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The Harold M. Schulweis Institute



THE WORSHIPER IS A SCULPTOR

“The ideal of David was in the marble
before Michelangelo touched it.

The ideal of the divine image is in the soul
before it is touched by prayer. The worshiper is a sculptor
who painstakingly carves his self after the divine image.”

-- Harold M. Schulweis, *For Those Who Can't Believe*, 1994

Within the legacy of the words and thought of Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis (z”l) there are many lessons that help give personal meaning to traditional High Holiday ritual. For example, in his 2010 Yom Kippur sermon “Hide and Seek” he counsels us:

“It’s easy to join the choir, follow the chazzan, and sing out loud ‘Ashamnu, bagadnu, gazalnu.’ But in the silent prayer, the ‘we’ becomes ‘me,’ ‘ours’ becomes ‘mine,’ ‘us’ becomes ‘I,’ a new moral grammar emerges: Ashamti, bagaditi, gazalti — ‘I’ have sinned, ‘I’ have stolen, ‘I’ have betrayed. I... I... I.

But there is no real ‘we’ on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. There is only the first person singular. And the commandment for each of us during these days is ‘U mib’sarecha lo titalem’ –you shall not hide from your own flesh.”

Rabbi Schulweis concludes:

“Repentance out of love begins with you yourself: ‘Love the other as thyself.’ For without love of self, remorse...is self-lacerating. In Hebrew, remorse is sculpting - ‘charatah’ from the root ‘cheret,’ a stylus, used to sculpt a nobler image of yourself.

We hide from ourselves and must seek what is hidden. Repentance is but self-discovery in silence.”

For further teachings and inspiration, including sermons, poems and prose for High Holiday preparation and reflection, please visit the web site of The Harold M. Schulweis Institute at www.hmsi.info.

L’Shanah Tovah!

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