

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

KOL NIDRE

When twilight charms the sunset into dusk
The singer comes. I do not know his step
Nor ever have I seen the form of him.
But when through darkening window-panes I reach
My vision for that straining star whose course
Was preconceived in me, and with me
I know must pass forever, I hear his voice:
Deep rhythm circling stern creation's path
And passing far beyond it—*Kol Nidre!*
A little silence—all is swept away;
And there are only God and nothingness
Myself besides, I who am more than God
And less than nothingness—for it is rest.

As from dissolving mists sudden appears
The city's countenance, so from these days,
Melting like mists away, rise clear and stern
The towers of the solemn days that were:
Dread days of reckoning whose shofar blasts
Like thunder, dawns of upturned faces, pleas
Like wrath of midnight storms, sing in my blood
Wakening memories long dead, best dead . . .

Two thousand years of listless wandering!
Ages without a battle cry! Lo, he
Who sings behind the wall is meek; the words

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Samuel Roth

Flow gently from his soul, and you whose song
Is light, unburdened by our Elohim,
Cannot conceive the terrible despair!
But we who sing it know, for as we sing
We suffer. Every note a lash! Each word
A lovely daughter's shame! Ay, every verse
A noble city's doom of martyrdom!
And the whole song the story of a race
Which wrought God from itself and lost its soul.

Kol Nidre! and a hundred armies march
Retreat! A hundred armies bannerless and slow,
A far-flung shadow o'er the fields of earth,
March through my soul and will not cease. Give me
Your crucifix, children of Christendom,
The thing you hold up to the sun, and wail
And moan—your sign of suffering!
The dead have pride, and seeing it on me
Will go their way. Yet I'll not desecrate
The dead! Their pride—'twas all they had in life!

Kol Nidre! God! will this never have end?
These mighty trumpet blasts—for whom?—the dead?
They do not hear, I say.
The living? Lord! Have you no laughter left?
These living, straws out in your mighty storm,
They do not hear your storm, only the cries
Of bleeding lambs and drowning swine reach them.

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By Rick Lupert

September 18, 2018

Promises Worth Breaking – A poem for Kol Nidre by Rick Lupert



All vows –

This legal document
written in unholy language

a prenuptial agreement
for our inevitable failing.

This relationship with

the year itself
a contract awaiting
the biggest signature.

Please, cancel my subscription
but charge my card anyway.
I don't deserve the content.

Every promise I make
a guaranteed broken one
between today and

By Rick Lupert
September 18, 2018

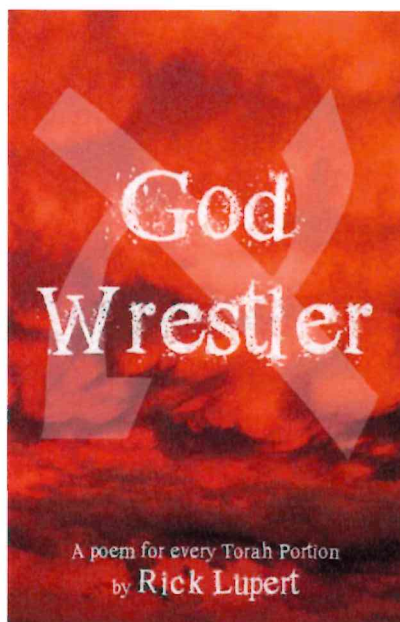
a year's worth of
Jewish days from now.
The next time the shofar

is dusted off,
we'll have this conversation again.
Forgive me this year

and last year and next.
Forgive everyone who ever
stood at the mountain.

Forgive our promises
our oaths, our vows, all vows
You made the whole world

and on this day and every day
You knew this would happen.
Pardon me. Please.



Los Angeles poet Rick Lupert created the [Poetry Super Highway](#) (an online publication and resource for poets), and hosted the Cobalt Cafe weekly poetry

Another one from the archives: Kol Nidre poem (<https://velveteenrabbi.blogs.com/blog/2012/11/another-one-from-the-archives-kol-nidre-poem.html>)

November 23, 2012 (<https://velveteenrabbi.blogs.com/blog/2012/11/another-one-from-the-archives-kol-nidre-poem.html>)

This poem was first published in *What Stays*, my second chapbook of poems (Bennington Writing Seminars Alumni Chapbook Series, 2002.) It has been used in congregations and independent minyanim during Kol Nidre services.

KOL NIDRE

I.

My people break our promises publicly.
We stand and say "Hey, God, you know,

you can't hold us to anything really,
I mean we're creation, right?" We declare

all vows, promises, and oaths
of the year to come -- all vows we're too silent

or too weak or forgetful to uphold --
null and void in advance.

We say, "God, you're listening, right?" We say,
"Don't worry, God. We still feel guilt."

We are like wild grapes.
We are beautiful, and we are sour.

Forgive us, and forgive
the stranger in our midst.

II.

In Stolpce, my grandfather's town,
some sons ran away, abandoned God.
Joined the army, splashed water
on bare faces, cooked pea soup with bacon.
Even they would gather once a year,
press their ears to the synagogue door,
whisper the Aramaic words and weep.

My grandmother's house in Prague
had a Christmas tree up to the ceiling.
When children said she'd killed their God
she said, "That must have been the Polish Jews."
For Kol Nidre she wore her new fur coat
and walked the cobbled promenade.
At eighty she still fasted, stood and swayed.

Once my Hebrew teacher stood a girl
in the trash because she wouldn't learn.
I came home bursting with new sounds
and imitated his accent at the dinner table.
I argued with our yardman, a Jehovah's Witness.
Later Eloisa chewed him out in Spanish:
didn't he know what Jewish meant?

III.

So that our vows may no longer be vows
we knock on our breasts with loose fists,

we speak an abecedarium of sins.
We know the disclaimer only lasts so long;

next year we'll be back with our court
of three, holding scrolls, looking solemn.

We know how foolish we sound
but the melody is old, and makes us cry.

Posted at 07:00 AM in Days of Awe (https://velveteenrabbi.blogs.com/blog/days_of_awe/), poetry (<https://velveteenrabbi.blogs.com/blog/poetry/>), prayer (<https://velveteenrabbi.blogs.com/blog/lliturgyl/>) | Permalink (<https://velveteenrabbi.blogs.com/blog/2012/11/another-one-from-the-archives-kol-nidre-poem.html>) | Comments (2) (<https://velveteenrabbi.blogs.com/blog/2012/11/another-one-from-the-archives-kol-nidre-poem.html#comments>)

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JewBelong

 jewbelong.com/holidays/yom-kippur/1700-2/kol-nidre/

A proclamation of humanity:

I will try and I *will* fail.

Do not believe a word I say,
only believe that I believe it.

An epitaph for the future, this
and that is not all I intend to be –
but recognize that by being we
inevitably cease
and desist in our duties.

Failure is a known unknown;
unintentional yet unavoidable.
Unsinkable ships sink.
Unbreakable bonds break
as easily as I will break
the promises I have yet to say

I shall never be a liar in advance;
this one vow I keep.
Do not mistake my unintentionations –
I shirk no duty and dodge no draft,
but time will find me in the wrong,
as time find us all (in time),
and all I ask is your forgiveness
when the time comes.

I may fail, but I *will* try
with all my heart.
-Evan M. Rosenberg