

וּנְתַנֶּה תְּקֵף

Unetaneh tokef
And we declare

The ark is opened.

וּנְתַנֶּה תְּקֵף קְדֻשַׁת הַיּוֹם כִּי הוּא נוֹרָא וְאֵלִים:
וּבוֹ תִנְשֵׂא מַלְכוּתְךָ וְיִכּוֹן בְּחֶסֶד כְּסָאֲךָ וְתִשָּׁב עָלָיו בְּאַמְתּוֹ:
אַמֶּת כִּי אַתָּה הוּא דִין וּמוֹכִיחַ וְיִוְדַע וְעַד וְכוֹתֵב וְחוֹתֵם
וְסוֹפֵר וּמוֹנֶה וְתִזְכֹּר כָּל-הַנְּשָׁכָחוֹת וְתִפְתַּח אֶת-סֵפֶר
הַזְּכוֹרוֹת וּמֵאֵלָיו יִקְרָא וְחוֹתֵם יָד כָּל-אָדָם בּוֹ:
וּבְשׁוֹפָר גָּדוֹל יִתְקַע וְקוֹל דְּמָמָה דְּקָה יִשְׁמַע.

*Unetaneh tokef kedushat hayom ki hu norah ve'ayom uvo tinaseh
malchutecha ve'yikon bechesed kis'echa veteshev alav be'emet:
Emet ki atah hu dayan umochiach ve'yodeah va'ed vechotem
vechotem vesofer umoneh vetizkor kol- hanishkachot vetiftach
et-sefer hazichronot ume'e'lav yikare vechotam yad kol-adam bo:
uveshofar gadol yitaka vekol demamah daka yishama.*

🍃 Now, we declare the sacred power of this day, which is the most awesome and solemn of days, when your rule is established over all, and your throne set in place by the power of love, and you come forth to govern in truth.

True it is that you are our judge, you alone can reprove, you alone can know, you alone are witness to all deeds. It is you who shall write, you shall seal what is written, you who shall read, and you who shall number all souls. You alone can remember what we have forgotten; it is you who shall open the Book of Remembrance, but its contents shall speak for themselves, for it bears the imprint of us all, which our deeds and our lives have inscribed. And when the great shofar is sounded, a small quiet voice can be heard . . .

בְּרֵאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה יִכְתְּבוּן וּבְיוֹם צוּם כְּפוּר יִחְתְּמוּן

Berosh hashanah yikatevun uveyom tzom kippur yechatemun

🍃 On Rosh Hashanah, all is written and revealed, and on Yom Kippur, the course of every life is sealed!

TRADITION:

Some say the unetaneh tokef was introduced into Jewish liturgy by R. Kalonymus ben Meshullam of Mayence around 1100 CE. The poem may have been written by R. Amnon, who was tortured for refusing to convert from Judaism. When released, he went immediately to synagogue. As he arrived, Rosh Hashanah services had progressed to just before kedushah in the Amidah. He asked for a pause, uttered the unetaneh tokef, and expired from his abuse. R. Amnon later appeared in a dream to R. Kalonymus, who then inserted the unetaneh tokef into the liturgy at the place R. Amnon had spoken it.

COMMENT: Maybe the question is not "Why is there suffering in the world?" but rather, "In the light of such suffering, what am I called upon to do?" Not "How can I stand this grief that afflicts me?" but rather "In the light of such grief, what good remains?" Not "Why do I have to lose so much?" but rather "In the light of such loss, what blessings can I celebrate?"

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