



# Temple Beth Shalom

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## Days of Awe



## Supplemental Readings

*Compiled by Rabbi Gerald R. Fox*

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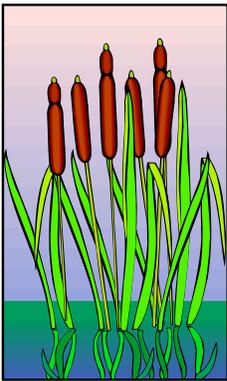
*Better a few prayers spoken with intention than many words prayed without intention.*

*—Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 1:4*

### How to Be in the Present

A plea on behalf of respect for the here and now, for today. How can we assure life in the future, if we have not yet learned how to live consciously, and responsibly in the present? Do not trample, hold in contempt or sell the future into bondage. Do not stifle it, rush or force it. Respect every single moment, as it will pass and it will never again be repeated.

—Janusz Korczak



There are three main avenues by which one arrives at meaning in life. The first is by creating a life or doing a deed. The second is by experiencing something or encountering someone; in other words, meaning can be found not only in work but also in love. Third: even the helpless victim of a hopeless situation, facing a fate that cannot be changed, may rise above himself, grow beyond himself, and by so doing, change himself.

—Viktor E. Frankl

### This Rosh Hashanah

This Rosh Hashanah, each of us enters this sanctuary with a different need.

Some hearts are full of gratitude and joy:  
They are overflowing with the happiness of love  
and the joy of life;  
they are eager to confront the day, to make the world more fair;  
they are recovering from illness or have escaped misfortune.  
And we rejoice with them.

Some hearts ache with sorrow:  
Disappointments weigh heavily upon them, and they have tasted  
despair; families have been broken;  
loved ones lie on a bed of pain;  
death has taken those whom they cherished.  
May our presence and sympathy bring them comfort.

Some hearts are embittered:  
They have sought answers in vain;  
have had their ideals mocked and betrayed;  
life has lost its meaning and value.  
May the knowledge that we too are searching  
restore their hope that there is something to find.

Some spirits hunger:  
They long for friendship; they crave understanding;  
they yearn for warmth.

May we in common need gain strength from one another;  
sharing our joys, lightening each other's burdens, and praying  
for the welfare of our community.

—Rabbi Chaim Stern

And so we understand that ordinary people are messengers of the Most High. They go about their tasks in holy anonymity, often, even unknown to themselves. Yet, if they had not been there, if they had not said what they said or did what they did, it would not be the way it is now. We would not be the way we are now. Never forget that you, too, yourself, may be a messenger. Perhaps, even one whose errand extends over several lifetimes.

—Rabbi Lawrence Kushner



The Architect of the universe creates anew each day. Therefore, each day is an utterly new creation. Take as much as you can from what each day has to offer.

–Rebbe Nachman of Bratslav

To be “religious” might mean to have an intuitive feeling of the unity of the cosmos... Oneness is grounded in scientific reality: we are made of the same stuff as all of creation. The deepest marvel is the unity in diversity.

–Daniel Matt

Spirituality is not a thing to be taught or imparted by study. It must be felt in the innermost power of the soul, as the glow of the heart touched by God.

–Rabbi Kaufmann Kohler

Start small. Bless one moment for what it brings you. Say one ancient prayer. Link yourself with continuity and eternity. Fill one silence with your end of the conversation. No one can do this for you. It belongs to you.

–Anonymous

### A Meditation for the New Year

In the twilight of the vanishing year, I lift my heart to You, O God.

I give thanks for all the blessings which fill my life with joy, for the love of family and support of friends, for the comfort others have given me in difficult moments, and for the privilege of life that You have granted me.

Now the time of repentance and renewal has come. These Days of Awe provide me with moments to meditate on the meaning of my life, on the worth of my deeds, and upon the regrets that mock my noblest intentions. No human being lives without failures. No year passes without its disappointment, its sorrows, its sins.

On this eve of the New Year, awaken me to the wisdom of my faith and people. Let these sacred days remind me that life is Your precious gift and that You have called me to Your service. You have made me in Your image, a fragile soul empowered with goodness and truth, justice and love.

So turn me to You now. Open the gates of the New Year, and grant to me, to my loved ones, my people, and all peoples, life and health, contentment and peace.

–From the Wilshire Boulevard Temple High Holy Day prayer book

### Holidays and Holiness

At this season of the year our ancestors always wished one another a Shanah Tovah – a good year.

*We usually wish each other a happy New Year.*

They emphasized the thought that life's central quest was for goodness, for uprightness.

*In our culture, the accent falls on the pursuit of pleasure.*

Even the way in which we refer to these days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur reveals a decisive difference in attitude.

*We close our shops or absent ourselves from our businesses and professions on account of the Jewish holidays.*

To them, they were the Jewish Holy Days, days of awe and trepidation.

*There is a world of difference between a holiday and a holy day.*

On holidays we run away from duties.

*On holy days, we face up to them.*

On holidays, we seek to let ourselves go.

*On holy days, we try to bring ourselves under control.*

On holidays, we try to empty our minds.

*On holy days, we attempt to replenish our spirits.*

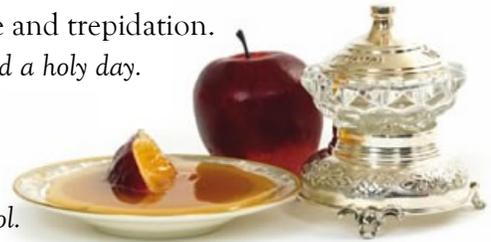
On holidays, we reach out for the things we want.

*On holy days, we reach up, striving to remember the things we need.*

Holidays bring a change of scene.

*Holy days bring a change of heart.*

—Rabbi Stanley Rabinowitz



During the month before Rosh Hashanah my mom calls me every day to blow the shofar over the phone! She explains that's the way to get us ready for the High Holidays. I have always been taught that the shofar was meant to be a kind of alarm that roused us from our normal lives and instructed us to prepare for the New Year and the Days of Awe.

—Micaela Hellma-Tincher

Why is it important to pause and count our blessings? Because of the human temptations to pray only prayers of asking for something at those times when we are aware of the pain and the unfulfilled yearnings in our life. We can only begin to accept the *all* of life, and affirm that life is worth its price, if we lift to consciousness all the *good* in our lives.

—Rabbi Samuel E. Karff

Synagogue membership does not involve a test of devoutness. No one is regarded as “not religious enough” to belong. The synagogue’s role is to encourage good works and uphold the highest moral principles, not to investigate how many of these principles one is observing.

–Rabbi Irwin Sanders

### What It Means to Be a Congregation

What does it mean to *be* a congregation? It means to care about each other. Pray? We also pray at home. We come together as a congregation in order to share in our life as Jews, to be part of the Community of Israel – past, present, and future.

“Once the Gerer Rebbe, may his memory protect us, decided to question one of his disciples: ‘How is Moshe Yaakov doing?’ The disciple didn’t know. ‘What!’ shouted the Rebbe, ‘You don’t know? You pray under the same roof, you study the same texts, you serve the same God, you sing the same songs and yet you dare to tell me that you don’t know whether Moshe Yaakov is in good health, whether he needs help, advice, or comforting?’”



Here lies the very essence of our way of life: every person must share in the life of others, and not leave them to themselves, either in sorrow or in joy.

–Mahzor Hadesh Yameinu

It is not enough to be concerned for the life to come. Our immediate concern must be with justice and compassion in life here and now, with human dignity, welfare, and security.

–Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

### Shema Yisrael: We Close Our Eyes for Shema because We’re Blind

The more real a thing is the less you can see it. After you reach the level where you see all those things which are not to be seen, then you open your eyes and everything is clear to you, and it feels like you saw it all the time. To love someone is the deepest thing in the world, but you can’t prove it. You can’t put your finger on it, but it’s the most real thing in the world.



God is the most, utmost real thing in the world, and you can’t see Him, but after you don’t see Him, you see Him. Then you can see Him everywhere, in every flower, in every cloud, in every little stone, in every candle. When we say the *Shema*, God is One, we close our eyes, because first we don’t see God, we’re blind. We just believe. But then we open our eyes, and it is so clear. He’s always there.

–Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach

**Teshuvah: Making a U-turn**

While bicycling on the first day of summer, I passed a church bulletin board. It carried the message: “If you are headed in the wrong direction, God allows U-turns.” That is a perfectly good translation of our term “*teshuvah*,” which literally means “turning around.”

You might remember the story of the passenger plane caught in a storm, when the pilot announced, “I have some good news and some bad news. The bad news is that our radio compass is inoperative. The good news is that we are making excellent time.” Of course, whatever speed we may be traveling, it doesn’t matter if we aren’t heading in the right direction. And if we’re headed wrong, the smartest thing we can do is turn around.

That’s why, in the *U’netaneh Tokef*, when we pray about a good life, the first thing we mention is *teshuvah*, the ability to recognize when we’ve gone off course, and the courage to make a U-turn, and head in the right direction again. Perhaps in English-speaking congregations, we should mispronounce the prayer, “*U-Netaneh Tokef*.”

Let’s take time, during the *U’netaneh Tokef*, to think about where we are going, and what parts of our lives need to make a U-turn, so that we can look forward to lives of blessing in this new year.

—Rabbi Shamaï Kanter

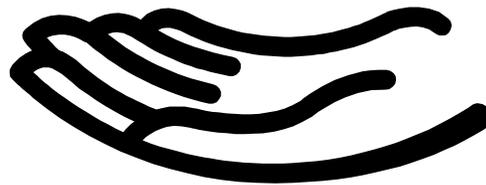
Help me perfect my ways  
of loving and caring.  
Inspire me to make myself  
whole so that I may honor  
Your name and create a  
world of justice and peace.

—Martin Buber

**Here I Am**

I want to be present to this moment.  
What is arising in me?  
As I stand before God  
    whatever I understand that to mean  
    God far above  
    or God deep within  
As I stand with my community  
    whether we are together in person  
    connected across the miles  
    or linked through the generations  
What words pour forth from my heart?  
What am I afraid of?  
What do I yearn for?  
Here I am: me, all that I am.  
Here I am: here, and nowhere else.  
Here I am: in this very moment  
    not remembering yesterday  
    not dreaming about tomorrow  
    but here and now.  
Like Your prophet Isaiah  
I yearn to say:  
*Here I am God: send me.*

—Rabbi Rachel Barenblat



A pious Jew is not one who worries about his neighbor’s soul and his own stomach; a pious Jew worries about his own soul and his neighbor’s stomach.

—Rabbi Yisrael Salanter

God has placed abilities and challenges in our heart without regard to gender. Each of us has the duty, whether man or woman, to realize those gifts that God has given.

–Rabbi Regina Jonas



### Those Who Err are Closest to God

Every human being is tied to God by a rope. If the rope breaks, and is later fixed with a knot, that individual is connected ever closer to God than if there were never a break in the rope. Thus, errors, mistakes and failures have the potential of drawing us even closer to God.

–Hasidic Teaching

These days, given the stresses and tensions of modern life, many people are irritable and depressed. This may cause them to say things they really do not mean, and they regret having said them. We should keep this in mind and give people every consideration.

–Rabbi Avraham Pam

During Rosh Hashanah services when I was a child, my Grandpa Harry used to turn around and make all the children laugh by sticking out his false teeth. My cousins and I would be hysterical with giggles. We got in trouble every year. Grandpa Harry, however, always turned back around in his seat and looked totally innocent.



–Patty Nogg

We spend [New Year's Day] walking through our lives, room by room, drawing up a list of work to be done, cracks to be patched. Maybe this year, to balance the list, we ought to walk through the rooms of our lives ... not looking for flaws, but for potential.

–Ellen Goodman



A prince was far away from his father—a hundred days' journey away. His friends said to him, "Return to your father." He replied, "I cannot; I don't have the strength." Thereupon his father sent word, saying to him, "Come back as far as you can according to your strength, and I will go the rest of the way to meet you." So the Holy One, blessed be God, says to Israel, "Return to Me, and I will return to you" (Malachi 3:7).

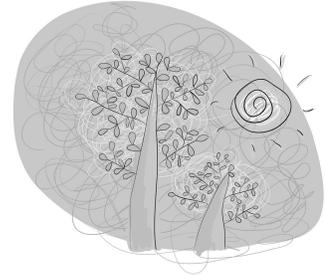
–Pesikta Rabbati 44:9

Prayer is no panacea, no substitute for action. It is rather, like a beam thrown from a flashlight before us into the darkness. It is in this light that we grope, stumble, and climb, discover where we stand, what surrounds us, and the course which we should choose. Prayer makes visible the right, and reveals what is hampering and false. In this radiance, we behold the worth of our efforts, the range of our hopes, and the meaning of our deeds.

—Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

When we are dead, and people weep for us and grieve, let it be because we touched their lives with beauty and simplicity. Let it not be said that life was good to us, but, rather, that we were good to life.

—Jacob P. Rudin



Can He be God  
if He can only  
be worshipped  
in one way?

—The Seer of Lublin  
(Rabbi Yitzhak Yaacov)

### The Unfolding of *Tefilah*

When praying, move gradually. Do not exhaust all of your strength at the outset. Rather, begin slowly, and in the midst of your prayer, cleave to God with greater intensity. Then you will even be able to recite the words of prayer very quickly without losing your focus. While you may be unable to connect with God at the beginning of prayer, continue to recite your words with attention and focus. Strengthen yourself step by step, until God helps you to pray more intensely.

—Tzava'at HaRivash, #32

### The Need for Prayer

. . . All beings long for the very source of their origin. Every plant, every grain of sand, every lump of earth, small creatures and big ones, the heavens above and the angels, every substance together with its particles — all of them are longing, yearning, panting to attain the state of holy perfection. Man and woman suffer all the time from this homesickness of the soul and it is in prayer that we cure it. When praying we feel at one with the whole of creation, and raise it to the very source of blessing and life.

—Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook



Every word of one's prayer should be like a rose that is picked from a bush. One gathers rose upon rose until a bouquet is formed and can be offered to God as a beautiful blessing.

—Rebbe Nachman of Bratslav



### Everything May Change

Everything may change in our demoralized world except the heart, our love and our striving to know the Divine. Painting, like all poetry, has a part in the Divine; people feel this today just as much as they used to. What poverty surrounded my youth, what trials my father had with us nine children.

And yet he was always full of love and in his way a poet. Through him, I first sensed the existence of poetry on this earth. After that I felt it in the nights, when I looked into the dark sky.

Then I learnt that there was also another world. This brought tears to my eyes, so deeply did it move me.

—Marc Chagall (adapted)

### To Be Forgiven, Learn How to Forgive

To be forgiven one must first learn how to forgive. Many of us waste years waiting to be forgiven. But since we have never offered forgiveness ourselves, we do not know how to recognize when it is extended to us.

To “forgive” means not only to excuse someone for having committed an offense, but also to renounce the anger and claims of resentment. Forgiving someone therefore means you are willing to endure the risk that he will hurt you in exactly the same way again, but that you trust him not to.

—Rabbi Lawrence Kushner



### Spread the Love of God

Abaye said: Spread the love of God through your actions. If you yourself study and help others to do so, if your business activities are decent and trustworthy, what will people say? “Have you seen the behavior of one who studies Torah? How beautiful! What a fine person!” Thus Isaiah (49:3) taught, “You are My servant Israel. I will be glorified through you.”

—based on Talmud, Yoma 86a

Never mind the remorse.  
Just don't do what causes it.

—Jewish Saying

Rabbi Eliezer said: “Repent one day before your death.” His disciples asked him, “Does one know on what day he will die?” “All the more reason he should repent today, lest he die tomorrow.”

—Talmud, Shabbat 153a

Eyes Open or Closed

When you are on a low spiritual level, pray out of a prayer book; looking at the letters will allow you to pray with kavannah [focus]. When you are attached to the Supernal world, however, it is better to close your eyes, so that your sight does not distract you from connecting to God.

—Tzava'at HaRivash, #40



People are accustomed to look at the Heavens and wonder what happens there, it would be better if they would look within themselves, to see what happens there.

—Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotsk

Zokhrenu Le-Hayim: To Life!

What is the most important word in the entire *Mahzor*? I think everyone would agree that the word is *hayim*. As we recite in every *Amidah* prayer “*Zokhreinu L’hayim . . . Remember us L’hayim, for life, O Ruler who delights in life.*”

But I believe that we are asking for much more than life. We are praying: “God, *Zokhreinu L’hayim, remember us in the year to come with many opportunities to say L’hayim—over a cup of wine at a bris, bar or bat mitzvah, a child’s wedding, the birth of a grandchild, upon the completion of a tractate of Talmud, or on the success of an important charitable endeavor.*”

May it be Your will, O God, to let us shout *L’hayim* at a joyous family *simchah*—may this year truly be a year of joy, of Jewish family celebration and continuity as we lift our voices and cups in Your praise.

*Zokhreinu L’hayim—remember us in this year and grant us L’hayim at simchas of Jewish nachas in our families.*

—Rabbi Joseph L. Braver



Open a hand of compassion to the poor. Say not, “I will miss what I give.” Be like the sheep who give their wool and have no less the next year because they have given.

—Rabbi Louis I. Newman

Oral deception is more heinous than monetary fraud because restoration is possible in the latter while no restoration is possible in the former, and the latter concerns one's money while the former affects his person.

—Moses Maimonides



Yom Kippur is a day to remove our *kapparat*, our coverings, the masks and stories which conceal our true selves.

—Rabbi David Ingber

If you see what needs to be repaired and how to repair it, then you have found a piece of the world that God has left for you to complete. But if you only see what is wrong and how ugly it is, then it is yourself that needs repair.

—Rabbi Tzvi Freeman



### *Avinu Malkeinu—Our Father, Our King*

The *Avinu Malkeinu* prayer includes the plea “*Shema Koleinu*”—Hear our voice.

As we contemplate our lives and the year ahead, we don't always have the proper words to articulate our hopes and dreams.

But if our voices convey sincere intention, even that can be enough.

God heard the voices of Ishmael and the Children of Israel crying wordlessly in the desert. God granted Hannah's petition when she wept her prayers in the Temple. She moved her lips, but only her soul poured out; no words were discernible.

*Shema Koleinu.* May the holy One hear our voices, too.

And may God bless us with Solomon's gift—*lev shome'ah*—a listening and discerning heart, so that we may hear God in reply.

*Avinu Malkeinu, Shema Koleinu.*

—Rabbi Debra Orenstein

All I Got Was Words

When I was young and fancy free,  
My folks had no fine clothes for me  
All I got was words:

*Got tzu danken (Thank God)*  
*Got vet geben (God will provide)*  
*Zol mir leben un zein gezunt (Live and be well)*

When I was wont to travel far,  
They didn't provide me with a car  
All I got was words:

*Geh gezunt (Be healthy)*  
*Geh pamelech (Go slowly)*  
*Hub a glickliche reise (Have a good life)*

I wanted to increase my knowledge  
But they couldn't send me to college  
All I got was words:

*Hub saychel (Have common sense)*  
*Zei nischt kein narr (You are not a fool)*  
*Torah iz di beste schorah (Torah is the best lesson)*

The years have flown—the world has turned,  
Things I've gotten; things I've learned.  
Yet I remember:

*Zog dem emes (Tell the truth)*  
*Gib Tzedakah (Give charity)*  
*Hub Rachmonas (Have compassion)*  
*Zei a mench! (Be a mensch, a good person)*

All I got was words.

—Unknown

Lamdeni Elohai — Teach Me, My God

Teach me to pray and to bless you for all.  
For the ripening fruit and the fading in Fall.  
For the freedom to breathe  
and to sense and to hold  
and to know and to wish  
and to fly and to fold.

Teach me to sing you the songs of your praise  
for the cycling of moon and the opening days  
so that each of my moments for ever be new,  
so that each of my moments will always be true,  
so that each of my moments I walk here with you.

—Leah Goldberg (English translation/interpretation: Orit Perlman)

To be content means to be satisfied with the material possessions one has. One who wants more than he has is suffering from "desire." All transgressions stem from desire. Its opposite – contentment – is the basis for the whole Torah.

–The Vilna Gaon

The human mind is not capable of grasping the Universe. We are like a little child entering a huge library. The walls are covered to the ceilings with books in many different tongues. The child knows that someone must have written these books. It does not know who or how. It does not understand the languages in which they are written. But the child notes a definite plan in the arrangement of the books - a mysterious order which it does not comprehend, but only dimly suspects.

–Albert Einstein

**Teaching by Being**

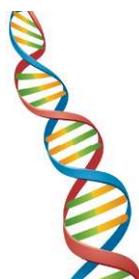
Dear God,  
 teach me to embody those ideals  
 I would want my children  
 to learn from me.  
 Let me communicate  
 with my children wisely –  
 in ways  
 that will draw their hearts  
 to kindness, to decency  
 and to true wisdom.  
 Dear God,  
 let me pass on to my children  
 only the good;  
 let them find in me  
 the values  
 and the behavior  
 I hope to see in them.

–Rebbe Nachman of Bratslav



The statistical probability that organic structures and the most precisely harmonized reactions that typify living organisms would be generated by accident, is zero.

–Ilya Prigogine (Chemist-Physicist)



. . . The capacity of DNA to store information vastly exceeds that of any other known system: it is so efficient that all the information needed to specify an organism as complex as man weighs less than a few thousand millionths of a gram. The information necessary to specify the design of all the species of organisms which have ever existed on the planet . . . could be held in a teaspoon and there would still be room left for all the information in every book ever written . . .

–Dr. Michael Denton (Microbiologist)

I believe that God is in me, as the sun is in the color  
and fragrance of a flower,  
the Light in my darkness, the Voice in my silence.

—Helen Keller

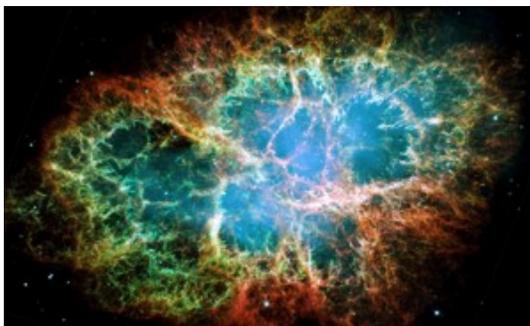
We go about our daily lives understanding almost nothing of the world. We give little thought to the machinery that generates the sunlight that makes life possible, to the gravity that glues us to an Earth that would otherwise send us spinning off into space, or to the atoms of which we are made and on whose stability we fundamentally depend. Except for children (who don't know enough not to ask the important questions), few of us spend much time wondering why nature is the way it is; where the cosmos came from, or whether it was always here; if time will one day flow backward and effects precede causes; or whether there are ultimate limits to what humans can know.”



—Carl Sagan

We are on a journey to keep an appointment with whatever we are.

—Gene Rodenberry



As a man who has devoted his whole life to the most clear headed science, to the study of matter, I can tell you as a result of my research about atoms this much: There is no matter as such. All matter originates and exists only by virtue of a force which brings the particle of an atom to vibration and holds this most minute solar system of the atom together. We must assume behind this force the existence of a conscious and intelligent mind. This mind is the matrix of all matter.

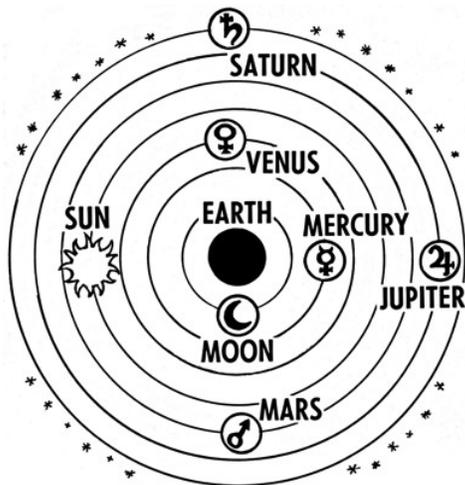
—Max Planck

The older we get, the more extraordinary life becomes—and the more amazing our capacity to experience its fullness.

—Rabbi Shira Milgrom

. . . how surprising it is that the laws of nature and the initial conditions of the universe should allow for the existence of beings who could observe it. Life as we know it would be impossible if any one of several physical quantities had slightly different values.

—Professor Steven Weinberg (Physicist)



Every cubic inch of space is a miracle.

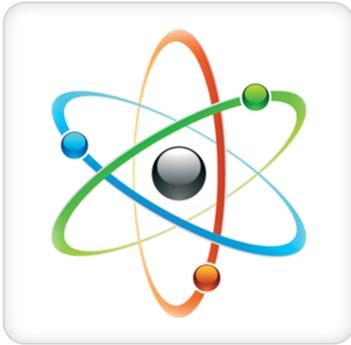
—Walt Whitman

As long as you are occupied with the mathematical sciences and the technique of logic, you belong to those who walk around the palace in search of the gate . . . . When you complete your study of the natural sciences and get a grasp of the metaphysics, you enter into the inner courtyard and are in the same house as [G-d the King].

—Moses Maimonides

Space is to place as eternity is to time.

—Joseph Joubert



As we look out into the universe and identify the many accidents of physics and astronomy that have worked together to our benefit, it almost seems as if the universe must in some sense have known that we were coming.”

—Professor Freeman J. Dyson

As we survey all the evidence, the thought insistently arises that some supernatural agency—or, rather, Agency—must be involved. Is it possible that suddenly, without intending to, we have stumbled upon scientific proof of the existence of a Supreme Being? Was it God who stepped in and so providentially crafted the cosmos for our benefit?

—George Greenstein (Astronomer)

How quickly do we grow accustomed to wonders. I am reminded of the Isaac Asimov story *Nightfall*, about the planet where the stars were only visible only once in a thousand years. So awesome was the sight that it drove men mad. We who can see the stars every night glance up casually at the cosmos and then quickly down again, searching for a Dairy Queen.

—Roger Ebert



When you pray, you are like a bed of coals.  
 After prayer, as long as a single spark remains,  
 A great fire can be kindled again.  
 But if that spark dies, there can be no fire.  
 Cling to God always,  
 Even at times when you feel unable to reach God.  
 This is how you may preserve that single spark,  
 So that the fire of your soul is never extinguished.

— Rabbi Dov Baer of Mezeritch

**V'Taher Libeinu: Kindness**

The hardest part is people.  
 So Lord, help me face them without rancor or disappointment.  
 Help me see the pain behind their actions rather than the malice;  
 the suffering rather than the rage.

And in myself, as I struggle with the vise of my own desire —  
 give me strength to quiet my heart, to quicken my empathy, to act  
 in gratitude rather than need.

Remind me that the peace I find in the slow track of seasons or an uncurling  
 fern frond, is married to the despair I feel in the face of nuclear war.

Remind me that each small bird shares atoms with anthrax, with tetanus, with  
 acid rain, that each time I close my heart to another, I add to the darkness;

Help me always follow kindness. Let this be my prayer.

—Karen Holden

Faith is an attitude, part gift, part victory hard won, that  
 allows each of us to look into our children's eyes, full of trust  
 and purity, expectation and a little fear, and say to them,  
 "I am so glad that I was able to bring you  
 into the world. Despite all the ugliness we  
 know the world possesses, despite war and  
 hatred, greed and poverty that spoil the  
 planet and erode the spirit, despite even  
 the inevitability of death itself, faith is what  
 lets us say, 'Dear child, it is still good.'"

—Rabbi Nina Beth Cardin

**My Script**

How do I inscribe myself into the Book of Life for  
 the coming year? What do I want my script to be?

The *Areshet Sefateinu* reminds us that we are  
 writing our script in partnership with God. It  
 challenges us to write a good script.

—Rabbi Zalman Schacter-Shalomi

### Spiritual Paths



It is important to visualize mentally the two paths that are before you. One path leads to the Garden of Eden, eternal bliss. The other path leads to tremendous suffering. When you see this clearly enough, you will have a strong inner feeling. This will become part of our reality and will have major ramifications in your way of life. Developing this awareness is a high priority. Do all you can to internalize faith and live with it daily.

—Rabbi Yisrael Salanter

### Illness and Fear

It is natural to be frightened when we become ill. We feel vulnerable. We worry; we want to know that everything will turn out all right. We sometimes feel alone even when loved ones are by our side. The illness lies within us, and no one else knows exactly how we feel. Prayer has the power to transform our fear into faith. It reminds us that we are never alone. Everything we are, body and soul, is in the hand of God, whose presence fills the universe and who is as close to us as our own breath. No matter what this unpredictable world sends our way, with God by our side we can find the strength to confront our fears. So pray and welcome God's healing power.

—Naomi Levy

### A Prayer for Protection at Night

In the name of *Adonai*, the God of Israel:

May the angel Michael be at my right,  
and the angel Gabriel be at my left;  
and in front of me the angel Uriel,  
and behind me the angel Raphael . . .  
and above my head the presence of God.

—from the nighttime Shema



**A Prayer for Healing**

I am sick, God. And I am frightened.  
I feel so alone. I am scared of doctors.  
I am scared of pain and uncertainty,  
of feeling helpless.

Be with me God. Be there when  
others fail me. Be my strength and  
my protector. Be my friend.

Hear me, God. Heal me, God. Lead  
me back to strength, God, back to  
health, back to life, back to You.  
Amen.

—Naomi Levy



Courage is a special kind of  
knowledge: the knowledge of  
how to fear what ought to be  
feared and how not to fear what  
ought not to be feared.

—David Ben Gurion

So many people walk around  
with a meaningless life. They  
seem half-asleep, even when  
they're busy doing things they  
think are important. This is  
because they're chasing the  
wrong things. The way you  
get meaning into your life is  
to devote yourself to loving  
others, devote yourself to  
your community around you,  
and devote yourself to  
creating something that gives  
you purpose and meaning.

—Morrie Schwartz

A lemon tree, like everything else, has a chronological age. But what are the ages of the lemons it bears? Each has its own age. So it is with us. The fruits we bear during infancy are quite different from those of adolescence. The varying seasons of early, middle, and late adulthood all blossom anew, bearing fresh fruit, green fruit that needs ripening.

—Elaine Bernstein Partnow

Atonement

Yom Kippur is not a Day of Penitence; it is the Day of Atonement. The penitent person is sorry for what he has done in the past; the atoned person is in the process of changing himself now.

—Rabbi Henry Kagan



A father complained to the Besht [Baal Shem Tov] that his son had forsaken God.

‘What, Rabbi, shall I do?’

‘Love him more than ever,’ was the Besht’s reply.

—Rabbi Dov Baer of Mezeritch

Watch your thoughts; they become your words.  
 Watch your words; they become your actions.  
 Watch your actions; they become your habits.  
 Watch your habits; they become your character.  
 Watch your character, for it will become your destiny.

—Hillel

U-Teshuvah . . .

The Baal Shem Tov taught that in the heavenly court there is no one who can judge you for what you have done in your life on earth. So this is what they do: They show you someone’s life — all the achievements and all the failures, all the right decisions and all the wrongdoings — and then they ask you, “So what should we do with this somebody?” And you give your verdict. Which they accept. And then they tell you that this somebody was you. Of course, those who tend to judge others favorably have a decided advantage.

Better get in the habit now.

—Rabbi Tzvi Freedman

### A Force for Good

Let people realize clearly that every time they threaten someone or humiliate or hurt unnecessarily or dominate or reject another human being, they become forces for the creation of psychopathology, even if these be small forces. Let them recognize that every man who is kind, helpful, decent, psychologically democratic, affectionate, and warm, is a psychotherapeutic force even though a small one.

—Abraham H. Maslow



The only man who makes  
no mistakes is the man  
who never does anything.

—President Theodore Roosevelt

When people come to you for help,  
do not turn them off with pious  
words, saying: “Have faith and take  
your troubles to God!” Act instead as  
if there were no God, as though there  
were only one person in all the world  
who could help — only yourself.

—Martin Buber

Yom Kippur is perfect. I love to sin  
and God loves to forgive me.

—Sam Levenson

Help me perfect my ways  
of loving and caring.  
Inspire me to make myself  
whole so that I may honor  
Your name and create a  
world of justice and peace.

—Martin Buber

And so we understand that ordinary people are messengers of the Most High. They go about their tasks in holy anonymity, often, even unknown to themselves. Yet, if they had not been there, if they had not said what they said or did what they did, it would not be the way it is now. We would not be the way we are now. Never forget that you, too, yourself may be a messenger. Perhaps even one whose errand extends over several lifetimes.

—Rabbi Lawrence Kushner

I can stay the tears of others, if I can see myself  
as diminished of their sorrows.

I can hasten time when everyone will be able  
to rejoice in freedom,

And if I can see myself as the companion,  
of those fighting against oppression,

I can honor the struggle of people everywhere  
to gain dignity and deliverance from bondage.

When I look at myself in the mirror  
who will I see?

—Anonymous

Religion embraces both faith and action.  
The primary quality is action, for it lays the  
foundation for faith; the more we do good,  
the more readily do we grasp the meaning  
of duty and life, and the more readily do  
we believe in the Divine from which stems  
the good.

—Rabbi Leo Baeck

It is not enough to be concerned for the life to come. Our immediate concern must be with justice and compassion in life here and now, with human dignity, welfare and security.

—Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel



People's good deeds are used  
by the Eternal as seeds for  
planting trees in the Garden  
of Eden: thus, each of us  
creates our own Paradise.

—The Mezeritzer Rebbe

When I was young, I was taught that being Jewish meant:  
 you don't cross picket lines,  
 you work for peace,  
 you fight for social justice,  
 you never forget the suffering of your people as a link to the suffering of others.

–Sabrina Virgo

The commandment to be charitable is in its weight as much as all the rest of the commandments in total.

–Talmud, Bava Batra 9a

### Tzedakah: The Root of Life

*Tzedakah* is the root of life. When you give to others, you raise the sparks from their broken state, and you elevate your own soul. The word *tzedakah* [charity] contains within it the word *tzedek* [righteousness]. In acting as a *tzaddik* [righteous person], you become a holy spark of the Cosmic *Tzaddik* and you help elevate *Tzedek* from poverty and exile. Enough said. Here is the idea: By carrying out a holy deed or an act of life-sustaining charity, you redeem a spark from the evil forces, and thus increase your own holiness....

–Rabbi Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl

### Eight Degrees of Charity

There are eight degrees in the giving of charity, one higher than the other:

- One who gives grudgingly;
- One who gives cheerfully, but not enough;
- One who gives a sufficient sum, but only when asked;
- One who gives before being asked, and directly to the needy;
- One who gives so that the needy knows the source, but the giver knows not the recipient;
- One who gives so that the giver knows the identity of the recipient, but the recipient knows not the giver;
- One who gives so that the giver knows not the identity of the recipient, nor does the recipient know the identity of the giver;
- The *highest* form: One who helps the needy by offering a gift or a loan, or by joining in a partnership, or by providing work, so that the person may become self-supporting.

–Moses Maimonides



Help me perfect my ways of loving and caring.  
Inspire me to make myself whole  
so that I may honor Your name and  
create a world of justice and peace.

—Martin Buber



The foundation of the state of  
perfection is in matters that are  
between a man and his neighbor.

—Rabbi Yisrael Salanter, Imrei Binah

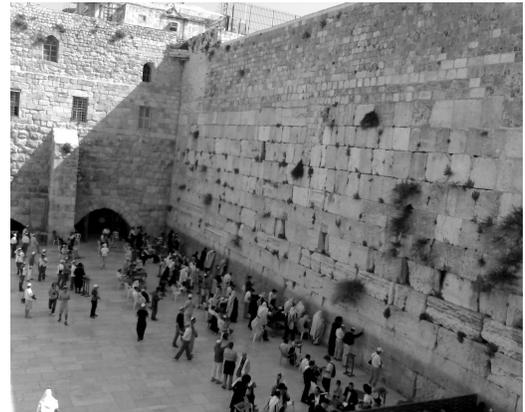
One evening when we were already resting on the floor of our hut, dead tired, soup bowls in hand, a fellow prisoner rushed in and asked us to run out to the assembly grounds and see the wonderful sunset. Standing outside we saw sinister clouds in the west and the whole sky alive with clouds of ever-changing shapes and colors, from steel-blue to blood red. The desolate grey mud huts provided a sharp contrast, while the puddles on the muddy ground reflected the glowing sky. Then, after minutes of moving silence, one prisoner said to another, “How beautiful the world could be.”

—Viktor E. Frankl

### No Time for Weeping

. . . When we reached the Western Wall, I was breathless. It seemed as though all the tears of centuries were striving to break out of the men crowded into that narrow alley, while all the hopes of generations proclaimed: “This is no time for weeping! It is a moment of redemption, of hope . . .” We stood among a tangle of rugged, battle-weary men who were unable to believe their eyes or restrain their emotions. Their eyes were moist with tears, their speech incoherent. The overwhelming desire was to cling to the Wall, to hold on to that great moment as long as possible.

—Yitzhak Rabin, on arriving at the Kotel during the Six Day War



Hope  
Smiles from the threshold of the year to come,  
Whispering ‘it will be happier’ . . . .

—Alfred Tennyson

No one can make you feel inferior  
without your consent.

—Eleanor Roosevelt

Don't Be Judgmental

It was outside Schwartz's bakery on Fairfax Ave. that I first saw him do it while I waited in my car for my wife to finish *Shabbos* shopping. As I watched the *erev Shabbat* [Sabbath evening] crowd go by, my attention was drawn to a poorly dressed young woman pushing an old market wagon, filled with bundles of rags, paper bags, and whatever else goes into living hand to mouth.



A small child sat cushioned in the wagon, and another kid walked alongside her. Passengers in poverty.

Coming from the opposite direction was this man whom I recognized. As he passed her, he turned around suddenly and called out something to get her attention. I didn't hear what. When she turned, he pretended to be picking up some money. Green it was, how much wasn't meant for me to know.

He motioned that she had dropped it, and quickly put it in the child's lap and was gone.

It was less than a month later, while I waited at the checkout counter at Ralph's market, that I saw that man again. He was standing behind an *alte bubbe* [old grandmother] who was counting out her pennies to pay for her milk and bread.

He didn't see me, but I saw him as he bent down and came up holding a twenty in his hand, all the while saying that the *bubbe* had dropped it. She said, "no," it wasn't hers. Everybody in line urged her to take it, and she did.

Now when anyone is lucky enough to see an act of kindness, it makes for good feelings. Trouble was that I never liked this man until now.

God gave us two eyes to see. The right one to see the good in others, and the left to see the fault in ourselves.

I see better now.

—Rabbi Howard Weiss



I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.

—Maya Angelou

**Before the Gate has been Closed**

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

—Yehuda Amichai

**In Many Houses**

In many houses  
 all at once  
 I see my mother and father  
 and they are young  
 as they walk in.  
 Why should my  
 tears come,  
 to see them laughing?  
 That they cannot  
 see me  
 is of no matter:  
 I was once  
 their dream:  
 now  
 they are mine.

—Author unknown

**Hold On**

Hold on to what is good  
 even if it is  
 a handful of earth.  
 Hold on to what you believe  
 even if it is  
 a tree which stands by itself.  
 Hold on to what you must do  
 even if it is  
 a long way from here.  
 Hold on to life even when  
 it is easier letting go.  
 Hold on to my hand even when  
 I have gone away from you.

—Nancy Wood

**Ne'ilah**

The hinge of the year  
 the great gates opening  
 and then slowly slowly  
 closing on us.

I always imagine those gates  
 hanging over the ocean  
 fiery over the stone grey  
 waters of evening.

We cast what we must  
 change about ourselves  
 onto the waters flowing  
 to the sea. The sins,

errors, bad habits, whatever  
 you call them, dissolve.  
 When I was little I cried  
 out *!! !! I want, I want.*

Older, I feel less important,  
 a worker bee in the hive  
 of history, miles of hard  
 labor to make my sweetness.

The gates are closing  
 The light is failing  
 I kneel before what I love  
 imploring that it may live.

So much breaks, wears  
 down, fails in us. We must  
 forgive our broken promises—  
 their sharp shards in our hands.

—Marge Piercy

For Those Who Watch Over Us

May the One who blessed our ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, bless the men and women who serve in the armed forces of the United States of America, and the men and women who serve in the Israel Defense Forces, for they stand to protect our people from harm.



May God make them successful in every righteous endeavor. May the Holy One watch over our soldiers, protect them from every accident and distress, and send blessings and healing to them in their moments of need.

May they be filled with courage and calm, as they remember the words of the prophet: “They will attack you, but they shall not overcome you; for I am with you – declares the Lord – to save you.”

And let us say, Amen.

Jerusalem

Jerusalem: the face visible yet hidden,  
the sap and the blood of all that makes us  
live or renounce life.

The spark flashing in the darkness,  
the murmur rustling through shouts of  
happiness and joy.

A name, a secret.

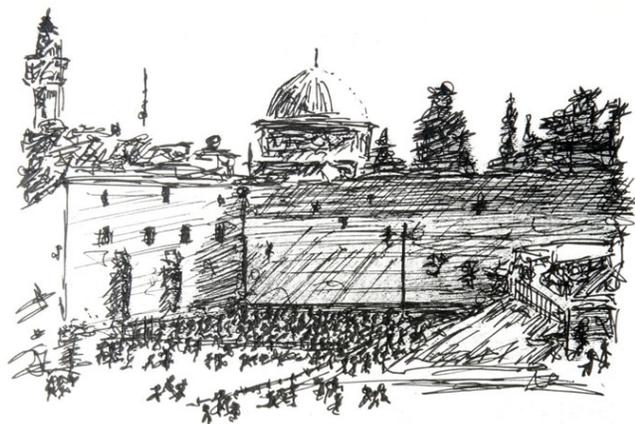
For the exiled, a prayer.

For all others, a promise.

Jerusalem: seventeen times destroyed yet never erased.

The symbol of survival.

Jerusalem: the city which miraculously transforms person into pilgrim;  
no one can enter it and go away unchanged . . .



–Elie Wiesel

Someone who does not know his own worth –  
how can [they] estimate that of another?

–*Jaakob Josef from Polonia*

Where is God to be found?  
In the place where He is given entry.

–*R. Menahem Mendel of Kotsk*

Pray as if everything depended on God.  
Act as if everything depended on you.

–*Rabbi Ferdinand Isserman*

Judaism is a doing which can be grasped  
only by the heart.

–*Julius Lester*

*Temple Beth Shalom*



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