



Congregation Eitz Chaim
Marietta, GA

HIGH HOLIDAY

SUPPLEMENTARY READER



For All Who Enter

How beautiful are your dwellings, O Jacob!
How lovely your sanctuaries O Israel!

Thanks to Your abundant kindness, O Lord,
I am able to enter Your house;

To bow down before You in reverence,
In this sacred place of worship.

Lord, I love to be in Your house,
The sanctuary dedicated to Your glory.

Here I worship
In Your presence, O Lord, my Master.

In kindness, Lord, answer my prayer;
Mercifully, grant me Your abiding help.

The Synagogue

May the door of the synagogue be wide enough
to receive all who hunger for love,
all who are lonely for fellowship.

May it welcome all who have cares to unburden,
thanks to express, hopes to nurture.

May the door of this synagogue be narrow enough
to shut out pettiness and pride, envy and enmity.

May its threshold be no stumbling block
to young or straying feet.

May it be too high to admit complacency,
selfishness, and harshness.

May this synagogue be, for all who enter,
the doorway to a richer and more meaningful life.

Inspire Us Again

Heavenly Father, we have come together to pray
as a congregation;

And yet each of us is strangely solitary in
Your presence.

Each of us comes before You with our own sorrows
and regrets, with our own hopes and fears.

Each of us has a prayer no one else can utter;
Each of us brings praise no one else can offer.
Each of us feels a joy no one else can share;
Each of us has needs which are his alone.

And so, we pray:

If we are weary, give us strength.
If we are discouraged, give us hope.
If we have forgotten to pray, remind us.
If we have been careless of time, forgive us.
If our hearts have been chilled by indifference,
warm them with Your mercy; inspire us again with
the glowing spirit of this Holy Day.

Amen



Joyful Melodies

The Baal Shem Tov, may his merit shield us (18th century), once came to a certain city before Rosh Hashanah. He asked the inhabitants of the city, "Who is the Reader here during the Days of Awe?" They said to him, "The rabbi of the city." The Baal Shem Tov asked, "How does he conduct the prayers?" They said to him, "He chants all the confessions of Yom Kippur with joyful melodies."

The Baal Shem Tov sent after the rabbi and asked him, "Why do you sing the confessions joyfully?" Said the rabbi to him, "Lo, a servant who is cleaning the courtyard of the king, if he loves the king, is very happy cleaning the refuse from the courtyard, and sings joyful melodies, for he is giving pleasure to the king."

The Sermon

It is related of Rabbi Heshel (18th-19th century) that he had an admonisher who stood watch over him even during his sermon, and when he would recognize anything at all unseemly in any sentiment of Rabbi Heshel's, he would admonish him in the presence of the entire congregation. Rabbi Heshel would accept the admonition and stop in the middle of his sermon.

We Wait Too Long

We often wait too long to find our way back to the synagogue, to work at the self-renewal of which these holy days remind us. While we wait, our lives become progressively depleted of spiritual content. The estrangement between us and our heritage grows larger and more painful.

We wait too long to become more deeply involved in Jewish observance and Jewish study. While we wait, the time for the harvest comes and we haven't even planted.

We wait too long to do what must be done today, in a world which gives us only one day at a time, without any assurance of tomorrow. We frequently lament that our days are so few; and yet, we procrastinate as though we had an endless supply of time.

We wait too long to show kindness. And often we thereby lose the opportunity. How many lines of thanks or encouragement are waiting for us to be written? How many words of solace are waiting for us to be spoken?

We wait too long to be charitable. Too much of our giving is delayed until much of the need has passed and the joy of giving has been largely diminished.

We wait too long to speak the words of forgiveness which should be spoken, to set aside the hatreds that should be banished.

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We wait too long to discipline ourselves and to take charge of our lives. We feed ourselves the vain delusion that it will be easier to uproot tomorrow the debasing habits which we permit to tyrannize over us today, whose command over us grows more deeply entrenched each day they remain in power.

We wait too long to be parents to our children..... forgetting how brief is the time during which they are children, how swiftly life urges them on and away.

We wait too long to read the books that are waiting to be read, to see the beauty which is here to be seen, to hear the music which is here to be heard, to seek repentance which is within reach, to utter the prayers which are waiting to cross our lips, to perform the duties waiting to be discharged, to show the love that may no longer be needed tomorrow.

We wait too long in the wings, when life has a part for us to play on stage.

Our prayer book reminds us that God is waiting -waiting for us to stop waiting, and to proceed with all haste to begin to do now, all the things for which this day was made.

When Repentance Commences

Rabbi Israel Lipkin Salanter once said: "Most people repent during the Selichot week preceding Rosh Hashanah; the more pious during the month of Elul preceding Rosh Hashanah; but I say that one should begin to repent immediately after Yom Kippur."

Where He Is

There is a significant Midrashic comment on the verse: "God heard the voice of the lad *where he is*." The Midrash imagines the angels protesting: "How can Ishmael be spared in that his descendants will torment Israel?"

God replies: "At this moment he is worthy to be saved"; God hears the voice of the lad *where he is*. Man is a creature of moods and cannot live ever on the heights. The firm resolve he makes on Rosh Ha-Shanah may weaken when the days of self-examination are gone. But at least, the Rabbis might have said, let man's purpose be strong on these days that God might hear his voice *where he is*.

Three Books Are Opened

R. Kruspedai said in the name of R. Yochanan: Three books are opened [before the Heavenly Tribunal] on Rosh Hashanah - one for the unquestionably wicked; one for the unquestionably righteous; and one for those between [these extremes]. The unquestionably righteous are immediately inscribed and sealed for life; the unquestionably wicked are immediately inscribed and sealed for death. [But the judgment of] those between stands in abeyance from Rosh Hashanah until Yom Kippur. If they are found worthy, they are inscribed for life; if they are not found worthy they are inscribed for death.



How's Your Book?

We Are All Writing A Book!

One Jew to another: "How's your book coming?"

Answer: "What do you mean, my book?"

I'm not writing a book!"

Of course you are. Doesn't it say in the Mishnah,
"And all your deeds are written down in the Book"?
(Ve-chol ma-asekha be-sefer nichtavim.)

The Three Things My Father Discovered

The great Jewish humorist, Sam Levenson, in describing the Jewish American experience, once wrote, "my folks were immigrants and they fell under the spell of the American legend that the streets of America were paved with gold. When my father got here, though, he found out three things: First, he saw that the streets were not paved with gold. The second thing he noticed was that the streets were not even paved, and last, but not least, he discovered that he was the one who was expected to do the paving." There are three precepts that the Jew must understand before beginning anything new...first, the dream of what ought to be; secondly the reality of how it is; and last, but not least, what must be done to make life more livable for everyone.

Perhaps that, above all, should be the Jewish watchword during the New Year.



To Begin Again

What is the difference between
a wise person and a fool?

Even fools will say a wise thing now and then,
And the wisest will at times descend to foolishness.

So what distinguishes a wise person from a fool?

A fool is one who never has a change of mind.
Conditions change, situations alter, and new times
Make new demands, but the fool remains the same.

What is the difference

between a good and an evil person?

There is some goodness even in the worst.

And is there a person who has not sinned?

So, what makes one person good and another evil?

An evil person refuses to change -doing wrong, knowing it, and
yet persisting in evil ways.

There is no sadder confession than

"I know I am doing wrong, but it's too late now to change."

This is surrender to despair.

Rosh Hashanah comes with a great gift-

The opportunity to begin again.

No one has sunk so low that repentance is beyond reach.

The old year is gone. The ledger is closed.

Our Book of Life is now open to a new page.

No sins blot it, no indiscretions blemish it.

Slowly the invisible pen begins to record our life:

And it is given to us to direct the pen.

If we have fallen into the habit of blot and smudges,

It is harder to write clear and fine words and phrases.

But we are invited to try

and we are challenged to succeed.

"If I had my life to live over"

"If I had known then what I know now ..."

On Rosh Hashanah we receive the gift of beginning again.

We know now what we did not know then.

What will we do with the knowledge?

How will we use the gift?

"Little" Resolutions

A little less impatient with those we deem too slow;
A little less arrogant because of all we know;
A little less conceited since our worth is slight;
A little less intolerant even when we are right.
A little more forgiving and swifter to be kind;
A little more desirous the word of praise to find;
A little more eager to help others to rejoice;
A little more careful to speak with gentle voice.
A little more effort to see another's view;
A little more determined to live faithfully as a Jew;
A little more willingness to extend a helping hand;
A little more commitment to our people and our land.
A little more eagerness to listen and understand;
A little more readiness to respond to God's command;
A little more resolve to do what must be done;
And a greater understanding that, truly, "we are one!"

Repentance

"I want to repent," a man once told his rabbi,
"but I don't know what to do.
How do I go about it?"

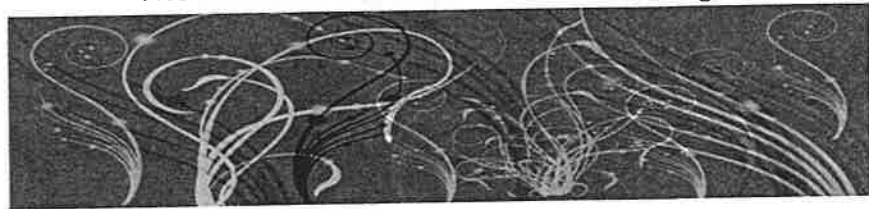
"When you sinned," the rabbi replied
"did you know what to do?"

"Of course. It was easy. First I sinned,
and then I knew."

"Precisely! Do the same thing now, but reverse
the process. First repent, and then you will know how."

Hard Questions

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?



There Are Two Seas

There are two seas in the Land of Israel. One is fresh,
and fish are in it. Splashes of green adorn its banks. Trees
spread their branches over it, and stretch out their thirsty
roots to sip of its healing waters.

Along its shore children play.

The River Jordan makes this sea with sparkling water
from the hills. So it laughs in the sunshine. And men build
their homes near to it, and birds their nests; and every kind
of life is happier because it is there.

The River Jordan flows on south into another sea. Here
there is no splash of fish, no fluttering leaf, no song of birds,
no children's laughter. Travelers choose another route unless
on urgent business. The air hangs heavy above its waters
and neither men nor beast nor fowl will drink.

What makes this mighty difference in these seas?

Not the River Jordan.

It empties the same good water into both.

Not the soil in which they lie;

not the country 'round about.

This is the difference.

The Sea of Galilee receives but does not keep the
Jordan. For every drop that flows into it another drop flows
out. The giving and receiving go on in equal measure.

The other sea is shrewder, hoarding its income jealously.

It will not be tempted into any generous impulse.

Every drop it gets, it keeps.

The Sea of Galilee gives and lives.

This other sea gives nothing. It is named the Dead Sea.

There are two kinds of people in the world.

There are two seas in the land of Israel.

Listen

Judaism begins with the commandment: Hear O Israel,
But what does it really mean to hear?
The person who attends a concert
with his mind on business,
Hears - but does not really hear.

The person who walks amidst the songs of birds
And thinks only of what he will have for dinner,
Hears - but does not really hear.

The man who listens to the words of his friends,
Or his wife or his child,
And does not catch the note of urgency
"Notice me, help me, care about me,"
Hears - but does not really hear.

The man who listens to the news
and thinks only of how it will affect the stock market,
Hears - but does not really hear.

The person who stifles the sound of his conscience
And tells himself he has done enough already,
Hears - but does not really hear.

The person who hears the hazzan pray
And does not feel the call to join with him,
Hears - but does not really hear.

The person who listens to the rabbi's sermon
And thinks that someone else is being addressed,
Hears - but does not really hear.

The person who hears the Shofar sound
And does not feel the need to change his ways,
Hears - but does not really hear.

As the new year begins, O Lord,
Strengthen our ability to hear.
May we hear the music of the world,
And the infant's cry, and the lover's sigh.

May we hear the call for help of the lonely soul,
And the sound of the breaking heart.
May we hear the words of our friends,
and also their unspoken pleas and dreams.

May we hear within ourselves the yearnings
That are struggling for expression.
May we hear You, O God,
For only if we hear You,
Do we have the right to hope
That You will hear us.

Hear the promises we make to You this day, O God-
And may we hear them too.

A Zodiacal Sign

Scales are the zodiacal sign for the month of Tishri, the period when man's deeds are weighed in the balance. A hasidic teacher noted that, just as the first of Tishri, Rosh Hashanah, is the middle of the year, so if a person's conduct during the first six months has been average, the balance of the scale is level.

To Seek The Way

A man had been wandering about in a forest for several days, unable to find the way out. Finally he saw a man approaching him in the distance. His heart was filled with joy. "Now I shall surely find out which is the right way out of this forest," he thought to himself. When they neared each other, he asked the man, "Brother, will you please tell me the way out of the forest? I have been wandering about here for several days and I am unable to find my way out."

Said the other to him, "Brother, I do not know the way out either, for I too have been wandering about here for many days. But this much I can tell you. Do not go the way I have gone, for I know that it is not the way. Now come, let us search for the way out together.

Our master added: "So it is with us. The one thing that each of us knows is that the way we have been going until now is not the way. Now come, let us join hands and look for the way together."

Missing the Stars

Once upon a time there was a young king. One night an angel appeared to him in a dream and offered him great wealth, great power and great influence. "What must I do to acquire all these wondrous things? He asked.

The angel replied, "If you accept what I offer, you will no longer be able to look into the heavens."

The young king thought for but a moment - "What a small price to pay for such marvelous gifts."

He agreed to the angel's terms and in but a few years, became fabulously rich, controlled a vast army and his advice was sought by all the leaders of his generation.

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Years passed and the King fell into a great depression. Once again in a dream the angel appeared to the King and asked - "Why are you so sad? Everything you were promised, you received. Your treasury is overflowing, your military is unchallenged, and your genius is admired by all."

"Yes", said the King, "All of what you say is true - but I lack one thing that I have come to realize is the most precious treasure one can possess."

The king, his eyes moist with tears, looked at the angel and said - "I miss seeing the stars."

Life's Whispers

Once upon a time the eagle, the lion and the great fish met at the water's edge. To the eagle they asked - "What do you leave behind?" Replied the eagle, "I leave behind an empire of mountain tops, of swirling winds and of endless heavens." To the lion they asked, "What do you leave behind?" Replied the lion, "I leave behind an empire of jungles, of forests, of endless plains." And of the great fish they asked, "What do you leave behind?" Replied the great fish, "I leave behind an empire of rivers, of seas and of oceans." As the eagle, lion and great fish pondered their answers, a butterfly floated by on a breath of air, its rainbow wings glistening in the sunlight. "Tell us, Oh, butterfly" they bellowed haughtily, "What do you leave behind?" The butterfly gracefully settled on a slender blade of grass, "I have no empire - no endless heavens, no endless plains, no endless oceans. I am but a tiny, fragile creature but what I leave behind for they who have met me is an endless memory of unselfish beauty."

The Sound of the Shofar

May the sound of the Shofar shatter our complacency
And make us conscious of the corruptions in our lives.

May the sound of the Shofar penetrate our souls,
And cause us to turn back to our Father in Heaven.

May the sound of the Shofar break the bonds of the
evil impulse within us, and enable us to serve the Lord with
a whole heart.

May the sound of the Shofar renew our loyalty to the one
true King and strengthen our determination
to defy the false gods.

May the sound of the Shofar awaken us to the enormity of
our sins, and the vastness of God's mercy
for those who truly repent.

May the sound of the Shofar summon us to service
And stir us to respond, as did Abraham, "Here am I."

May the sound of the Shofar recall the moment
When we stood at Mount Sinai and
uttered the promise:
"All that the Lord has spoken, we will keep and obey."

May the sound of the Shofar recall the promise of
the ingathering of the exiles,
And stir within us renewed devotion to
the Land of Israel.

May the sound of the Shofar recall
the vision of the prophets,
Of the day when Egypt, Syria, and Israel will live in peace.

May the sound of the Shofar awaken us
to the flight of time,
And summon us to spend our days with purpose.

May the sound of the Shofar become
our jubilant shout of joy
On the day of the promised, long-awaited redemption.

May the sound of the Shofar remind us that it is time
To "proclaim liberty throughout the land
To all the inhabitants thereof."

May the sound of the Shofar enter our hearts;
For blessed is the people that hearkens to its call.

An Al Chayt for Teens

We miss the mark
when we selfishly refuse to share what we have,
when we make fun of others,
when we look down on those who are different from us,
when we don't stand up for our beliefs,
when we are not loyal to our friends,
when we show off in order to get attention,
when we copy other people's work,
when we tell lies,
when we steal, and say, "It's only a small thing,"
when we disobey parents and teachers,
when we do things we know are bad for us,
when we gossip and tear down other people,
when we try too hard to fit in with a particular group.
For all of these, O God of forgiveness, pardon us,
forgive us, grant us atonement.
V'al kulam Eloha selichot, s'lach lanu,
m'chal lanu, kaper lanu.

I Am A Jew

I am a Jew because my faith demands
no abdication of the mind.

I am a Jew because my faith demands all
the devotion of my heart.

I am a Jew because wherever there is
suffering, the Jew weeps.

I am a Jew because wherever there is despair,
the Jew hopes.

I am a Jew because the message of our faith is
the oldest and the newest.

I am a Jew because the promise of our
faith is a universal promise.

I am a Jew because, for the Jew,
the world is not completed; people must complete it.

I am a Jew because, for the Jew,
humanity is not fully created; people must complete it.

I am a Jew because the faith of the people Israel
places humanity above nations, above Judaism itself.

I am a Jew because the faith of the people Israel places above
humanity, image of the Divine, the Oneness of God.

Spiritual Saying

Everyone is born alone --
And must remain in one's aloneness.

Time Available

R. Meir of Primishlan discovered one evening that his shoelace had broken. He went to a cobbler who was repairing shoes in his store.

"Is it too late for you to repair my shoelace?" the Rebbe asked. "As long as the candle is burning, I can work at repairs," was the reply.

R. Meir began dancing with joy. "Never have I heard such sweet truth, the truth of the Torah - as long as the candle is burning, we can work at repairing [the universe]."

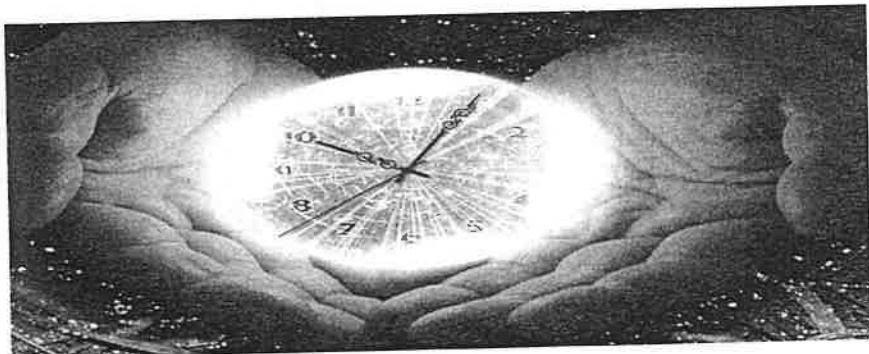
Wise Advice

R. Pinhas of Koritz, on entering the House of Learning, saw two Hassidim engaged in deep conversation.

"What are you discussing?" he enquired.

"How to overcome temptation when it pursues us."

"Don't worry," advised the Rebbe. "If you don't pursue temptation, it will not pursue you."



I Stood With Abraham

I stood with Abraham in his lonely vigil
And read the destiny of my people in the stars.
I was with Isaac when he built the altar
Where his faith and devotion were put to the test.
I stood with Jacob
When he wrestled through the night
With the angel of despair
And won a blessing at the break of dawn.
With Joseph I dreamt of sheaves and stars
And climbed the steps from the pit to a prince's throne.
I was with Moses, an alien prince among an alien people.
Unshod, I stood with him before the vision
in the wilderness
And from the fire I heard the Voice
summoning him to service.
I was at Sinai and entered there the everlasting
covenant between my people and its God.
I suffered and I hungered with them
All the way across the wilderness to the Promised Land.
I was with Joshua at Jericho
And with Deborah by the waters of Megiddo
When the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.
I stood with the blind Samson in his agony
And I heard the wild cry of his desperate courage
As he pulled the pillars over the Philistines.
I heard Samuel admonish his people to remain free
And not to reject God by enslaving themselves to a king.
I listened to the harp of David,
And I saw him bow before the wrath of Nathan
And before the truth of his accusation.
I heard Solomon in the Temple
On the day he dedicated it as a
House of Prayer for all peoples, and I learned from him
Of a God whom heaven and the hosts
of heaven cannot contain,

Whose compassion extends to all,
Even to the stranger who comes from a far off country.

I was with the prophets
Who came to destroy old worlds
And to build new ones.

I heard them lash out against injustice.
I warmed at their compassion for the weak.
From them I learned what a raging fire within one's soul
An unfilled mandate from God can be.

I was with my people by the rivers of Babylon
And I heard their oath:

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem.

I entered their makeshift synagogues in Babylon,
And learned there that prayer and study

Can be as beloved to God
As the sacrifices of the priests in the Temple
Or the songs of the Levites.

I returned with them from the captivity
And saw how a people can rebuild upon ruins.

I sat with the sages and the scribes
Who patiently interpreted the word of God
And slowly formed the Oral Law.

I moved among the mountains of Judea
With the lionhearted sons of Matathias.
I saw the miracle of the single cruse of oil
That illumined the Temple of the Lord.

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I Stood With Abraham, *continued*

I was with Hillel
When he summarized the whole Torah
In the commandment to love your neighbor as yourself.

I was with Akiba
When he inspired a revolution,
Defied an empire,
And died a martyr.

I wandered with my people into many lands,
Where the cross and the crescent reigned.
I walked with them over all the highways of the world.
I was with them when they drank out of the bitter chalices
Of pain, humiliation, cruelty, and hatred.

I saw them stay sane, in the midst of madness.
I saw them stay civilized, in the midst of brutality.
I saw them lighting candles in the midst of darkness.

Then I saw the night lift and the dawn break,
And into a new world, blessed with liberty and freedom
I marched with them exultingly.

I saw the shackles fall from off their limbs,
I saw the radiance of their emancipated minds and hearts.

I saw them enrich every land that
gave them opportunity.

I was with them when they landed at Ellis Island.
And fell in love with the land that stood for liberty.

Then I saw the night descend again.
I saw them suffer as no people has ever suffered before.
I saw them burned and gassed and tortured.

Then, like a Phoenix, I saw them
rise again in the old land.

I saw them begin a new life there
Based on the ancient teachings of justice and mercy.

I saw them nurture saplings in the wilderness,
And I watched them make the desert bloom.

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I was with them in the Six Day War.
I stood by them when their precious hard-earned state
was in danger. I trembled when they did,
and I rejoiced when they rejoiced.
I was at the Wall. I was in the Sinai.
I was on the Golan Heights.
Shall I leave them now?
Can I part company with this
immortal band whom I love?
They have become too dear and precious to me.
They are bone of my bone,
Flesh of my flesh,
Soul of my soul.
They are my people.
Their quest is mine.
They will live within me,
And I will live with them,
Forever.

Eternal Praise To God

God You have done everything to make me stop believing
in You. Now, lest it seem to You that You will succeed by these
tribulations in driving me from the right path, I
notify You, God, and God of my fathers, that it will not
avail You in the least. You may insult me. You may
castigate me. You may take from me all that I cherish and
hold dear in the world. You may torture me to death, but I
will always love You and these are my last words to You, my
wrathful God: . . . I die exactly as I have lived, crying,
"Eternally praised be the God of the dead, the God of
vengeance, of truth, of love, who will soon show His face
to the world again..."

The Reason A Jew Prays For Prosperity

During the Rosh Hashanah services Levi Isaac, in his own inimitable manner, addressed the King of kings:

“Almighty One, blessed be Thy Name! Why does a Jew pray for a year of sustenance and plenty? Why does a Jew need money? When a Jew has the means, he gives charity to the poor, provides for the education of his children, purchases a choice etrog for Sukkot, buys beautiful clothing and tasty food to honor Your Sabbath; he also uses money to fulfill other laws that You have commanded him.

If You want the children of Israel to continue to obey Your commandments during the year, You must grant an abundance of wealth.”

A Curious Custom

I saw a very curious custom in practice among the Jews of Kurdistan. On Rosh Hashanah, they all go to a river that flows at the foot of a hill, and say the prayer of the Casting. Afterward, they all jump into the water and swim around like the fish of the sea, instead of only shaking the hems of their clothing on the bank of the river, as our brothers, the children of Israel, do in Europe. And when I inquired of them the reason for this curious custom, they answered that by this act they are purified of all their sins, for the waters of the river wash away all the sins they have committed during all the past year.

The King

It is told of the pious Rabbi Aaron of Karlin (18th century) that once he was the Reader during the Morning Prayers of Rosh Hashanah. When he began to sing "The King" he cried and wept so bitterly that he was not able to continue. He was afterward asked what had happened. He replied that he had been reminded of the saying of the sages, of blessed memory: "When Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai appeared before Vespasian, he said, "Peace unto you, O king, peace unto you, O king." Said Vespasian to him, "If I am a king, why have you not come to me until now?" Therefore, he said, when I began to sing "The King," my heart grew sad within me, for He is a king, and I have not come before him until now to turn in Teshuvah.

As The Fish Of The Sea - Tashlich

It is customary to go to a river where there are fish, because we are compared to fish suddenly caught in a net. So we are caught in the severe net of divine judgment, and gazing at the river contemplate Teshuvah.

Another reason is given in Eliyahu Zutta: We visit rivers with fish that the evil eye may not govern us, as it cannot govern fish, and that we may be fruitful and multiply like fish. And those who interpret metaphorically say: Just as fish have no eyebrows and their eyes are always open, so let the eye of Him who is on high always be open for our benefit.

A Prayer For Our Country

Our God and God of our ancestors: We ask Your blessings for our country, for its government, for its leader and advisors, and for all who exercise just and rightful authority. Teach them insights of Your Torah, that they may administer all affairs of state fairly, that peace and security, happiness and prosperity, justice and freedom may forever abide in our midst.

Creator of all flesh, bless all the inhabitants of our country with Your spirit. May citizens of all races and creeds forge a common bond in true harmony to banish all hatred and bigotry and to safeguard the ideals and free institutions which are the pride and glory of our country.

May this land under Your Providence be an influence for good throughout the world, uniting all people in peace and freedom and helping them to fulfill the vision of Your prophet: "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they experience war any more."

And let us say: Amen.

A Prayer For The State Of Israel

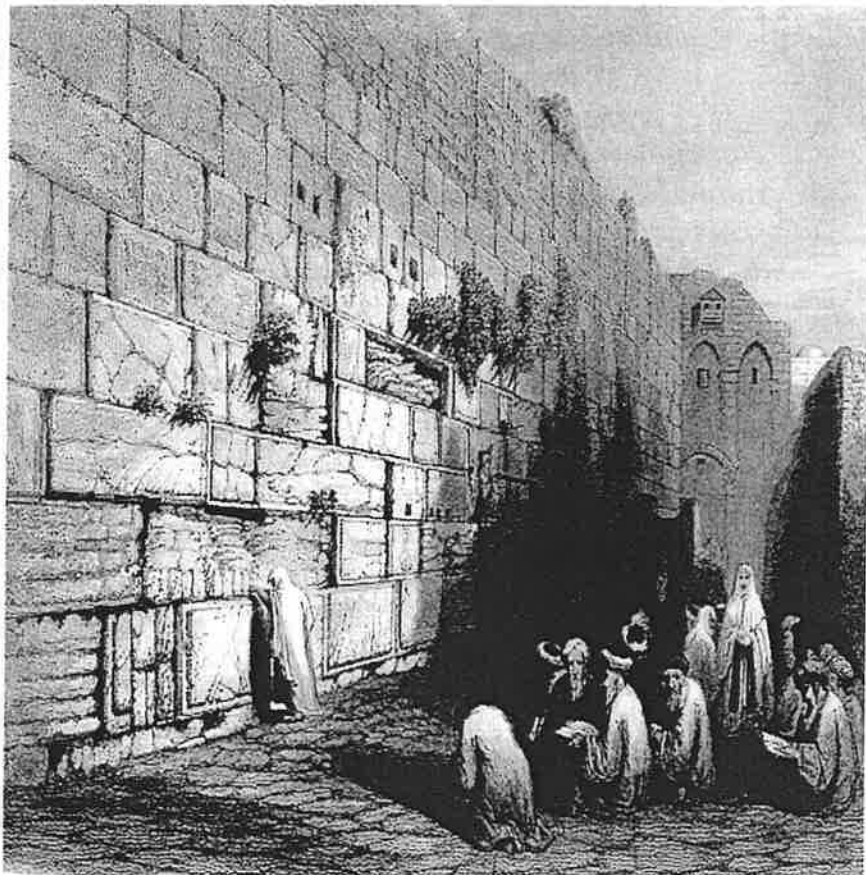
Our Father in Heaven, Rock and Redeemer of the people Israel: Bless The State of Israel, with its promise of redemption. Shield it with Your love; spread over it the shelter of Your peace. Guide its leaders and advisors with Your light and Your truth. Help them with Your good counsel. Strengthen the hands of those who defend our Holy Land. Deliver them; crown their efforts with triumph. Bless the land with peace, and its inhabitants with lasting joy.

And let us say: Amen.

Next Year In Jerusalem

Twice during the year we say, "Next year in Jerusalem!" – once during the Seder on Passover eve and once at the Closing Prayer of Yom Kippur. For there is a difference of opinion in the Talmud between Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Joshua.

The first says that Israel was first redeemed in Nisan and is destined to be redeemed in Nisan, and the second says they were redeemed in Nisan and are destined to be redeemed in Tishri. Therefore, both in Nisan and in Tishri we say, "Next year in Jerusalem!"



We Are Clay

We are clay.

You are the potter

Who shapes us at his will.

Mold us into worthy vessels

Even though we're only clay.

Do not smash us if we prove imperfect, -

Remember we are only clay.

We are glass.

You are the craftsman

Who can blow us into many shapes.

Form us into finest crystal

Even if You have to twist and turn us.

But do not smash us if we are not pure, -

Remember we are only glass.

We are silver.

You are the smith

Who molds us as he wishes.

Hammer us as You design

Even though we are not gold.

Do not smash us if we tarnish, -

Remember we are only silver.

We are the rudder.

You are the helmsman

Who steers us to the left or to the right.

Direct us to the shore You choose.

Do not let us idly spin

Even if we constantly resist Your grasp, -
Remember that the waves are very strong.

We are threads.

You are the weaver

Who creates the patterns that he likes.

Weave us, God, into Your plan.

Make us supple, straight, and true.

And do not throw us in a heap

If we should not be perfect. -

Remember we are only threads.

Nothing But Good

Rabbi Schmeike and his brother once asked their teacher, the Maggid of Mezerlch, to explain the words of the Mishnah: "A man must bless God for the evil in the same way that he blesses Him for the good."

The Maggid replied: "Go to the House of Study, and there you will find Rabbi Zussya; he will explain these words to you."

When the two brothers placed their question to Rabbi Zussya, he laughed and said:
"I am surprised that the Maggid sent you to me.
You must go elsewhere; make your inquiry
of someone who has suffered tribulations in his lifetime.
As for me, I have experienced nothing
but good all my days."

But the two brothers knew full well that from his earliest hour to the present, he had endured the most grievous sorrows. Thereupon they understood the meaning of the words of the Mishnah - and why the Maggid had sent them to Rabbi Zussya.

Perspective

Everyone must have two pockets,
so that he can reach into one or the other
according to his need.

In his right pocket, he should keep the words:
"For my sake was the world created.
And in his left pocket: "I am dust and ashes."

On Rosh Hashanah, It Is Written

On Rosh Hashanah it is inscribed
and on Yom Kippur it is confirmed:
Who shall live...a creative existence...and
Who shall die...a living death?
Who shall attain the maturity of years...measured by death
of spiritual growth...and
Who shall perish prematurely...due to ethical deprivation?
Who shall be seared...by the flame of lashing tongues...and
Who shall be extinguished...
by the bitter waters of intolerance?
Who shall be cut off...
by the sword of involuntary servitude...and
Who shall be devoured...by technological bestiality?
Who shall be expunged...by the hunger for prominence
undeserved...and
Who shall be parched...by the thirst for honor unmerited?
Who shall be swallowed...by the earthquakes of human
degradation...and Who shall be terminally tormented...
by the plagues of infectious insensitivity?
Who shall be strangled...by the tentacles of greed...and
Who shall be pummeled...by the petrified substances
of cerebral stagnation?
Who shall attain a physical quietude...and
Who shall meander amidst the streams of
inconsequential activity?
Who shall achieve inner tranquility...and
Who shall confront psychological anguish?
Who shall be at ease with his Self and his fellow...and
Who shall be afflicted by his Self and his fellow?
Who shall plummet to a poverty of the soul...and
Who shall enter deposits in riches of relevance?
Who shall sink in a sea of wasted moments...and
Who shall be exalted in a life of
perpetual milestones and meaning?
Teach us O Eternal, to number our days wisely!
Amen.

On The Day Of Renewal

On the Day of Renewal-we can decide,
And on the Day of Repentance-we can determine:
Who shall truly live.

And who shall cease to live-although in the midst of life;

**Who shall attain fullness of life through sharing,
And who shall cut himself off from living by selfishness;**

Who shall be consumed by the fires of arrogance,
And who shall be quenched by the waters of despair;

**Who shall be cut down by the sword of envy,
And who shall be devoured by beastly hatred;**

Who shall hunger for love,

And who shall thirst for friendship;

Who shall be shaken by the rejection of sacred values,

**And who shall be plagued by the scorning of
cherished virtues;**

Who shall be strangled to silence.

And who shall be stoned into submission;

Who shall find rest in home and hearth,

And who shall be driven to wandering;

Who shall attain tranquility of mind and soul.

And who shall be beset with anxiety and doubt;

Who shall have a life poor in accomplishment,

And who shall have a life rich in satisfactions;

Who shall bring himself low in dejection,

Who shall raise himself high in hope;

But all have been gifted with the power of

Tshuvah, Tefillah, Tzedakah -

Changing, Resolving, Doing.

May we use wisely the gifts

which these Days of Renewal and Repentance bring.



We Cannot Merely Pray To You

We cannot merely pray to You, O God
To end war;
For we know that You have made the world in such a way
That man must find his own path to peace
Within himself and with his neighbor.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God,
To end starvation;
For You have already given us the resources
With which to feed the entire world,
If we would only use them wisely.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God,
To root out prejudice;
For You have already given us eyes
With which to see the good in all men,
If we would only use them rightly.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God,
To end despair;
For You have already given us the power
To clear away slums and to give hope,
If we would only use our power justly.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God,
To end disease;
For You have already given us great minds
With which to search out cures and healings,
If we would only use them constructively.

Therefore we pray to You instead, O God,
For strength, determination, and will power,
To *do* instead of just to *pray*,
To *become* instead of merely to *wish*,

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For Your sake and for ours,
Speedily and soon,
That our land may be safe,
And that our lives may be blessed.

May the words that we pray,
And the deeds that we do
Both be acceptable before You, O Lord,
Our Rock and our Redeemer.

A Task For Humanity

When the Holy One created the first man. He took him before all the trees in the garden of Eden, and He said: "See how lovely and excellent My works are. All that I have created, for you have I created.

Consider this carefully. Do not corrupt My world or make it desolate. For if you corrupt it or make it desolate, there is no one to set it right after you."

On Forgiveness

On Yom Kippur, God will pardon everyone who has sinned against Him. But He will not pardon a person who has sinned against another human being, until that person himself has appeased the person who was wronged.



Now Is The Time For Turning

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

Now is the time for turning.
The leaves are beginning to turn
From green to red and orange.
The birds are beginning to turn
And are heading once more towards the South.
The animals are beginning to turn
To storing their food for the winter.
For leaves, birds, and animals
Turning comes instinctively.

But for us turning does not come so 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 admitting that we have the ability to change;
And this is always embarrassing.

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

Lord, help us 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 Lord, and bring us back towards You.
Revive our lives, as at the beginning.
And turn us towards each other, Lord,
For in isolation there is no life.

Listen to the Wind

Listen to the wind,
for there is nothing else we can listen to
for this was the place where children became old, and
where old men had no children to console.

Listen to the stones,
for the stones themselves were broken,
as our hearts were broken.
For this is the place of eternal night.
Never will there be sun here.

Do not trust your eyes.
There is no sun here. Never trust anything else,
for there is no one to trust here. In this place
people were so abandoned, so doomed, and
their solitude and silence were such that even now
we capture something simply by being here.

This is the place, a kingdom.
Can you imagine: four million people lived
and vanished overnight in this place.
We could build a nation with four million people.

There would be enough doctors,
enough teachers, enough parents,
enough children, enough princes,
enough beggars, enough merchants, enough dreamers
to build a people.
And in this space, which became the grave of
man's heart, that kingdom vanished.

Listen to the wind And listen to the sky.
For we are here to pray, as in a cemetery.
But this is no cemetery.
They have no cemetery.
They did not even have a cemetery.
We are their cemeteries.

We Stand Before Our God

In this hour, all Israel stands before God, the Judge and Forgiver. In His presence let us all examine our ways, our deeds, and what we have failed to do.

Where we transgressed, let us openly confess: "We have sinned!" Determined to return to God, let us pray: "Forgive us." We confess our sins, the sins of the individual and the sins of the community.

We express our contempt for the lies concerning us and the defamation of our religion and its testimonies.
We have trust in our faith and in our future.

Who made known to the world the mystery of the Eternal, the One God? Who imparted to the world the comprehension of purity of conduct and purity of family life?

Who taught the world respect for man, created in the image of God Who spoke of the commandments of righteousness, of social justice?

In all this we see manifest the spirit of the prophets, the Divine revelation to the Jewish people.
It grew out of our Judaism and is still growing.

We stand before our God. On Him we rely. From Him issues the truth and the glory of our history, our fortitude amidst all changes of fortune, our endurance in distress.

Our history is a history of nobility of soul, of human dignity. It is history to which we have recourse when attack and grievous wrong are directed against us.

God has led our ancestors from generation to generation. He will guide us and our children through these days. We stand before our God strengthened by His commandments that we fulfill.

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We bow to Him and stand erect before men. We worship Him and remain firm in all vicissitudes. Humbly we trust in Him and our path lies clear before us; we see our future.

All Israel stands before her God in this hour. In our prayers, in our hope, in our confession, we are one with all Jews on earth.

We look upon each other and know who we are; we look up to our God and know we shall prevail.

"Let Us Say Kaddish"

Let us say Kaddish not only for the dead, but also for the living who have forgotten the dead. And let the prayer be more than a prayer, more than lament; let it be outcry, protest and defiance.

And above all let it be an act of remembrance. For that is what the victims wanted; to be remembered, at least to be remembered.

For just as the killer was determined to erase Jewish memory, so were the dying heroes and fighting martyr bent on maintaining it alive.

They are now being defamed, or forgotten, which is like killing them a second time. Let us say Kaddish together and not allow others to betray them posthumously.

Reflections on Repentance

The gates of repentance are always open.

To know that one has sinned is halfway towards repentance.

Once a person repents, do not continue to remind them of their sins.

The Significance of Man?

The significance of man is that he is that part of the universe that asks the question, "What is the significance of Man?" He alone can stand apart imaginatively and, regarding himself and the universe in their eternal aspects, pronounce a judgement.

When he consults himself, man knows he is great. When he contemplates the universe around him, he knows that he is little. And his ultimate greatness consists of his knowledge of his littleness.

Man is an animal which alone among the animals refuses to be satisfied by the fulfillment of animal desires.

We were worms in our physical creation; we have become human in our hunger for divinity.

Adam was created single, to teach us that to destroy one person is to destroy a whole world, and to preserve one person is to preserve a whole world.

No man should say to another, "my father was superior to yours!" ... Though no two men are exactly alike, God stamped us all with the same mold, the seal of Adam. Everyone must say, "The world was created for my sake!" Every man, no matter how great or small, must be viewed not as a means to an end, but as an end in himself.

The Spirit of God is within every man, however mean, ugly, or diseased; and when we visit indignities upon other men, we are affronting our Creator, and we are also harming ourselves. Every person born into this world represents something new, something that never existed before, something original and unique.

Each one of us is a priceless bit of mosaic in the design of God's universe.

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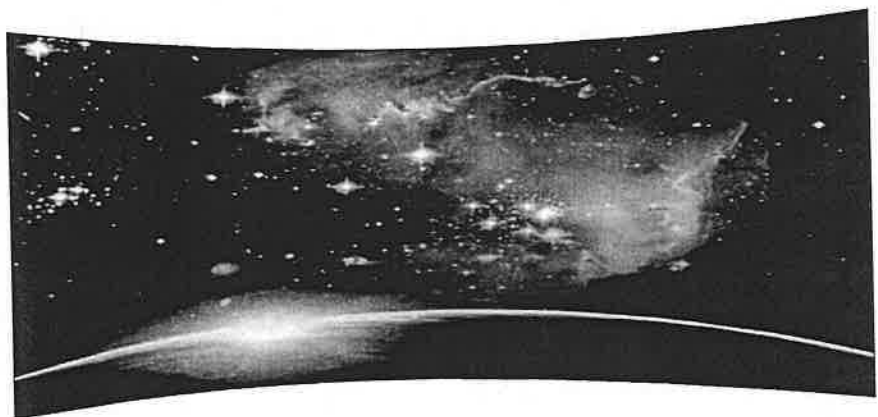
There is no such thing as an average man. Each one of us expresses his humanity and his divinity in some distinctly different way. The beauty and the bloom of each human soul is a thing apart, a separate holy miracle under God, never once repeated throughout all millennia of time.

It is a pleasant fact that you will know no man long, however low in the social scale, however poor, miserable, intemperate, and worthless he may appear to be, a mere burden to society, but you will find at last that there is something which he understands and can do better than any other.

One cannot always be a hero, but one can always be a man. We who lived in the concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread.

They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of his freedoms to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.

In the midst of winter, I finally learned that there was in me an invincible summer.



Ashamnu: An Alphabet of Wrongdoing

Of these things we have been guilty. We have:

Acted out of malice; we have
Back-bitten; we have been
Contemptuous of others; we have
Double-crossed; we have given
Evil advice; we have
Falsified the truth; we have
Gloated over our achievements; we have
Hated wrong-doers; we have been
Insolent; we have
Jeered convictions not our own; we have
Knifed friends in the back; we have
Lost our self-control; we have
Manipulated; we have
Nullified the humanity of others; we have
Oppressed our brothers and sisters;
we have told
Petty lies; we have
Quietly acquiesced in wrong; we have
Refused to back down from positions
we could see were incorrect; we have
Sneered at serious matters; we have
Trifled with other humans; we have
Usurped others' positions; we have practiced
Violence, we have supported
War by our lack of long-term commitments;
we have committed
X-number of sins of which we have not been aware;
we have said
Yes when we should have cried out no;
we have lacked the
Zeal to struggle for our convictions
through unrewarding months and years.

For The Sin

For the sin of the hardened heart,
For the sin of the murmuring lips,
For the sin of the lustful look,
For the sin of the pious mask,
If Thou forgive us, O Lord,
Can we forgive ourselves?

For the sin of enjoying violence,
For the sin of degrading Thy name,
For the sin of debasing our speech,
For the sin of polluting Thy earth,
If Thou forgive us, O Lord,
Can we forgive ourselves?

For the sin of the yea that was nay,
For the sin of the bought heart,
For the sin of the covetous eye,
For the sin of the neck raised in pride,
If Thou forgive us, O Lord,
Can we forgive ourselves?

For the sin of casting off the divine yoke,
For the sin of raising myself by the fall of another,
For the sin of shifty hand and deceitful mind,
For the sin of the impure oath and pure hate,
If Thou forgive us, O Lord,
Can we forgive ourselves?

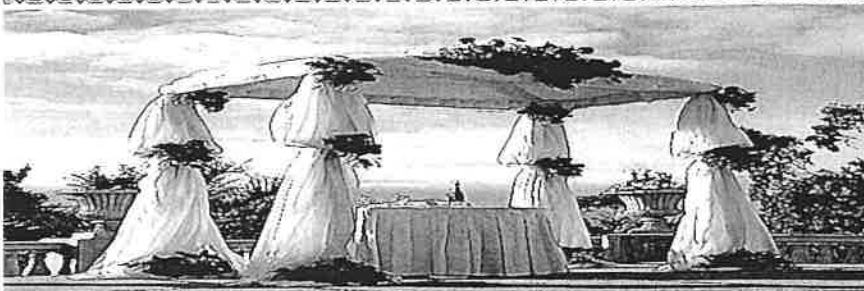
Give us the strength, O Lord, to see our sins and
the goodness, O Lord, to turn from them: the courage,
O Father, to seek the good, and love in our hearts to do it.

A Plethora Of Words

The Ropshitzer Rabbi once said: "There is a good rationale for the practice of rabbis to deliver lengthy sermons on the Sabbath of Repentance. Some truly pious and virtuous rabbis have no sins to expiate and seek forgiveness on the Day of Atonement. In order to have cause for repentance and to keep their atonement prayers from being in vain, they preach at length on the Sabbath of Repentance, for it is written in the Book of Proverbs, 'In the multitude of words there wanteth not transgressions.'

Yom Kippur Likened To A Wedding Day

There is a Talmudic dictum that "when a man marries, his sins are forgiven." Hence a wedding day is equated with Yom Kippur. As Yom Kippur atones for sins, so matrimony is a bridge to forgiveness and atonement. To emphasize the nexus between Yom Kippur and their wedding day, the bridegroom and bride fast on that day. In the afternoon service, the bridegroom recites the Viddui, the solemn Yom Kippur Confession. As it is customary to wear white on the Day of Atonement as a symbol of purity, so it is traditional for the bride to wear a white gown and for the bridegroom to be clad in a kittel (white robe).



Masquerading

The Kelemer maggid asked: Why is the Day of Atonement called in Hebrew Yom ki-Purim (a day like Purim)?

And he gave this answer: The similarity between the two days is based on the fact that on both days, it is customary to masquerade. On Purim, Jews masquerade and don the costumes of non-Jews. On the Day of Atonement, they masquerade as pious Jews.

Heartbeats

Rabbi Israel Meir, famed as the author of *Hafetz Hayyim*, was expounding the customs of Yom Kippur. Referring to the practice of beating one's heart when reciting the Confession of Sins, he explained:

“God does not forgive the sins of one who smites his heart but He pardons those whose hearts smite them for the sins they committed.”

Redemption For The World

The Berditchever rabbi ascended the pulpit before Neilah and addressed these words to God: “Our sages have taught that whoever quotes a passage in the name of him who said it, brings redemption to the world. Therefore, since I quote: *And God said: 'I have pardoned according to your words, ' You must pardon us and bring redemption to the world.*”

A New Al Het

For the sin which we have committed before You
by not working for peace,

And for the sin which we have committed before You
by ignoring the plight of the poor,

For the sin which we have committed before You
by dividing our cities into slums and suburbs

And for the sin which we have committed before You
by not respecting the image of God within each human being.

For the sin which we have committed before You
by lowering our moral standards,

And for the sin which we have committed before You
by trying to outdo each other in display of wealth.

V'al kulam, 'Eloha selichot. s'lach lanu. m'chal lanu. kaper lanu.
For all these sins. God of forgiveness, forgive us,
pardon us, and grant us atonement.

For the sin which we have committed before You
by not working adequately for our brethren in distress.

And for the sin which we have committed before You
by being a divided community.

For the sin which we have committed before You
by not educating our teenagers and ourselves in Torah.

And for the sin which we have committed before You
by not fulfilling our responsibilities to our brethren.

V'al kulam, 'Eloha selichot. s'lach lanu. m'chal lanu. kaper lanu.
For all these sins. God of forgiveness, forgive us,
pardon us, and grant us atonement.

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For the sin which we have committed before You
by unfair business practices and ruthless competition.

And for the sin which we have committed before You
by poor workmanship and neglect of our duties.

For the sin which we have committed before You
by keeping silent in the face of evil in the
high and low places.

And for the sin which we have committed before You
by gossip.

For the sin which we have committed before You
by neglecting our parents,

And for the sin which we have committed before You
by indulging our children.

For the sin which we have committed before You
by conforming.

And for the sin which we have committed before You
by chasing after honors, and by envy.

For the sin which we have committed before You
by not developing our own capacities.

And for the sin which we have committed before You
by not allowing others to become what they could be.

V'al kulam, 'Eloha selichot. s'lach lanu. m'chal lanu. kaper lanu.
For all these sins. God of forgiveness, forgive us,
pardon us, and grant us atonement.

A Yemenite "Ki Anu Amekha"

You are the Master and I am the servant.
Who should have mercy on the servant
if not the Master?

You are the Creator and I am the creature.
Who should have mercy on the creature
if not the Creator?

You are the Strong and I am the weak.
Who should have mercy on the weak if not the Strong?
You are the Judge and I the judged.

Who should have mercy on the judged if not the Judge?
You are God and I am man.

Who should have mercy on man if not God?
You are the Sovereign and I the subject.
Who should have mercy on the subject
if not the Sovereign?

You are the Living and I am the dying.
Who should have mercy on the dying if not the Living?

You are the Potter and I am the clay.
Who should have mercy on the clay if not the Potter?

You are the Faithful and I am the faithless.
Who should have mercy on the faithless
if not the Faithful?

You are the Rich and I am the poor.
Who should have mercy on the poor if not the Rich?

You are the Redeemer and I am the bound.
Who should have mercy on the bound
if not the Redeemer?

You are the Holy and I am the profane.
Who should have mercy on the profane if not the Holy?

You are the Shepherd and I am the sheep.
Who should have mercy on the sheep
if not the Shepherd?

You are the Just and I am the sinner.
Who should have mercy on the sinner if not the Just?

You are the Beginning and I am the end.
Who should have mercy on the end if not the Beginning?

Neilah

Said the Holy One: If you have come to a synagogue,
do not remain standing at the outer gate,
but enter gate after gate, until you
have reached the innermost gate.

The gates are made to be entered.
Open for us the gates, even as they are closing.
The sun is low, the hour is late;
let us enter the gates at last.

When a person begins life, countless gates stand
waiting to be opened.
The gates do not stay open forever.
We walk through the years,
and they shut behind us.

At the end, they are all closed, except the
final gate which we must enter.
Before it is too late, let us open
the gates that lead to blessing.

Let us enter the gates of Torah and tranquility,
let us enter the gates of kindness and compassion.
Let us open the gates to those things in
life which abide eternally.

Before the gates swing shut, before all of them close,
do not remain standing at the outer gate.
The gates are made to be entered.
The sun is low, the hour is late;
let us enter the gates at last.

Point Of View

R. Naftali of Roptchitz used to tell his disciples
"There are two ways that a man can be taller than his
neighbor: He can himself climb to a higher position, or he
can drag his friend down to a lower position.
Never follow the second path. Instead of digging a hole
for your friend, build a hill for yourself."

The Tzanzer was asked by a Hasid: "What does the
Rabbi do before praying?" "I pray," was the
reply, "that I may be able to pray properly."

For All These Things

For all of these things do we offer praise to You:
for the ability to tell light from dark
for the ability to tell right from wrong.
For creating us in Your image.
For the gift of freedom.
For the privilege of being Jewish.
For the ability to see.
For the garments that clothe us.
For the power to stand up under our burdens.
For the majestic universe in which we live.
For providing for our daily needs.
For the guidance to do right.
For endowing our people with strength.
For crowning Israel with glory.
For the privilege of awakening to a new day.



Peace

I have lived among men who hated peace.
I sought peace, but they longed for war.
Often since my youth they have sorely
afflicted me.

This is a refrain of the people Israel:
Often since my youth,
they have sorely afflicted me.

But they have not prevailed.
Let those who hate Zion be put to shame.
They have not prevailed.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.
May all who love her prosper.
May there be peace within her gates,
Well-being within her homes.

Deal kindly with us. Lord, deal kindly,
For we have suffered enough.
Too long have we suffered the insults
and the contempt of haughty oppressors.

You have been forsaken and despised, says the
Lord, but I will make you majestic forever.
Violence will no more be heard in your land,
Nor devastation within your borders.

May the Lord bless us from Zion.
May we witness the well-being of Jerusalem
all the days of our life.
May peace embrace Israel, and the people Israel.
And let us say: Amen.

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Iva and Irwin Weitz