



**Beth Chayim Chadashim Telephone Minyan**  
**Yom Kippur Machzor**

September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2013

10 Tishrei 5774

Compiled and Edited by Bracha Yael

*On the tenth day of the same seventh month you shall observe a sacred occasion when you shall practice self-denial.*

(Num. 29:1)

*And Adonai said, "I have forgiven according to your words."*

(Kol Nidre Liturgy; Num. 14:20)

*Remember us for Life, our Sovereign Who desires life, and seal us in the Book of Life—for Your sake, Our Living God.*

(Neilah Service liturgy)

## **An Invitation**

We invite into our presence family and friends who are away or of blessed memory and also to those who are in need of our prayers to join us as we observe Yom Kippur together. Please say now who you would like to be with us in prayer.

## **I Know Myself**

God, I am not so arrogant as to pretend  
that the trial of my life  
does not reveal my flaws.  
I know myself  
in this moment of prayer,  
to have failed  
the ones I love and the stranger,  
again and again.  
I know how often  
I did not bring to the surface of my life  
the hidden goodness within.  
Where I have achieved, I am grateful;  
where I have failed, I ask forgiveness.  
Remember how exposed I am  
to the chances and terrors of life.  
I was afraid.  
I sometimes chose to fail.  
And I ask:  
Turn my thoughts from the hurt to its remedy.  
Free me from the torments of guilt.  
Forgiven, O God, I shall then forgive others;  
failing, I shall learn to understand failure;  
renewed and encouraged, I shall strive to be  
like those who came before me: human,  
failing sometimes, yet a blessing.

[Siddur B'chol L'vav'cha With All Your Heart, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah, NY, NY p.192, borrowed from *Gates of Repentance: The New Union Prayerbook for the Days of Awe*. Copyright 1978 CCAR]

## **The Foundation of Repentance**

And now my heart has uplifted me and my spirit has motivated me to return to You sincerely, with a good and complete heart, with all my heart and soul and resources, to become one who confesses and forsakes my transgressions, to cast off myself all my transgressions, to make myself a new heart and a new spirit, and to be diligent and careful in fearing You. And You, Adonai, my God, who opens Your hand to repentance and assists those who come to purify themselves, open Your hand and accept me with complete repentance before You.

[Excerpt from the prayer 'Foundation of Repentance' with minor edits by Bracha Yael. *The Complete ArtScroll Rosh HaShanah Machzor*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd., p.7. New Trans. and anthologized commentary by Rabbi Nosson Scherman, New York, 1985]

## Shema

### ***Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheynu, Adonai Echad***

*Hear O Israel, Adonai is God, Adonai is One!*

We learn from the *Sh'ma*, which means "Listen," that the first step in any significant relationship is the act of listening. But the first part of listening is to be quiet. Being quiet is not easy. It does not mean simply not speaking. It also means opening your ears and your heart. It means trying to clear from your mind the inner dialogue which can be distracting when we want to listen to the voice of another. To be a good [listener], we must truly listen not only to the words, but to the heart of the other.

[*'Shema Means Listen'* from *Stepping Stones to Jewish Spiritual Living* by Rabbi James L. Mirel and Karen Bonnell Werth]

### **A Hasidic Tale**

Rabbi Shneur Zalman, The Rav of Northern White Russia was in jail in Petersburg awaiting trial when the prison warden entered his cell. The majestic and quiet Rav, who was so deep in meditation that he did not at first notice his visitor, suggested to the prison warden, a thoughtful person, what manner of man he had before him. He began to converse with his prisoner and brought up a number of questions which had occurred to him in reading the Scriptures. Finally he asked: 'How are we to understand that God, the all-knowing, said to Adam: "Where are you?"'

'Do you believe,' answered the Rav, 'that the Scriptures are eternal and that every era, every generation and every person is included in them?' 'I believe this,' said the other.

'Well then,' said the zaddik, in every era, God calls to every person: "Where are you in your world? So many years and days of those allotted to you have passed, and how far have you gotten in your world?" God says something like this: "You have lived forty-six years. How far along are you?"'

When the prison warden heard his age mentioned, he pulled himself together, laid his hand on the Rav's shoulder, and cried: 'Bravo!' But his heart trembled.

[*'Hasidic Tale'* from *The Way of Man: According to the Teaching of Hasidism* by Martin Buber]

## **Self-Acceptance and Change**

You cannot become someone other than who you are until you know who you are. And you cannot know who you are until you accept who you are right now and in this place. For the time is now, not some other time; and the place is here, not somewhere else. And you are who you are, not anyone else.

[Self Acceptance and Change' from *God Was In This Place & I, I Did Not Know* by Lawrence Kushner. p. 141]

## **A Reflection on *Teshuva***

The conclusion of true *teshuva*, returning to our Source in Heaven, is not self-rejection or remorse, but the healing that comes from telling ourselves the truth about our real intentions and, finally, self-acceptance. This does not mean that we are now proud of who we were or what we did, but it does mean that we have taken what we did back into ourselves, acknowledged it as part of ourselves. We have found its original motive, realized how it became disfigured, perhaps beyond recognition, made real apologies, done our best to repair the injury, but we no longer try to reject who we have been and therefore who we are, for even that is an expression of the Holy One of Being.

[Lawrence Kushner, *God was in this Place & I, I Did not Know: Finding Self, Spirituality and Ultimate Meaning*, Woodstock:Vermont, Jewish Lights Publishing,1991; p.79]

## **Unetaneh Tokef**

*On Rosh Hashanah it is inscribed,  
And on Yom Kippur it is sealed.  
How many shall pass away and how many shall be born,  
Who shall live and who shall die,  
Who shall reach the end of his or her days and who shall not,  
Who shall perish by water and who by fire,  
Who by sword and who by wild beast...*

(From the traditional Unetaneh Tokef prayer)

### **An Interpretive Unetaneh Tokef**

We now confront the meaning of this day  
As we stare into the face of our own mortality.  
We form a circle.  
Hands and souls linked,  
We stand as community.  
Together we contemplate  
The *Yomim Noraim*.  
The days of awe,  
The days of trembling.

Our eyes scan the room  
And lock with the eyes of others,  
As we consider the year just begun.

As we cross the threshold of a New Year,  
We are not so foolish  
As to think that it will be  
A year unblemished by tears.

Give us the strength to stand as a circle,  
When the year is touched by anguish and pain.  
When injustice, illness, and death,  
Enter the circle,  
Give us the compassion not to avert our gaze.

Only You know what the year will bring.  
Who will live and who will die.  
Who will face cancer or depression  
Or the other maladies of flesh and soul.

Job loss, addiction, infertility, heartbreak,  
Temptations to stray from vows to  
family and community.  
Impoverishment, earthquake, hurricanes, acts of terror,  
We are vulnerable creatures subject to Your grace.

We do not ask to be exempt from the  
Afflictions of being human.  
We only ask that you be with us in the  
Peaks and in the valleys,  
That you help us to stand with each  
Other in good times and in bad.

And that the circle of witness and consolation  
Remains unbroken  
In the coming year. Amen

(Anne Brener)

## 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 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 real companionship within our family  
Or was there a living together and a growing apart?

    Were we a help to our mates or friends  
    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?

[Rabbi Jack Reimer, *New Reform Congregation of Encino Machzor*, 1984]

## Ashamnu

Our God and God of our fathers and mothers: Let our prayer enter Your presence; O do not turn aside from our entreaty! For we are not so obstinate and stubborn as to say before You, "We are righteous, we have done no wrong." For indeed, we have done wrong. We have sinned.

We have been negligent; we have betrayed;  
We have robbed; we have slandered;  
We have been perverse; we have been wicked;  
We have sinned willfully; we have done violence;  
We have been deceitful; we have given evil advice;  
We have lied; we have mocked;  
We have rebelled; we have been iniquitous;  
We have trespassed; we have oppressed;  
We have been obstinate; we have acted wickedly;  
We have been corrupt; we have committed abominations;  
We have gone astray; we have led others astray,  
We have turned aside from Your mitzvot,  
From Your laws which point us toward the good,  
And no good has come to us from our misdeeds.  
Yet You do justly with everyone who comes before You,  
For You have acted out of truth, while we have too often acted falsely.  
What shall we say before You who dwells in the heights,  
What stories can we tell You who dwells in heaven?  
Do You not already know all that we reveal and all that we have tried to hide?

Indeed, You know the mysteries of the universe,  
And the best kept secrets of every living thing.  
You search out the innermost rooms of our life,  
With care You examine all our feelings, all our thoughts.  
Not one thing is hidden from You, nothing escapes Your gaze.  
God who preserves the memory of all our ancestors,  
If You would only wipe away the memory of all our wrongs  
And grant atonement for all our sins.

[On Wings of Awe Hillel Machzor, ed. and trans. by Rabbi Richard N. Levy; Washington D.C. B'nai B'rith Foundations; pp.214-217]

### **All Israel Is Responsible For One Another**

Why was the Confession composed in the plural, so that we say, "We have sinned," rather than, "I have sinned?" Isaac Luria answers: Because all Israel is one body and every one of Israel is a limb of that body; that is why we are all responsible for one another when we sin. So, if one's fellow should sin, it is as though one has sinned oneself; therefore, despite the fact that one has not committed that iniquity, one must confess to it. For when one's fellow has sinned, it is as though one has sinned oneself.

['All Israel Responsible For One Another' from *Days of Awe* by S.Y. Agnon; p. 220]

## The Final Confession

***When we pour out our confession, we don't hit ourselves; we hold ourselves.***

### **Al Cheyt**

For the wrong we did before You under coercion or of our own free will;  
And for the wrong we did before You by hardening our hearts.

For the wrong we did before You unintentionally;  
And for the wrong we did before You through idle talk and meaningless resolutions.

For the wrong we did before You by using sex exploitatively;  
And for the wrong we did before You in public and in private.

For the wrong we did before You knowingly and deceptively;  
And for the wrong we did before You by offensive language.

For the wrong we did before You by oppressing another person;  
And for the wrong we did before You by malicious thoughts.

For the wrong we did before You by promiscuity;  
And for the wrong we did before You by confessing insincerely.

For the wrong we did before You by contempt for parents and teachers;  
And for the wrong we did before You intentionally or by accident.

For the wrong we did before You by violence;  
And for the wrong we did before You by failing to be true to our heritage, thus defaming Your Name in the world.

For the wrong we did before You by the unbridled passions of our *yetzer ha-ra*;  
And for the wrong we did before You knowingly and unknowingly.

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



## **Al Cheyt (cont.)**

For the wrong we did before You by lying and deceiving;  
And for the wrong we did before You by accepting bribes.

For the wrong we did before You by scoffing and mocking;  
And for the wrong we did before You by speaking ill of other people.

For the wrong we did before You in our work;  
And for the wrong we did before You in the foods we eat and the amount we drink.

For the wrong we did before You by refusing to be generous;  
And for the wrong we did before you by being proud and haughty.

For the wrong we did before You by the content of our conversation;  
And for the wrong we did before You by immodest or demeaning glances.

For the wrong we did before You by scornful glances;  
And for the wrong we did before You by a defiant manner.

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

For the wrong we did before You in rejecting Your authority;  
And for the wrong we did before You in making harsh judgments on other people.

For the wrong we did before You by plotting against others;  
And for the wrong we did before You by tormenting others.

For the wrong we did before You by dismissing serious matters with a joke;  
And the wrong we did before You by being obstinate.

For the wrong we did before You by running to do evil;  
And for the wrong we did before You by gossiping.

For the wrong we did before You by swearing falsely;  
And for the wrong we did before You by hating others without cause.

For the wrong we did before You by betraying a trust;  
And for the wrong we did before You out of confusion, unaware of the significance of our actions.

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

***When we “make” teshuva we remember the Source of our innermost selves and our purpose in creation.***

['Al Cheyt' from *On Wings of Awe Hillel Machzor* ed. by Rabbi Richard N. Levy. pp. 233-237]

*Judith Plaskow believes the numerous recitations of the traditional Al Cheyt (confession of sins) can undermine women's already fragile self-esteem. She offers instead this counter or complement to it. It gives a powerful affirmation of one's strengths and deeds.*

### **Al Mitzvah Shekiyamnu**

For the mitzvah we fulfilled by loving ourselves  
And for the mitzvah we fulfilled by loving our partners, our friends and our families.  
For the mitzvah we fulfilled by affirming our own strengths  
And for the mitzvah we fulfilled by affirming the strengths of others.  
For the mitzvah we fulfilled in our work  
And for the mitzvah we fulfilled by eating healthy food.  
For the mitzvah we fulfilled by being honest  
And for the mitzvah we fulfilled by living our values and beliefs.  
For the mitzvah we fulfilled by supporting Jews  
And for the mitzvah we fulfilled by supporting all peoples.  
For the mitzvah we fulfilled by working for justice and peace  
And for the mitzvah we fulfilled by preserving the environment.  
For the mitzvah we fulfilled by...  
And for the mitzvah we fulfilled by...

### **Affirmations**

We are accepting  
We are balanced  
We are caring  
We are devoted  
We are empathic  
We are faithful  
We are gracious  
We are holy  
We are insightful  
We are just  
We are kind  
We are loving  
We are modest  
We are nurturing  
We are open  
We are positive  
We are questioning  
We are reaching  
We are strong  
We are trustworthy  
We are understanding  
We are vital  
We are wise  
We are young  
We are zestful

## Torah Service

### Blessing before Torah Study

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheynu melech ha-olam asher kid'sha-nu b'mitz-vo-tav v'tzee-vanu l'sok b'divrei Torah.*

Blessed are You Adonai, Our God, Sovereign of all Creation, who has commanded us to busy ourselves in the words of Torah.

### Alternative Yom Kippur Morning Service Torah Reading

You stand today—all of You—before Adonai your God: your leaders, your tribes, your elders, your officials, every man, woman, and child in Israel, the stranger in the midst of your camp, from the one who chops your wood to the one who draws your water, that you may enter into the sworn covenant of Adonai your God which Adonai your God is confirming with you this very day, for the purpose of establishing you as the people whose only God is Adonai, as you have promised, and as God swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. But it is not only with you that I am making this sworn covenant, but with whoever is standing here with us today before Adonai your God, and with whoever is not here with us today.

For this mitzvah which I am commanding you today is not too wondrous for you to follow, nor too remote from you; it is not in heaven, that you should say, “Who will ascend to heaven to obtain it for us and explain it to us that we may do it?” Nor is it beyond the sea that you should say, “Who will cross over the sea to obtain it for us and explain it to us that we may do it?” For the word is very close to you, in your own mouth and heart, so you can do it.

See, I have set before you today life and good (or “order,” or “prosperity”) and death and evil (or “chaos,” or “adversity”), in that I am commanding you today to love Adonai, to walk in the ways and keep the mitzvot, the statutes, and the judgments of your God, that you may live and increase as Adonai your God blesses you in the land into which you have come to inherit. But if your heart turns aside and you do not hearken, but let yourself be led astray to worship other gods and serve them, then I tell you today that you will surely perish, you shall not live long upon the land whither you have crossed the Jordan to inherit. Today I call as witness against you heaven and earth: life and death I set before you, blessing and curse, that you might choose life, and you and your seed might live, loving Adonai your God, hearkening to God’s voice, and cleaving to the One who is your life and the length of your days, dwelling upon the land which Adonai your God promised to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.

[Deut. 29:9-14; 30:11-20]

## A Prayer for Healing

### Words of Wisdom from a Friend

In times of difficulty and illness, BCC member Ray Eelsing often reflects on the wisdom of his life partner Ed LaFuente (may his memory be for a blessing). While suffering from the negative effects of HIV medications and AIDS, Ed wrote these words of comfort to a friend who was dealing also with serious health challenges:

*"I hope we can help bear some of the burden on your shoulders. Remember we are always here for you. If you need anything, call. I know we cannot resolve what life is having us face now, but we can share it --- and pound it down into the space it deserves --- so we can still go on 'enjoying' or 'trying to enjoy' life.*

At Ed's eulogy, Rabbi Lisa Edwards marveled at his insight into facing adversity:

*I love the phrase "and pound it down to the space it deserves." Ed knew we had to respect life's challenges, give them space, but he also knew that we don't have to be ruled by those challenges, don't have to let them overwhelm who we are in our essence, don't have to let them keep us from appreciating life itself.*

May Ed's words guide us on our own journey to health and enjoyment.

**Please See Attached Yizkor Service**

## Final Pleas

Open for each of us the gates of righteousness;  
Then shall we enter, praising God.  
Open the gate for us now when the gates are closing.  
For day is passing, day is passing.  
The sun turns home.  
Let us come into Your gates.  
Please, God, spare...  
Please forgive...  
Please have mercy...  
Please forget.  
Please forbear.  
And please absolve.  
Help us overcome sin and wrong-doing.

(Neilah Service; *Wings of Awe: A Machzor for Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur*; ed. and trans. by Rabbi Richard Levy; B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations, 1985; p.437)

Now the gates are closing in the heavens which have been the witness of our hearts on this afflicting, wearying, yet now exalting day. As the sun descends into the sea, we pray that it may take our misdeeds, thoughtlessness, and wrongs with it, that when the stars rise in the clear night sky there might rise with them the first and tender steps of a committed, thoughtful life, our soul awake to the brightness of possibilities that life can offer us, to enable us to shine among our cosmos as the full, bright Tishrei moon that soon will glow above us in the Sukkot sky.

(Neilah Service; *Wings of Awe: A Machzor for Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur*; ed. and trans. by Rabbi Richard Levy; B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations, 1985; p.452)

## Final Prayers

***Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheynu, Adonai Echad!***

Hear O' Israel, Adonai is God, Adonai is One!

(three times)

***Baruch Shem k'vod mal'chu-to l'olam va-ed.***

Praised be the Name whose glorious kingdom is forever and ever.

(seven times)

**Adonai Hu Ha-Elohim!**

Adonai is God!

Next Year in Jerusalem!  
Next year may a new world dawn for us all!

## Additional Prayers, Poems and Writings

### A Hasidic Tale:

Rabbi Hayyim of Zans told a parable: A man had been wandering about in a forest for several days, not knowing which was the right way out. Suddenly he saw a man approaching him. His heart was filled with joy. "Now I shall certainly find out which is the right way," he thought to himself. When they neared one another, he asked the man, "Brother, tell me which is the right way. I have been wandering about in this forest for several days."

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

[‘Hasidic Tale’ from *Days of Awe* by S.Y. Agnon; p. 22]

### Return

Return again, return again,  
return to the land of your soul

Return again, return again,  
return to the land of your soul

Return to what you are,  
Return to who you are,  
Return to where you are  
Born and reborn again...

Return again, return again,  
return to the land of your soul...

(Lyrics and music by Neshama Carlebach and Shlomo Carlebach)

## **Time for Turning**

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

Now is the time for turning.  
The leaves are beginning to turn  
From green to red and orange.

The birds are beginning to turn  
And are heading once more towards the South.  
The animals are beginning to turn  
To storing their food for the winter.  
For leaves, birds, and animals  
Turning comes instinctively  
But for some of us turning does not come so simply.

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

It means breaking with old habits  
It means admitting that we have been wrong;  
And this is never easy.  
It means losing face;  
It means starting all over again:  
And this is always painful.  
It means saying: "I'm sorry."  
It means admitting that we have the ability to change:  
And this is always embarrassing.

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

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

*(Unattributed, New Reform Congregation of Encino Machzor, 1984)*



### **Yom Kippur for One who Cannot Fast**

*Ribbono shel Olam*/Sovereign of the Universe;  
Creator of All, Source of All Life,  
Who Knows What is Deep in Human Hearts,  
Who Nurtures Every Living Being:

As You know, dear God  
Yom Kippur is here, and because of my condition,  
I am not able to keep the traditional fast—  
I cannot abstain totally from eating.

On this Day of Atonement, this Sabbath of Sabbaths,  
this year and every year,  
it is so central to join the people of Israel  
in denying ourselves food and drink one day  
so that we focus on correcting our misdeeds,  
on knowing our mortality;  
on reaching for a life of Torah, *mitzvot*, and lovingkindness;  
on You.

You know, dear God, that it is not my intent  
to be apart from our people and our tradition.  
My current state of health makes it unsuitable for me to fast.

So, dear God, I turn to You now in sincerity and openness:  
Help me in the coming year to do my best in guarding my health.  
Help us, Your children, learn how to protect our bodies from harm.  
Help us support others in caring for their *tzelem Elohim*, their Image of God.  
Teach us to help one another grow and thrive in Body, Mind, and Spirit.

Guide caring family and health care professionals in their partnering with You  
to bring healing if not cure, support and strength if not an end to symptoms.  
And if there is an opportunity for me to help others who suffer  
by doing something they need or by being attentive company—  
Grant me the ability to do this *mitzvah* with love and devotion.

*Rofeh khol basar*/ Healer of all living creatures:  
I thank You for the breath that is in me  
for the community of Israel that lives  
for the possibilities of today and tomorrow.

May my eating be as a fast;  
May it be dedicated to You, to *T'shuvah*—  
to the Renewal and Restoration of my Relationship  
to You, to Others, and to Myself.

(Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub)

### **Unetaneh Tokef**

When we really begin a new year it is decided,  
And when we actually repent, it is determined;  
    Who shall be truly alive, and who shall merely exist;  
    Who shall be happy, and who is miserable;  
Who shall be tormented by the fire of ambition,  
And whose hopes shall be quenched by the waters of failure;  
    Who shall be pierced by the sharp sword of envy,  
    And who shall be torn by the wild beast of resentment;  
Who shall hunger for companionship,  
And who shall thirst for approval;  
    Who shall be shattered by storms of change,  
    And who shall be plagued by the pressures of conformity;  
Who shall be strangled by insecurity,  
And who shall be beaten into submission;  
    Who shall be content with their lot,  
    And who shall wander in search of satisfaction;  
Who shall be serene,  
And who shall be distraught;  
    Who shall be at ease,  
    And who shall be afflicted with anxiety;  
Who shall be poor in their own eyes,  
And who shall be rich in tranquility;  
    But *teshuvah*, *tefilah* and *tzedakah*  
    Have the power to change the character of our lives.  
May we resolve, then, to turn from our accustomed ways  
And to behave righteously  
So that we may truly begin a new year.

[Stanley Rabinowitz (adapted); Kol Haneshamah: Machzor Leyamim Nora'im  
Prayer book for the Days of Awe]

## **Who by Fire**

And who by fire, who by water,  
Who in the sunshine, who in the night time,  
Who by high ordeal, who by common trial,  
Who in the merry merry month of May,  
Who by slow decay,  
And who shall I say is calling?

And who in her lonely slip, who by barbiturate,  
Who in these realms of love, who by something blunt,  
And who by avalanche, who by powder,  
Who for his greed, who for his hunger,  
And who shall I say is calling?

And who by brave assent, who by accident,  
Who in solitude, who in this mirror,  
Who by his lady's command, who by his own hand,  
Who in mortal chains, who in power,  
And who shall I say is calling?

(Leonard Cohen)

'Who By Fire' YouTube musical video and discussion about Leonard Cohen's modern take on Unetaneh Tokef

<http://www.examiner.com/article/a-modern-take-on-unetaneh-tokef-leonard-cohen-s-who-by-fire-continues-great-midrashic-tradition>

## ***CYCLE OF JEWISH TIME AND HEALING***

**Excerpt from Keynote talk at  
National Center for Jewish Healing Conference:  
*SEASONS FOR HEALING* -**

***DRAWING SPIRITUAL RESOURCES FROM THE JEWISH HOLIDAYS***<sup>1</sup>

**Rabbi Amy Eilberg  
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*Unetaneh Tokef*, the prayer that imagines God inscribing in the heavenly book who shall live and who shall die in the year to come, has become for many a riveting and troubling image of the high holy days. I remember one year that the *Unetaneh Tokef* prayer found me painfully aware that a friend, a beloved member of our community, who had known much tragedy in her life, was now in the final stages of a long and valiant cancer journey. We were quite sure that our friend would not live to see another Rosh Hashana, and *Unetaneh Tokef* took us

## **(Seasons for Healing Keynote Talk cont.)**

deep into our grief. And I remember the year that I listened to the *Unetaneh Tokef* on Rosh Hashanah, having been told that I might have ovarian cancer. I was lucky - by Yom Kippur I had good news. But the words shook me to my core.

Rosh Hashanah, although the start of the *Aseret Yemei Teshuvah*, the Ten Days of Turning or Repentance, is not about sin or penitence. It is about powerlessness, about the mysterious grandeur of the Divine, and about the very small place that we occupy in the universe. Surely, this message can be toxic for people living with illness (and for healthy people as well), when it is understood in a self-deprecating way. But at heart, it is a message of healing, reminding us that we are not God. We are not in charge. Illness happens not because we are sinners but because we are human. There can be relief in this - relief from the exhausting struggle with unanswerable questions, and relief in knowing that I can relax, because the job of Ruler of the Universe is taken - and not by me. In a sense, Rosh Hashanah invites the whole community into the truth with which sick and grieving people live every day. Rosh Hashanah assaults the denial of the healthy, so that on this day, the ill - beset with clear awareness of mortality - are at one with the whole community, all of us knowing the fundamental uncertainty of life. We are made of dust, as the *Unetaneh Tokef* concludes, and to dust we return; like clay vessels, we can break, like flowers we fade, and like shadows we pass, and like a dream we will someday pass from sight. This is the truth, and there can be comfort in standing in the sacred circle of community affirming it, at the same time committing to savor the fragile gift of life we are given.

So, too, on Yom Kippur we enact a 25-hour period of practice for the experience of dying. Deprived of food, drink, and sexual pleasure, dressed in the white of the shroud, constantly reminded that the gates will soon close, we come face to face with our own mortality. This confrontation with mortality can lead to a sense of dread, despair, and overwhelming grief. At the same time, this recognition can motivate us to embrace the beauty of our lives, and to make changes so that we live truly, righteously and generously with the time that remains to us.

Many people who live daily in the face of mortality find themselves doing the work of the High Holidays throughout the year: examining their lives, making amends, rearranging priorities, and living with the awareness of the preciousness of each moment. Sometimes, such self-scrutiny can lead to harsh judgments about oneself as one grows in awareness of one's imperfections. It is important for ill and grieving people to make sure that this process of introspection does not lead to self-blame or excessive guilt. The goal of the High Holidays, perhaps like the journey of life itself, is to emerge on the other end as a more righteous and godly person, more conscious of life's fragility and beauty, and more grateful for the blessings of life.

## **For the Sins We have Committed An Interpretative AI Cheyt**

For the sins we have committed – have we committed sins, jointly or separately, as a community or as individuals? What are our sins? Are they not mostly those of omission rather than commission? Aren't they things we have failed to do rather than things we have done – and those we did were unintentional rather than intentional?

We failed to stop our private wars, end poverty and ignorance, grant basic human dignities to all peoples. We failed to cure diseases, end pollution, make the world safe for tomorrow. Yet, could we have done these things if we had tried? Didn't we try in our own way at least one of these problems?

Are these our sins? Or are our sins more personal – that we failed to extend ourselves to our family, friends, and strangers? Did we do *all* we could to help those we know or did we just think about doing? Did we make a difficult moment easier for someone because we remember how we felt in a similar situation? Did we offer friendship to a new face in our “group?” Did we make the first move after a misunderstanding, knowing how hard it is for someone else? Did we reach out to friends when we felt their unexpressed need? Do we feel we did our best to be the best person we know we can be? Were we lazy in some or all of these, and other related areas of human relationship?

Have we, on an even more private vein, fully enjoyed the beauty of our world? Have we taken a moment out of our “busy” day to enjoy the songs of the birds or watch them gather on the lawn? Have we stopped in awe at the gloriousness of a sunset bursting with color? Have we noticed the subtle differences as the seasons blend into one another? Have we taken the time to really look at the intricate folding in a flower and to take in the aromas of nature? Have we looked at and appreciated the miracle of a newborn child and the beauty of the development of a person?

Are not our sins that we haven't done all these? That we haven't taken the time to develop ourselves? Our sins are in not fulfilling ourselves as totally alive men and women. Let us resolve to *try*. We cannot hope for perfection, but we can hope for and fulfill a sincere attempt. We can affirm life by allowing ourselves the time to develop, to think and to stop, to take in life and people. We can get to know ourselves and then others, to love ourselves so we can love others. We can and must try.

For the sins we have committed, we ask forgiveness of those around us. For the sins we no longer wish to commit, we ask God to give us strength to live.

[Ginger Jacobs, *New Reform Congregation of Encino Machzor*, 1984]

## **Day of Atonement Diary Entry by Hannah Senesh**

1 October 1938

It is the Saturday before the Day of Atonement, I should have gone to synagogue, but instead I wrote a poem, and now I would rather attempt some self-analysis in my diary.

I don't know quite where to begin. That I made many errors this past year (though I don't feel I actually sinned) I know. Errors against God, righteousness, people, and above all, against Mother, and even against myself. I know I have many mistakes to answer for, and see them all clearly in my mind's eye. But I find myself incapable of enumerating them, of writing them all down. Perhaps deep down I'm afraid that someday someone might read what I have written. And I am really incapable of "confessing."

I would like to be as good as possible to Mother, to wear my Jewishness with pride, to be well thought of in my class at school, and I would very much like always to be able to believe and trust in God. There are times I cannot, and at such times I attempt to force myself to believe completely, firmly, with total certainty.

[Excerpts from Hannah Senesh' Diary in *Four Centuries of Jewish Women's Spirituality: A Sourcebook* edited and with introductions by Ellen M. Umansky and Diane Ashton. Beacon Press, Boston, 1992, p.171]