



# *Hineini: I Am Here.*

An experiential *Yom Kippur*  
afternoon worship opportunity



*Prelude:*

Somewhere over the rainbow way up high  
There's a land that I heard of once in a lullaby.  
Somewhere over the rainbow skies are blue,  
And the dreams that you dare to dream  
really do come true.

Someday I'll wish upon a star and  
wake up where the clouds are far behind me,  
Where troubles melt like lemon drops  
away above the chimney tops,  
that's where you'll find me.

Somewhere over the rainbow blue birds fly.  
Birds fly over the rainbow, why then oh why can't I?

If happy little bluebirds fly  
beyond the rainbow,  
why can't I?

*Hashivaynu*

*Hashivaynu (hashivaynu) Adonai elecha,  
v'nashuvah (v'nashuva), chadeish (chadeish) yameinu k'kedem.*

Restore us to You, O Lord, that we may be restored ...  
renew our days as of old. *(Lamentations 5:21)*

*Hineini.*

I am here.

I am here because I seek forgiveness.

I am here because I seek awareness.

I am here because I seek connection.

I am here because I seek improvement.

*Hineini.*

*I am here.*

*I am here because I seek to be more present in my life.*

*I am here because I seek community.*

*I am here because I do not want to be alone.*

*Hineini.*

I am here.

I am here because I am aware that I can make better choices.

*Hineini.*

*I am here because I am aware that I can change how I see the world, and how the world sees me.*

*Hineini.*

I am here because this is my one and only life.

*Hineini.*

*I am here because I want to take responsibility for my actions and my life.*

*Hineini.*

*I am here.*

## AM I FAILING MYSELF?

We live in a dynamic world.  
Everything changes.

Mountains move.  
Glaciers melt.  
Sands shift.

Children grow up.  
We grow old.

What we were and what we are  
Give way to what we will become.

And there is no choice,  
Except for what we choose to become.

So the question is not “will you change,”  
But ... how will you change?



I know today is a day for change.  
But change moves through me like an unsettling wind –  
Invisible, yet I know it is there.  
I feel its movement.

At times, the winds of change are cold and make me  
shudder.  
In my attempt to shield myself from their harshness,  
Do I wrap myself with so many layers that I cut off my  
very breath?

At other times, change is a friendly breeze that awakens me to possibilities.

But in my zeal to embrace change,  
Do I shed my layers in such impassioned response that I lose perspective?

I am confused about this thing called change.

*Today is a day for change.*

*Today is a day for growth.*

*Am I here to change?*

*Am I here to grow?*

I am here because I am a Jew and it is *yontif*.

*I am here because my family expects me to be here.*

I am here to strengthen my bonds with my family.  
With my people.  
With God.

*I am here to seek forgiveness for sins I have committed.*

I am here to understand how, exactly, I have sinned.

*I get up,*

*Go to work,*

*Do my job.*

*Where do I sin?*

Yes, sometimes I'm disagreeable.  
I've been a little selfish, maybe.  
I've told a few lies ... but small ones.

Are these sins?  
I nurture, protect, provide.  
I do the best I can.

*I am here to discover my sins.  
I am here to confront myself.  
To see myself as I really am.*

I am willing to look at myself.

*I see separation – separation from my family by my work,  
By fatigue, fear, anger,  
By my preoccupation with myself.*

I see detachment – insulating me from what I prefer not to see or deal with.

I see skepticism over what reason cannot prove.  
Skepticism over God's presence in the unknown.

Are these sins?

*I am here to confess.*

Yes, to confess. For only when I confess can I start anew.  
Only when I confess can I begin to change.

*Now is the time to sow the seeds of change –  
The ground is fertile.  
The season is here.  
The time is now.*



## AM I FAILING MY FAMILY?

Each of us is nurtured in the family nest. We are nudged and coaxed and encouraged to crawl, walk, run, and fly. So do we learn the values by which we live.

In the homes we establish, love and partnership among the generations must continue to be the pattern of our lives. Therefore, if the Day of Atonement is to have full meaning for us, we must seek at-one-ment not only with ourselves, but with our families, both those we are born into and those we create.



### All Vows Are Lies

How quickly our desires turn into promises, contracts, plans, shredded documents:

*You can stay.*

*I'll keep you safe.*

*Don't worry.*

All vows are fog and float without foundation – glimpses of windmills on a rocky island.

*I'll always love you.*

*I can make you happy. There's no one like you.*



Untie the scarlet ribbon around the golden box;  
my pledge nestles inside like a stolen pearl.

*It's all good.*

*I'll be there.*

*It's a plan.*

Our vows are sweet at the moment we make them,  
but are only redeemed by regret and forgiveness.

*You can rely on me.*

*When it's the right time.*

*Next year ...*

- Kristine Thurston



## AM I FAILING MY PEOPLE?

Today, we are compelled to look back a year,  
To see our weaknesses the past twelve months.  
We even dare to glare at ourselves inside.  
But why today? What compels us to be here?

*"Yom Kippur," we say.*

*"Yom Kippur," our parents and grandparents said.*

*"Yom Kippur," we have always said.*

We – because we are the Jewish people.  
We are what the Jewish people has become.

*But will our descendants say Yom Kippur?*



*"Hallelujah,"* by Leonard Cohen

I've heard there was a secret chord  
That David played, and it pleased the Lord  
But you don't really care for music, do you?  
It goes like this, the fourth, the fifth  
The minor fall, the major lift  
The baffled king composing "Hallelujah" ...

*Hallelujah, hallelujah,  
Hallelujah, hallelujah.*

You say I took the name in vain  
I don't even know the name  
But if I did, well really, what's it to you?  
There's a blaze of light in every word  
It doesn't matter which you heard  
The holy or the broken Hallelujah

*Hallelujah, hallelujah,  
Hallelujah, hallelujah.*

Maybe there's a God above  
But all I've ever learned from love  
Was how to shoot somebody who outdrew you  
And it's not a cry that you hear at night  
It's not somebody who's seen the light  
It's a cold and it's a broken Hallelujah

*Hallelujah, hallelujah,  
Hallelujah, hallelujah.*

I did my best, it wasn't much  
I couldn't feel, so I tried to touch  
I've told the truth, I didn't come to fool you  
And even though it all went wrong  
I'll stand before the Lord of Song  
With nothing on my tongue but Hallelujah ...

*Hallelujah, hallelujah,  
Hallelujah, hallelujah.*



*Yom Kippur* is our time to change. But how can we change, how can we grow unless we know who we are? And how can we know who we are without looking inward with an unblinking eye, to see ourselves as we really are? No face to be saved, no barrier between us and the truth. For unless we drop all pretense, we will not find the truth and will be trapped forever in yesterday's ways. So let us resign from the frantic pace of other days, and in the moving quiet of this day, face ourselves honestly, squarely.

I think of myself as an ethical person.

*Do I live by my principles?  
Or, do I merely pay them lip service?*

I think of myself as a person of strong moral character.

*When facing life's attractive but questionable options,  
do I follow my conscience?  
Or ... do I stray from the path?*

I try to make choices based on what is right, not what is popular ... or convenient ... or expedient.

*Do I?*

*Or, do I act as I please, and then try to justify my behavior?*

I try to set a good example.

*By deed as well as by word?*

I value what is really important in life.

*Do I?*

*Or, do I place material gain and success above honor, integrity, and even the people (I say) I love?*

O God, these are difficult questions. Having to answer them makes me uncomfortable. Yet I understand part of the purpose of such probing questions – indeed, part of the purpose of this entire day – is to make me uncomfortable.

*I need to be uncomfortable for the sins I have committed.*

For I sin against You when I sin against myself.

*We sin against You when we sin against ourselves.  
For our failures of self, O God, we ask forgiveness:*

For using the sins of others to excuse our own,

*For tolerating in ourselves what we condemn in others,*

For denying our responsibility for our misfortunes,

*For refusing to admit our share in the troubles of others,*

For pretending to emotions we do not feel,

*For having convictions and not following them,*

For passing judgment without knowledge of the facts,

*For allowing falsehoods to go unchallenged,*

For having a talent and not using it,

*For having a goal and not pursuing it,*

For giving up on our dreams,

*For closing our eyes to reality,*

For false pride,

*For no pride,*

For self-contempt,

*For over-inflated egos,*

For not recognizing the sacrifice of others,

*For making martyrs of ourselves,*

For demanding instant gratification,

*For expecting constant gratification,*

For expecting too much,

*For settling for too little,*

For always saying no,

*For never saying no,*

We have failed ourselves by letting issues fester in the dark instead of bringing them into the light,

*We have failed ourselves by holding grudges instead of dismantling our anger.*

We have failed ourselves by our pettiness and our envy,

*By our conformity and imitation,*

By our gossip and our conceit,

*By our arrogance and our greed,*

We sin against You when we sin against ourselves. For our failures of self, we ask forgiveness.

*For our failures of self, O God, we ask forgiveness.*

I have sinned, I have confessed, and I shall repent. I pray I will be able to overcome any resistance to change.

*I pray that this day will be one of honest self-analysis in an ongoing effort to right what is wrong within me.*



### *V'al Kulam ...*

*V'al kulam, Elo'ah selichot, s'lach lanu, m'chal lanu, kaper lanu.*

For all these sins, O God of mercy,  
forgive us, pardon us, grant us atonement.



### **A Quiet Interlude ...**

#### **Reflecting ...**

God, I have brought much before You today.  
I have spoken many words,  
Shared many thoughts,  
Made many provides ... and more will follow.

I now need time to sit quietly –  
To sit quietly and listen,  
To hear Your voice,  
To know You have heard mine –

Time to be at peace,  
With myself and with You.

### **Struggling ...**

This year has been a difficult one for me –  
But even when times were most challenging,  
I tried not to question You, God.  
Even when darkness descended,  
I tried not to lose faith.

I pray –  
Please continue to grant me the fortitude to meet my trials.  
Please continue to help me conquer the difficult times.

Ease my path, God, so that I can be optimistic about  
tomorrow,  
Even as I struggle with today.  
Be present with me always and help me find peace.

### **Remorse ...**

I made some terrible choices this year, God, and I need to  
atone.

I used bad judgment.  
I should have known better.

I crossed lines.  
I *did* know better.  
As a consequence of my behavior, I hurt others.  
For that, I am profoundly sorry.



On this day of reflection,  
I come to You asking for strength and forgiveness –  
Strength to conquer the hardships I have created,  
Forgiveness for the hurt I have caused.  
Please God, hear my prayers.  
Smooth the road before me.  
Deal kindly and graciously with me.  
Be present with me always, and help me find peace.



*Y'hiyu l'Ratzon ...*

*Y'hiyu l'ratzon imray fee v'hegyon leebee (2x) l'fanecha.  
Adonai tzuri (2x) v'go-alee.*

Go inside your heart, just be.  
Go inside your heart and see.  
What it wants, what it needs,  
what it yearns when you breathe.  
Go inside your heart and see.

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my  
heart, be kind, be true, may they be acceptable to You.  
Oh, my Rock, my Rock, and my Redeemer.



## AM I FAILING HUMANITY?

Too often, in the absence of a catastrophic event, the world is reduced to my world, my environment, my needs.

There are people around me hurting, grieving, hopeless, and I turn my back. I have troubles of my own. I listen to the news. I hear about the destruction of our environment. I have about violence and child abuse, about hate crimes.

There is a world of hurt around me, and what do I say?  
“What can I do? I am only a single voice.”

*Am I failing my neighbors? Are we failing our world?*

*Apathy and turned heads are not the answer.*

*I am the answer.*

*We are the answer.*

Where have all the bright dreams gone? There is so much anguish and despair, so much violence and distress.

Uneasy and confused, we cry out, “Who is responsible?”

*I am responsible.*

Every night, millions of people go to bed hungry, most of them women and children. A child dies every seven seconds for lack of food.

*Have I done anything to end starvation?*

*Have I done enough to help end hunger?*

The streets are filled with homeless people. They walk among us.

*Have I done anything to give them a chance?*

*Or, do I walk by them, eyes closed to their plight?*

There are people all over the world oppressed and  
downtrodden, driven from their homeland. And I am  
asked repeatedly to help.

*Have I done something, anything to let them know  
someone cares? Or, do I care?*

Society abounds with dejected people – on the fringe  
because they are uneducated, illiterate, disabled or  
differently-abled, ill-prepared to make their own way in  
our competitive world.

*Have I done anything to give them hope?  
Or, am I insensitive to their need for help?*

For the sin of callousness or indifference in the face of  
human suffering, I ask forgiveness. For the sin of  
advancing the status quo, if only by my silence or my  
failures to act, I ask forgiveness.



### **“The Sound of Silence,” by Paul Simon**

Hello darkness, my old friend  
I've come to talk with you again  
Because a vision softly creeping  
Left its seeds while I was sleeping  
And the vision that was planted in my brain  
Still remains  
Within the sound of silence

In restless dreams I walked alone  
Narrow streets of cobblestone  
'Neath the halo of a street lamp  
I turned my collar to the cold and damp  
When my eyes were stabbed by the flash of a neon light  
That split the night  
And touched the sound of silence

And in the naked light I saw  
Ten thousand people, maybe more  
People talking without speaking  
People hearing without listening  
People writing songs that voices never share  
No one dared  
Disturb the sound of silence

Fools, said I, you do not know  
Silence like a cancer grows  
Hear my words that I might teach you  
Take my arms that I might reach you  
But my words, like silent raindrops fell  
And echoed in the wells of silence

And the people bowed and prayed  
To the neon god they made  
And the sign flashed out its warning  
In the words that it was forming  
And the sign said, the words of the prophets are written on  
the subway walls  
And tenement halls  
And whispered in the sounds of silence



## PROMISE, HOPE, TOMORROW ...

Today, I find strength by admitting I am weak.

*But will I find strength tomorrow?*

Today, I question my innermost soul to see if it is pure and clear.

*But will I question tomorrow?*

Today, I pledge to follow the road that is right, not the road that is easy.

*But which road will I walk tomorrow?*

Today, I am at one with myself and with You.

*But will I be whole tomorrow?*



*Avinu Malkeinu ...*

*Avinu Malkeinu, choneinu va'aneinu (2x)*

*Ki Ayn banu ma'asim.*

*Aseh imanu, tz'dakah vachessed (2x)*

*V'hoshi-einu.*

*Avinu Malkeinu – Almighty and Merciful –  
Answer us with grace, for our deeds are wanting.  
Save us through acts of justice and love.*



**“What a Wonderful World,” by Louis Armstrong**

I see trees of green, red roses too  
I see them bloom for me and you  
And I think to myself what a wonderful world

I see skies of blue and clouds of white  
The bright blessed day, the dark sacred night  
And I think to myself what a wonderful world

The colors of the rainbow so pretty in the sky  
Are also on the faces of people going by  
I see friends shaking hands saying how do you do  
They're really saying I love you  
I hear babies crying, I watch them grow  
They'll learn much more than I'll never know  
And I think to myself what a wonderful world  
Yes I think to myself what a wonderful world



This afternoon, we end with the same setting of intention  
as we began:

***Hineini.***

I am here.

I am here because I seek forgiveness.

I am here because I seek awareness.

I am here because I seek connection.

I am here because I seek improvement.

*Hineini.*

*I am here.*

*I am here because I seek to be more present in my life.*

*I am here because I seek community.*

*I am here because I do not want to be alone.*

*Hineini.*

*I am here.*

*I am here because I am aware that I can make better choices.*

*Hineini.*

*I am here because I am aware that I can change how I see the world, and how the world sees me.*

*Hineini.*

*I am here because this is my one and only life.*

*Hineini.*

*I am here because I want to take responsibility for my actions and my life.*

*Hineini.*

*I am here.*

**Thank you for sharing this sacred time with  
Temple Emanuel of Tempe.  
*G'mar chatimah tovah.***

Cover photo: Chapel of Thanksgiving,  
Thanks-Giving Square, Dallas, TX

*Compiled, edited, and typeset by Rabbi Cookie Lea Olshein from various sources,  
with special thanks to the members of Congregation Emanu El, Houston, Texas, for their  
generous permission to use of so many of their writings from "A Confession for Our  
Time." Special thanks to Kristine Thurston for the use of her poem,  
"All Vows Are Broken." Also contains original writing by Rabbi Cookie Lea Olshein.*