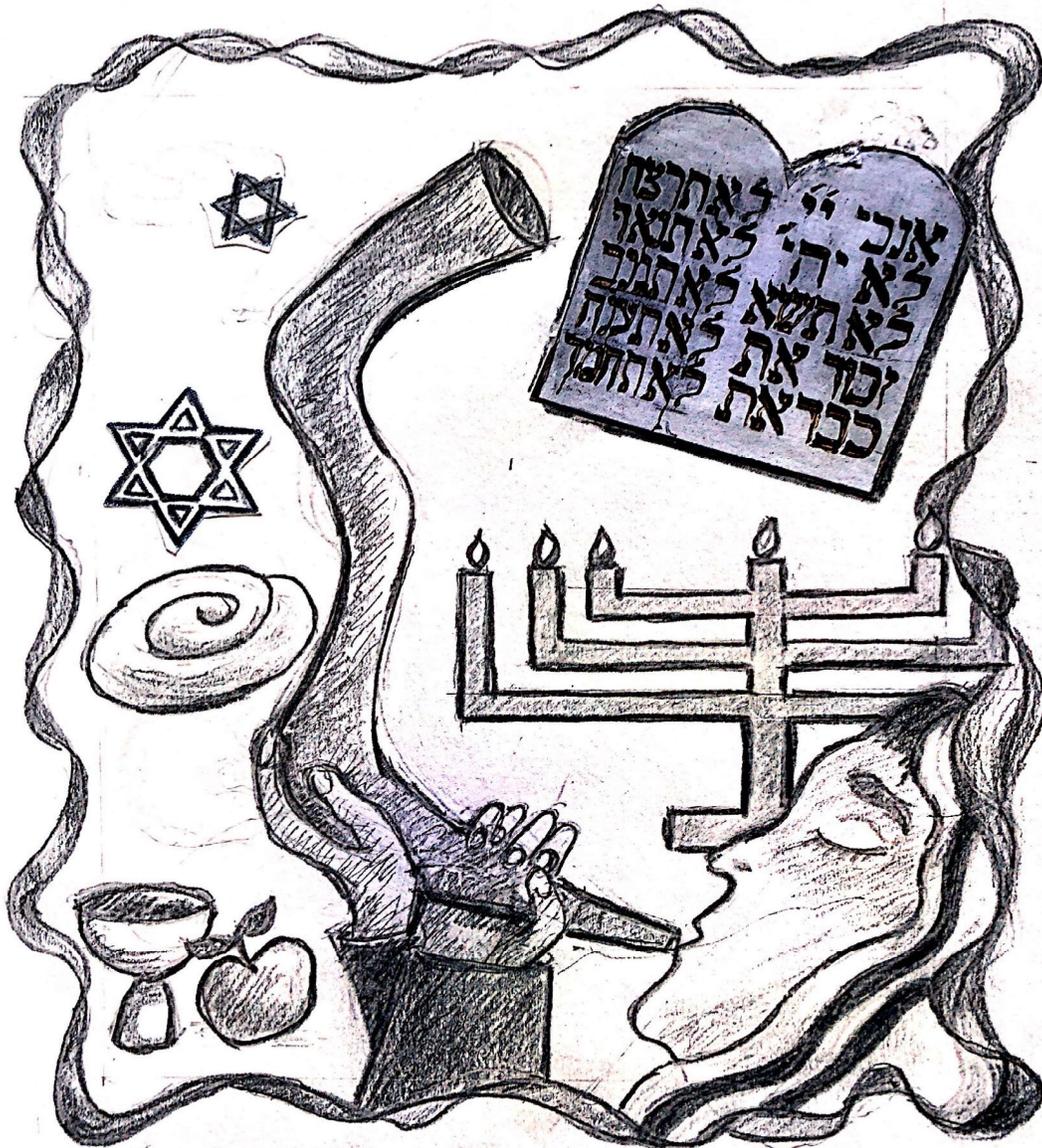


Congregation Hakafa  
Erev Rosh Hashanah  
Machzor



When the Ba'al Shem Tov foresaw some mortal danger threatening the Jewish people, he would go off to a certain place in the forest; there, he would ignite a fire and utter a certain prayer in intense meditation, and the decree would be miraculously annulled.

Later on, when his disciple Rabbi Dov-Beer, the Maggid of Mezritch, was faced with a similar matter of importance, he would go to the same place in the forest, where he would declare: "Master of the world: I know not how to ignite a fire, but I am able to offer the prayer," and the same miraculous deliverance would occur.

Another generation passed, and now it was Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sasov who sought to save his people. He went to the forest and said: "I am unable to ignite the fire, the secret meditation of the prayer, too, has been lost. But at least I can stand here at the place in the forest where it all happened." This alone was enough to avert the decree.

Yet another generation went by, and it was Rabbi Yisrael of Ruzhin's turn to plead for divine mercy. He sat upon his stately seat, held his head in his hands, and spoke with the Holy One, Blessed be He: "Master of the Universe: Hear my voice. I cannot ignite the fire, nor do I know the prayer. I cannot even find the place in the forest. All that I am able to do is to tell the story. Please let that suffice."

And, indeed, the fourth tzaddik's telling was no less effective than the actions of the first three had been.

*-A Hasidic Tale, A Jewish Woman's Prayer Book, edited by Aliza Lavie*

I remember: As a child, on the other side of oceans and mountains, the Jew in me would anticipate Rosh Ha-Shanah with fear and trembling. He still does. On that Day of Awe, I believed then, nations and individuals, Jewish and non-Jewish, are being judged by their common creator. That is still my belief. In spite of all that happened? Because of all that happened? I still believe that to be Jewish today means what it meant yesterday and a thousand years ago. It means for the Jew in me to seek fulfillment both as a Jew and as a human being. For a Jew, Judaism and humanity must go together. To be Jewish today is to recognize that every person is created in the image of God and that our purpose in living is to be a reminder of God. Naturally, I claim total kinship with my people and its destiny. Judaism integrates particularist aspirations with universal values, fervor with rigor, legend with law. Being Jewish to me is to reject all fanaticism anywhere. To be Jewish is, above all, to safeguard memory and open its gates to the celebration of life as well as to the suffering, to the song of ecstasy as well as to the tears of distress that are our legacy as Jews. It is to rejoice in the renaissance of Jewish sovereignty in Israel and the awakening of Jewish life in the former Soviet Union. It is to identify with the plight of Jews living under oppressive regimes and with the challenges facing our communities in free societies. A Jew must be sensitive to the pain of all human beings. A Jew cannot remain indifferent to human suffering, whether in other countries or in our own cities and towns. The mission of the Jewish people has never been to make the world more Jewish, but to make it more human.

*-What Being Jewish Means to Me, Elie Wiesel*

## The Shema and its Blessings

### שמע וברכותה

#### Barechu

בְּרַחוּ אֶת יְיָ הַמְבָרָךְ:

בְּרוּךְ יְיָ הַמְבָרָךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:

*Ba-ru-chu et A-do-nai ha-me-vo-rach!*

*Ba-ruch A-do-nai ha-me-vo-rach le-o-lam va-ed!*

Praise the Eternal One, to Whom all praise is due!

Praised be Adonai, to Whom our praise is due, now and for all generations!

#### Ma'ariv Aravim

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר בְּדַבְרוֹ מַעְרִיב עֲרָבִים, בְּחִכְמָה פּוֹתֵחַ שְׁעָרִים, וּבִתְבוּנָה מְשַׁנֶּה עֵתִים, וּמַחְלִיף אֶת הַיָּמִנִים, וּמְסַדֵּר אֶת הַכּוֹכָבִים, בְּמִשְׁמְרוֹתֵיהֶם בְּרַקִּיעַ כְּרָצוֹנוֹ. בּוֹרֵא יוֹם וְלַיְלָה, גּוֹלֵל אֹר מִפְּנֵי חֹשֶׁךְ, וְחֹשֶׁךְ מִפְּנֵי אֹר. וּמַעְבִּיר יוֹם וּמַבְיֵא לַיְלָה, וּמַבְדִּיל בֵּין יוֹם וּבֵין לַיְלָה, יְיָ צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ. אֵל חַי וְקַיִם, תָּמִיד יִמְלֹךְ עָלֵינוּ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, הַמַּעְרִיב עֲרָבִים:

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, asher bidvahro ma'ariv aravim. B'chochma poteach she'arim, uvit'vuna m'shaneh itim, umachalif et hazmanim, umsader et hacoachavim, b'mishm'rotahem barakia kirtzono. Borei yom valilah, golel or mipnei hoshech, v'hoshech mipnei or, uma'avir yom umayvi lilah, umavdil bein yom uvein lilah, adonai tzva'ot shmo. El chai v'kayam, tamid yimloch aleinu l'olam va'ed. Baruch Atah, Adonai, hama'ariv aravim.*

Praise the Ruler of the Universe, whose word brings on the evening. Your wisdom opens heaven's gate; Your understanding makes the ages pass and the seasons change. Sovereign is the will that moves the stars in their course across the endless skies.

*You are the Creator of day and night, rolling light away from darkness, and darkness from light; You cause day to pass and bring on the night; You set day and night apart: You are the Lord of Hosts.*

May our God rule us always to the end of time. Praise the Ruler of the Universe who makes the evening fall and brings on the dawn.

You mix the watercolors of the evening  
like my son, swishing his brush  
until the waters are black with paint.  
The sky is streaked and dimming.

The sun wheels over the horizon  
like a glowing penny falling into its slot.  
Day is spent, and in its place: the changing moon,  
the spatterdash of stars across the sky's expanse.

Every evening we tell ourselves the old story:  
You cover over our sins, forgiveness  
like a fleece blanket tucked around our ears.  
When we cry out, You will hear.

-from *Autumn Nightfall*, Rabbi Rachel Barenblat

Blessed is evening's fall,  
the heaven's transformation,  
the ever-changing seasons.

Blessed is the imperceptible movement  
of one moment into the next,  
notes in a seamless melody  
you compose for us  
even now.

Blessed is the light that bursts  
forth gloriously out of the darkness,  
showering us in the warmth of the day  
we know must inevitably arrive.

Blessed is the darkness  
that swaddles and bathes us  
in your dark beauty,  
comforting us with the sweet promise  
of liberation at long last.

Blessed is evening's fall.

-Rabbi Brant Rosen

## Ahavat Olam

אַהַבַת עוֹלָם בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל עִמָּךְ אָהַבְתָּ, תּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת, חֻקִּים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים, אוֹתָנוּ  
לְמִדַּת עַל כֵּן יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, בְּשִׂכְבְּנוּ וּבְקוּמֵנוּ נִשְׁיַח בְּחֻקֶיךָ, וְנִשְׂמַח בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָתְךָ  
וּבְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. כִּי הֵם חַיֵּינוּ וְאַרְךְ יָמֵינוּ, וּבָהֶם נִהְיֶה יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה,  
וְאָהַבְתָּ אֶל תַּסִּיר מִמֶּנּוּ לְעוֹלָמִים. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אוֹהֵב עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל:

*Ahavat olam beit yisrael amcha ahavta: Torah u'mitzvot, chukim u'mishpatim, otanu limadta.  
Al ken, Adonai Eloheinu, b'shochbeinu u'vkumeinu naseach b'chukeicha, v'nismach b'divrai  
toratecha u'v'mitzvotecha l'olam va'ed. Ki hem chayeinu v'orech yameinu, u'vahem nehege  
yomam valilah. V'ahavt'cha al tasir mimenu l'olamim! Baruch Atah Adonai, Ohev amo Yisrael.*

Eternal One, You offered Your people Israel everlasting love by giving us Your Word: the Torah, *mitzvot*, laws and ordinances. In gratitude, we will think of Your laws and Your commandments when we lie down and when we rise. We will take joy in Your Torah into every generation. Day and night we will reflect on Your Word, for You are our life, and following Your Word lengthens our days. Do not take Your love from us. We praise You, Adonai, our God, who loves Your people Israel.



How are we to understand divine revelation? Imagine... Moses' astonishment, when, instead of finding the Israelites ready to accept the revealed moral code, he finds them dancing in reverence and awe around an idol they themselves created—the Golden Calf.

Now, what would you expect Moses to do at this point? After all, God's first commandment explains that if you worship other gods, you're in trouble. You might anticipate Moses appealing to God to smite the undeserving Israelites. Instead, Moses smashes the tablets on the ground....

By breaking the tablets, Moses showed the Israelites, and us, that nothing, not even revealed law, is so sacred it cannot be tested by human experience. What was needed was *not* to exchange the slavery of the body for a slavery of the mind, but instead to create a tradition alive with questions and debate and glorious differences of opinion.

Of all Moses' achievements—releasing the Israelites from slavery, splitting the Red Sea, bringing them to Mount Sinai, and then leading them to the very edge of the Promised Land—the greatest was the breaking of the tablets.

This is of profound relevance in today's world, because if the Law of God is not beyond questioning, then even more so are man-made laws. Paradoxically, in Judaism, the moment of revelation coincides with something akin to enlightenment. Right from the beginning, even God agrees that to seek truth means to question authority. Quite literally, it means to break the rules.

[...] Moses showed us we have nothing to fear. The tablets of God were broken, but *we* remain intact. Our task, then, is to break the spell of Sinai. Only then, following Moses' example, can we begin the real work of hammering out what constitutes a moral society.

-from *Revelation: It's Not What It Seems to Be*, Daniel Reisel, Ph.D.

We, the burdened. And we, the burned.  
Have had so much taken from us.  
That we wonder what it is we can gift the world.  
For us, may this be a year of Torah rising.  
So that, in the absence of Torah and the desecration of Torah.  
The letters of Torah float graciously on high. Transcending the struggle.  
And dangling over all life the wisdom of the generations and the strength of all our People.  
When our hearts ache, may we ascend like the letters.  
When our souls cry out, may we ascend like the letters.  
When our minds race, may we ascend like the letters.  
When our bodies fail, may we ascend like the letters.  
And when the world calls, may all our answers lead to Torah.

-*Torah Rising: A Prayer for the Jewish New Year*, Devon Spier

Sinai [is] a re-occurring process, not a fixed encounter. The written Torah is a “depository” of Biblical Israel's consciousness of God—a record of past revelation—but certainly not the last word in our ongoing dialogue with God. Instead, “revelation is a continuous process, confined to no one group and to no one age.” ... God can “change Her mind.” As such, Sinai is constantly taking place, and it is the role of the individual to listen closely to what God is saying.

-adapted from *Jewish Denominations on Revelation, Sinai to Schism*, Rabbi Allen Selis

Shema

# שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֶחָד

בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

*Sh'ma Yisrael: Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echod!*

*Baruch shem k'vod malchuto l'olam va'ed!*

Hear O Israel: Adonai is our God, Adonai alone!  
Blessed is Your glorious majesty for ever and ever!

וְאָהַבְתָּ אֶת יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ, בְּכָל-לִבְבְּךָ, וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ, וּבְכָל-מְאֹדְךָ. וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים  
הָאֵלֶּה, אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ הַיּוֹם, עַל-לִבְבְּךָ: וְשָׁנַנְתָּם לְבְנֶיךָ, וְדַבַּרְתָּ בָּם בְּשַׁבְּתְּךָ  
בְּבֵיתְךָ, וּבְלֶכְתְּךָ בַדֶּרֶךְ וּבְשֹׁכְבְּךָ, וּבְקוּמְךָ. וּקְשַׁרְתָּם לְאוֹת עַל-יָדְךָ, וְהָיוּ לְטֹטְפֹת  
בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ, וּכְתַבְתָּם עַל מְזוֹזוֹת בֵּיתְךָ וּבְשַׁעְרֶיךָ: לְמַעַן תִּזְכְּרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם  
אֶת-כָּל-מִצְוֹתַי, וְהָיִיתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים לֵאלֹהֵיכֶם: אֲנִי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי  
אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, לְהִיוֹת לְכֶם לֵאלֹהִים, אֲנִי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

*V'a-hav-ta eit A-do-nai E-lo-he-cha, b'chol l'vav-cha, uv'chol naf-sh'cha, uv'chol m'o-de-cha.  
V'ha-yu ha-d'va-rim ha-ei-leh, a-sher a-no-chi m'tsa-v'cha ha-yom, al l'va-ve-cha. V'shi-nan-tam  
l'va-ne-cha, v'di-bar-ta bam b'shiv-te-cha b'vei-te-cha, uv'lech-t'cha va-de-rech, uv'shoch-b'cha  
uv'ku-me-cha. Uk'shar-tam l'ot al ya-de-cha, v'hah-yu l'to-ta-fot bein ei-ne-cha. Uch'tav-tam al  
m'zu-zot bei-te-cha u-vish-a-re-cha. L'ma-an tiz-ke-ru, va-a-si-tem et kol mits-vo-tai vi-he-yi-tem  
k'do-shim lei-lo-hei-chem. A-ni A-do-nai E-lo-hei-chem, a-sher ho-tsei-ti et-chem mei-e-rets  
mits-ra-yim, li-he-yot la-chem lei-lo-him. A-ni A-do-nai E-lo-hei-chem.*

You shall love Adonai your God with all your mind, with all your strength, with all your being. Set these words, which I command you this day, upon your heart. Teach them faithfully to your children; speak of them in your home and on your way, when you lie down and when you rise up. Bind them as a sign upon your hand; let them be symbols before your eyes; inscribe them on the doorposts of your house, and on your gates. Be mindful of all My Mitzvot, and do them: So shall you consecrate yourselves to your God. I am Adonai your God who led you out of Egypt to be your God; I am Adonai your God.

*Shema Yisrael* does not mean “Hear, O Israel.” It means something like: “Listen. Concentrate. Give the word of God your most focused attention. Strive to understand. Engage all your faculties, intellectual and emotional. Make God’s will your own. For what God commands you to do is for your welfare, the welfare of your people, and ultimately for the benefit of all humanity.”

In Judaism, *faith is a form of listening*: to the song creation sings to its Creator, and to the message history delivers to those who strive to understand it. Stop looking: listen. Stop speaking: listen. Create a silence in the soul. Strive to listen to the still, small voice beneath the noise. Then you will know that the universe is the work of the One beyond the furthest star yet closer to you than you are to yourself – and then you will love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your might. In God’s unity you will find unity—within yourself and between yourself and the world.

-from *The Meanings of Shema*, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

*V'a-hav-ta eit A-do-nai E-lo-he-cha, b'chol l'vav-cha, uv'chol naf-sh'cha, uv'chol m'o-de-cha.*

The path to the love of God is through the love of others; I do not love God until I love my neighbor as myself.

*V'ha-yu ha-d'va-rim ha-ei-leh, a-sher a-no-chi m'tsa-v'cha ha-yom, al l'va-ve-cha.*

Jewish faith unites mind and heart. Even as my mind seeks to understand life’s meaning, so may my life show love for all created things.

*V'shi-nan-tam l'va-ne-cha, v'di-bar-ta bam b'shiv-te-cha b'vei-te-cha, uv'lech-t'cha va-de-rech, uv'shoch-b'cha uv'ku-me-cha.*

We do not teach our children by words alone: May I make my life and actions into good teachings, for in my conduct I must exemplify Torah.

*Uk'shar-tam l'ot al ya-de-cha, v'hah-yu l'to-ta-fot bein ei-ne-cha. Uch'tav-tam al m'zu-zot bei-te-cha u-vish-a-re-cha.*

Let my home glow with the beauty of our own heritage.  
Let my doors be opened wide to wisdom and to righteousness.

*L'ma-an tiz-ke-ru, va-a-si-tem et kol mits-vo-tai vi-he-yi-tem k'do-shim lei-lo-hei-chem. A-ni A-do-nai E-lo-hei-chem.*

Each *mitzvah* is a way to holiness. The *mitzvot* elevate our humanity. Let me learn to use them to magnify the Divine in myself and in the world.

-*M'kor Tefillah*, p. 62