
lahazot beno'am adonay ulevaker beheyhalo.

One thing I ask from God; one thing do I seek—  
that I may stay in the divine presence all the days of my life,  
envision divine delight, and contemplate God's presence.

Psalms 27:4

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*Ahat Sha'alti* is a verse from Psalm 27, which is recited daily throughout the month of Elul. This penitential season preceding the High Holy Days has as its theme the task of returning to the path toward God. Thus, *Ahat Sha'alti* encapsulates our hopes for this season. D.A.T.

אֶשָׂא עֵינַי / ESA EYNAY

אֶשָׂא עֵינַי אֶל־הַהָרִים	Esa eynay el heharim
מֵאֵין יָבֹא עֲזָרִי:	me'ayin yavo ezri.
עֲזָרִי מֵעַם יְהוָה	ezri me'im adonay
עוֹשֶׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ:	oseh shamayim va'aretz.

I lift my eyes up to the hills:  
 from where does my help come?  
 My help is from THE UNSEEN ONE,  
 the maker of the heavens and the earth.



פִּתְחוּ־לִי / PITHU LI

פִּתְחוּ־לִי שַׁעֲרֵי־צֶדֶק	Pithu li sha'arey tzedek
אֲבֹא־בְכֶם אוֹדֶה יְהוָה:	avo vam odeh yah.
זֶה־הַשַּׁעַר לַיהוָה	Zeh hashar ladonay
צְדִיקִים יָבֹאוּ בוֹ:	tzadikim yavo'u vo.

Open to me, O you gateways of justice,  
 Yes, let me come in, and give thanks unto Yah!  
 This is the gateway to ONE EVERLASTING,  
 let all who are righteous come in.

אֶשָׂא...וָאָרֶץ / I...earth (Psalms 121:1-2).

פִּתְחוּ...בוֹ / Open...come in (Psalms 118:19-20).