



## HAR SINAI - OHEB SHALOM CONGREGATION

### SPIRITUAL MESSAGE #1

Doubt

Take your well-held beliefs and put them aside.

Despite what we are taught, there are many ways,  
many paths,  
many options.

You are only limited by your imagination.

Do not doubt your heart.

—Rabbi Karyn Kedar, *Amen: Seeking Presence with Prayer, Poetry, and  
Mindfulness Practice* (CCAR Press, 2020),

How do you find yourself limited in your relationship with God? Were these limitations taught to you growing up?



## HAR SINAI - OHEB SHALOM CONGREGATION

### SPIRITUAL MESSAGE #2

I'm Asking God One Question

If I could ask only one thing of God, what would it be?

It's nearly impossible to decide.

My prayer bends toward gratitude, not supplication.

"Thank You, Strength, for the steps I take as I walk the dog."

"Thank You, Wisdom, for the opportunity to study Torah."

"Thank You, Generosity, for abundance in my life."

"Thank You, Protection, for keeping us alive

and allowing us to reach this moment."

Endless gratitude,

every new day of every New Year.

If I could ask God for only one thing, what would it be?

I have no requests, only questions . . .

Maybe . . .

Who can . . . ?

When will . . . ?

What if . . . ?

Where was . . . ?

Why did . . . ?

No. Now I know my question.

If I could ask God something,  
not for something,

The one thing I would ask is:

“How can I help?”

—Rabbi Debra J. Robbins, *Opening Your Heart with Psalm 27: A Spiritual Practice for the Jewish New Year.*

What is the one thing you would ask God?



## HAR SINAI - OHEB SHALOM CONGREGATION

### SPIRITUAL MESSAGE #3

Notice the River

Notice the river

at break of dawn —

a braid of streams, creeks, and brooks, a dance of insects near the shore.

Notice how brackish,

where the river meets the sea,

how with grace the river

hugs the shore —

fierce in its rising,

fiercer when it falls.

Notice it all —

how it bends,

how it tells

the time of year,

and how smooth the boulders are that guide its course

Notice the Holy One

in blessing and in beauty,

in acts of repair,  
in the unearthing of truth,  
in eyes that meet,  
in the tumult of change,  
in words of forgiveness,  
in the bridges we build to those we hurt,  
in the flow of a year,  
in the course of a journey,  
in rising and falling,  
in the bend of a river,  
in the hand we hold out to those who hurt us, in the life we are living  
in blessing and in beauty.

—Rabbi Janet Marder and Rabbi Sheldon Marder, Mishkan HaLev:

When do you connect with your own spirituality? How can you multiply those moments in your life to deepen your relationship with god?



## HAR SINAI - OHAV SHALOM CONGREGATION

### SPIRITUAL MESSAGE #4

Hold the Pose

In yoga, holding a pose often leads to trembling,  
breathing and continuing to hold the pose builds strength.

I am reminded—

Feel no shame,

shaking is an indication of growth, not a sign of weakness.

Over time, the shaking lessens and the stillness lengthens.

And then it's time to move on to a different pose—

a different encounter—

and begin the cycle over again.

Shaking, I am like Job who feels pachad, fear, in his bones.

It's a quaking, churning feeling

sometimes noticeable to others, sometimes only to myself.

I say, "I'm shaking, I'm afraid."

Or maybe, "I've been shaken—

physically, emotionally, spiritually by an intense encounter."

I breathe, I wait, the shaking stops, the calm returns,

I move again, but I am changed.

...This season is about holding the pose.

Each day I learn again to maintain the focus,  
to not turn away when I tremble or am immobilized with fright or terror.

Like yoga, this too takes practice.

When I encounter the Strength of Life, will I tremble in fear?

When I am in the Presence of Light,  
will I be able to hold the pose of awe?

—Rabbi Debra J. Robbins, *Opening Your Heart with Psalm 27: A Spiritual Practice for the Jewish New Year* (CCAR Press, 2019), pp. 16–17.

When in your life have you felt fear? What helped you work through it?



## HAR SINAI - OHEB SHALOM CONGREGATION

### SPIRITUAL MESSAGE #5

Redeeming My Life

A part of me

Refuses to forgive

Myself

For my errors, my mistakes,

My oversights and misdeeds.

How can I redeem my life from within

This place of judgment,

Of harsh words and

Somber requirement?

God of Old,

God of justice and truth,

Teach me to restore my life

Through acts of love and kindness,

Thoughtfulness and care,

In support of my

Family and community.

Teach me to surrender my days

To the joy of service to others,

The joy of concern for this world

And generations to come.

Heavenly Guide,

Revive me with Your light,

Restore me with Your truth,

Refresh me with deeds

Of righteousness and charity.

— Alden Solovy, *This Joyous Soul: A New Voice for Ancient Yearnings*

(CCAR Press, 2019), p. 74.

Are there mistakes that you struggle to forgive yourself for? How might acts of love and kindness help you find forgiveness?



## HAR SINAI - OHEB SHALOM CONGREGATION

### SPIRITUAL MESSAGE #6

Courage

And I said:

O if only I had wings like the dove

I would fly away and find a restful abode.

I would wander afar while hastening

to find a haven from the stormy tempest. (Psalm 55:7–9)

And so I pray

that my spirit have the strength to soar,

that my heart have the courage to seek,

and my mind the wisdom to discover,

a life of meaning and purpose.

Grant me, O God,

strength,

courage,

and wisdom.

—Rabbi Karyn Kedar, *Amen: Seeking Presence with Prayer, Poetry, and*

*Mindfulness Practice* (CCAR Press, 2020), p. 59.

What is your prayer for the coming month of Elul? How would you define “a life of meaning and purpose”?



## HAR SINAI - OHEB SHALOM CONGREGATION

### SPIRITUAL MESSAGE #7

For Autumn

The rains have come,

Windy days and crisp nights.

Days are shorter now

As the land prepares to sleep.

Bless this day, God of seasons.

Bless the autumn with the hope of comfort and rest.

Be present with us as we gather with family and friends

So that we enliven our moments with love and joy.

God of time and space,

May this season be a blessing and a teacher.

Make me like the coming rain, nourishing all that I touch.

Make me like a gentle wind, quietly clearing old habits

And the debris of my mistakes.

Make me like the crisp air,

Present, refreshing, and free.

Bless my days with service and my nights with prayer.

Make me like the land, seeking solace and rest.

—Alden Solovy. *This Grateful Heart: Psalms and Prayers for a New Day*

(CCAR Press, 2017), p. 21.

How does the changing of summer into autumn affect you as we approach the High Holy Days?

How do memories affect you at this time of the year?



## HAR SINAI - OHEB SHALOM CONGREGATION

### SPIRITUAL MESSAGE #8

For Grace

All I am,

All I have,

All I'll become,

Are present in this moment:

Warmth and breath,

Love and compassion,

Silence and celebration.

Everything, here.

All gifts, present.

What then, God of all being,

What then of my choices?

What will I make of the space

Between this breath and the next?

Will I bring laughter and light,

Hope and faith,

Wonder and strength?

Will I stand in humble service

For all of my brothers and sisters?

Maker of heaven and earth,  
Grant us the wisdom to choose lives of grace,  
Of vision and understanding,  
Seeing each moment as a choice  
To bless our companions  
With strength and wisdom,  
With honor and respect.

Blessed are the gentle moments of grace.

— Alden Solovy, *This Joyous Soul: A New Voice for Ancient Yearnings*  
(CCAR Press, 2019), p. 85.

How have you grown or changed in recent months? How are you still becoming?



## HAR SINAI - OHEB SHALOM CONGREGATION

### SPIRITUAL MESSAGE #9

Our Calling

Surely, this mitzvah is not too baffling for you, nor is it beyond reach.

It is very close to you, in your mouth and in your heart:

You shall not threaten the rights of the stranger or orphan.

You shall not take a widow's garment in pawn.

Remember that you were a slave in Egypt.

Justice, justice shall you pursue,

that you may live to inherit the land that Adonai your God gives you —

you must not remain indifferent.

Keep and heed all that I instruct you;

thus it will go well with you — and your children after you — for all time. . . .

This mitzvah is very close to you, in your mouth and in your heart:

When you reap the harvest in your field and overlook a sheaf,

it shall go to the stranger, the orphan, and the widow —

you must not remain indifferent.

Life and death I have set before you, blessing and curse.

Choose life —

so that you and your children may live. . . .

Blessed shall you be in your comings

and blessed shall you be in your goings —  
you must not remain indifferent.

Our Calling. As a counterpart to the plea “Hear Our Call” (Sh’ma Koleinu, pages 134–135), we remind ourselves of the Jewish people’s sacred calling: to live by mitzvot that lead us to a life of holiness . . . In his final address to the Israelites, Moses utters a compelling call to righteousness, exhorting the people to follow God’s teachings . . . Moses reminds the nation of Israel that its very survival depends on creating a just and equitable society.

—Rabbi Janet Marder and Rabbi Sheldon Marder, *Mishkan HaLev: Prayers for S’lichot and the Month of Elul* (CCAR Press, 2017), p. 133.

How can Jewish tradition help us build a just and equitable society? Are there certain mitzvot that you could observe towards this end?



## HAR SINAI - OHEB SHALOM CONGREGATION

### SPIRITUAL MESSAGE #10

We Are Your People

Our God and God of our ancestors —

We are Your people; and You are our God.

We are Your children; and You are our father, our mother.

We are the people who serve You; and You call us to serve.

We are Your community; and You are our portion.

We are Your legacy; and You are our purpose.

We are Your flock; and You are our shepherd.

We are Your vineyard; and You watch over us.

We are Your work; and You are our maker.

We are Your beloved; and You are our lover.

We are Your treasure; and You are the One we cherish.

We are Your people; and You reign over us.

We offer You our words; and You offer us Yours.

So forgive us, pardon us, lead us to atonement.

—Rabbi Janet Marder and Rabbi Sheldon Marder, Mishkan HaLev:

Prayers for S'lichot and the Month of Elul (CCAR Press, 2017). This modern interpretation of KiAnuAmecha comes from the S'lichot liturgy, in which we implore God to forgive our sins.

In light of this traditional idea, how do you understand your relationship with God?