

High Holiday Inspirational Reading Supplement

Readings from this supplement will be shared throughout the holiday services.

Please have it available to follow along.



You Don't Have to Pray It to Say It

Pg. 2

"I'm not religious. I don't know the prayers. I'd feel hypocritical. I'm not sure what I believe so how can I pray?"

Would you say, "I'm not Albert Einstein so I'm not going to think?" or "I'm not Michael Jordan so I shouldn't play basketball?"

Prayer is scary because we want answers to our questions and may not get them. The very least is that you ask yourself questions to find out who you are and could be "Is there someone there greater than us?" "Does he/she care about me?" "What is expected of me?" The answers may be just in asking, making you think of thoughts you may not have considered before.

--- From a Jewish Theological Seminary program advertisement

Where Are We Our Trues Selves?

A little boy used to come home from school each day, and disappear into the forest behind his house.

After watching him go off into the woods, his father asked him: "Son, where do you go every day? Who is it you meet in the forest?"

The boy said: "I go to the forest to talk to God."

The father gently chided the boy: "Son, don't you know that God is everywhere! God is the same in the forest as God is right here at home."

"That's true, father," said the boy. "God is the same in the forest as right here at home. But I'm not the same.

When I'm in the forest, I feel different."

Forgiveness Practice

Too often people face
the ark, the leader
the television, the monitor, the game.

Too little do we face each other.

Or even know how.

Developing sustainable, meaningful intimacy
is one important theme of the Jewish Holy Days.

Intimacy with all people,

the Jewish People,

nature,

the planet,

and the Source of Life.

--- Rabbi Goldie Milgram

To everything there is a season,
And there is an appointed time for every purpose
Under heaven.

Now is the time for turning.

The leaves are beginning to turn
From green to red and orange.

The birds are beginning to turn
And are heading once more towards the South.

The animals are beginning to turn
To storing their food for the winter.

For leaves, birds, and animals
Turning comes instinctively.

But for us turning does not come so easily.

It takes an act of will

For us to make a turn.

It means breaking with old habits.

It means admitting that we have been wrong;

And this is never easy.

It means losing face;

It means starting all over again;

And this is always painful.

It means saying: "I am sorry."

It means admitting that we have the ability to change;

And this is always embarrassing.

These things are terribly hard to do.

But unless we turn, we will be trapped forever

In yesterday's ways.

Lord, help us turn

From callousness to sensitivity,

From hostility to love,

From pettiness to purpose,

From envy to contentment,

From carelessness to discipline,

From fear to faith.

Turn us around, Adonai, and bring us back towards You.

Revive our lives, as at the beginning.

And turn us towards each other, Adonai,

For in isolation there is no life.

Achti

*I am pained I did not call you
By the name your mother gave you.
I cast you aside,
Cursed you with my barrenness and rage,
Called you "stranger"/ Ha-ger,
As if it were a sin to be from another place.*

Achti

*They used me to steal your womb,
Claim your child,
As if I owned your body and your labor*

*I, whom they call "See Far Woman" / Sarah,
Could not witness my own blindness.
But you, my sister,
You beheld angels,
Made miracles in the desert,
Received divine blessings from a god,
Who stopped talking to me.*

*Only at the end,
When I witnessed my young son screaming under his father's knife,
Only then
Did I realize our common suffering.*

*And I called out, "Avraham, Avraham, hold back your knife!"
My voice trumpeted into the silence of my sin.*

*Forgive me, Achti
For the sin of neglect
For the sin of abuse
For the sin of arrogance
Forgive me, Achti,
For the sin of not knowing your name.*

--- Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb

Why did I keep silent? Why did I not speak
When I saw the smoke and fire in your father's eyes?
I stood in anguished silence waiting for some word,
A word I heard from angels' mouths who mocked me in old age
 Steal him away you prowler in the night,
 Fly away; flee before my silence breaks.
 I lied for greater glory in a king's camp.
 I offered up my body against the enemy's sword.
Once I was a woman praised in her generation,
Who thought all things possible were my right.
I voiced the arrogance of heart;
The danger of abject contempt.
 No child for me in vibrant youth
 When arms were strong to carry him in joy.
 In my old age my sealed womb parted
 And swelled my breasts to bursting.
Now I have a son -my only son-
Child of my laughter, child of my dreams
How dare they take you from me across the desert sands?
To a place of smoke and fire, to Moriah's ancient spire?
 Who will draw the first drop and who will weep the most?
 And who will take her vengeance on the father of the child?
 And who dares the Father of a promised nation born?
 I stand on my Moriah and challenge You, Creator,
To shed Your immortal immunity;
To discard Your awesome power.
I faced my husband's darkling fear,
Defying angels who listened to me laugh.
 Now rise up women of silence, sing a new song.
 With voices echoing over time, make known
 How, with strength of heart we mastered God and men;
 With strength of love we forged a covenant of hope.

--- Michael Halperin

Rabb Aaron of Karlin led his congregation in prayer on Rosh Hashanah. As he chanted the opening word of the Shacharit service, HaMelekh, 'You are the King,' he burst into tears.

Following the service his disciples asked him what was wrong; Why did he cry when he called God HaMelekh, "The King?"

Rabbi Aaron answered: as I chanted the prayer I remembered the story of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai. Once he came before Vespasian, who would soon become emperor of Rome. He came to beg for mercy for the Jewish people.

The Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai began by saying: "Oh Great King! Peace be unto you!"

Vespasian said to the rabbi: "If I am the king, where have you been until now?"

So, Rabbi Aaron explained: "As I called God, Hamelekh, the King My heart grew sad and frightened. For if God is truly the king, *where have I been until now? Why have I not returned in repentance until now?*"

A New Year's Poem

The past year makes way for new. Look back at our roads less traveled.
Lean forward into what's yet to be and dedicate yourself to building.

Look back at our roads less traveled: Friday nights in mystical white...
Dedicate yourself to building the vibrant future you dream for.

Friday nights in mystical white. Enliven the soul, bring hope to the heart.
The vibrant future you dream for: The renewal of tomorrow is in your hands.

Enliven the soul, bring hope to the heart. What do you yearn for?
The renewal of tomorrow is in your hands.
Dare to dream what the future needs.

What do you yearn for?
Lean forward into what's yet to be.

Dare to dream what the future needs as the past year makes way for new.

--- Rabbi Rachel Barenblatt

May the sound of the Shofar shatter our complacency
And make us conscious of the corruptions in our lives.

May the sound of the Shofar penetrate our souls,
And cause us to turn back to our Parent in Heaven.

May the sound of the Shofar break the bonds of the evil impulse within us,
And enable us to serve the God with a whole heart.

May the sound of the Shofar renew our loyalty to the one true Ruler,
And strengthen our determination to defy the false gods.

May the sound of the Shofar awaken us to the enormity of our misdeeds,
And the vastness of God's mercy for those who truly repent.

May the sound of the Shofar summon us to service,
And stir us to respond, as did Abraham, "Here I am."

May the sound of the Shofar recall the moment,
When we stood at Mount Sinai and uttered the promise:
All that the Adonai has spoken, we will keep and obey:'

May the sound of the Shofar
recall the promise of the ingathering of the exiles,
And stir within us renewed devotion to the Land of Israel.

May the sound of the Shofar recall the vision of the prophets,
Of the day when Egypt, Syria, and Israel will live in peace.

May the sound of the Shofar awaken us to the flight of time,
And summon us to spend our days with purpose.

May the sound of the Shofar become our jubilant shout of joy ,
At the time we bring about the, long-awaited redemption.

May the sound of the Shofar remind us that it is time,
To "proclaim liberty throughout the land
And to all the inhabitants thereof."

May the sound of the Shofar enter our hearts;
For blessed is the people that hearkens to its call.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end war;
For we know that You have made the world in such a way
That people must find their own path to peace
Within themselves and with their neighbor.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God,
To end starvation;
For You have already given us the resources
With which to feed the entire world,
If we would only use them wisely.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God,
To root out prejudice;
For You have already given us eyes
With which to see the good in all people
If we would only use them rightly.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God,
To end despair;
For You have already given us the power
To clear away slums and to give hope
If we would only use our power justly.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God,
To end disease;
For You have already given us great minds
With which to search out cures and healings
If we would only use them constructively.

Therefore we pray to You instead, O God,
For strength, determination, and will power,
To *do* instead of just to pray,
To *become* instead of merely to wish,

For Your sake and for ours,
Speedily and soon,
That our land may be safe,
And that our lives may be blessed.

May the words that we pray,
And the deeds that we do
Both be acceptable before You, Adonai,
Our Rock and our Redeemer.

Hineinu: Here we are
Sitting together with family and friends.
We have returned to greet the New Year,
To reflect on the year gone by,
And to give an accounting of our souls.
Are we worthy of this opportunity?
Have we fulfilled the promises we made last year?
Are we prepared to be truly present; And to listen
With a whole heart to words of Your Torah?

The words we chant this day fill us with awe.
Yet we are afraid that we might leave this holy place
The same as we entered it.
“Draw your veil of love around us O God”
Let us feel Your presence Adonai,
Let us join in song and answer the prayers
Which we recite so that
These words will become our words
And our words rise up before You.

Heneini, Here I am.

Hineinu, Here we are.

--- Rabbi Mark Greenspan

Let us ask ourselves hard questions,
For this is the time for truth.

How much time did we waste

In the year that is now gone?

Did we fill our days with life

Or were they dull and empty?

Was there love inside our home

Or was the affectionate word left unsaid?

Was there a real companionship with our children

Or was there a living together and a growing apart?

Were we a help to our mates

Or did we take them for granted?

How was it with our friends:

Were we there when they needed us or not?

The kind deed: did we perform it or postpone it?

The unnecessary gibe: did we say it or hold it back?

Did we live by false values?

Did we deceive others?

Did we deceive ourselves?

Were we sensitive to the rights and feelings

Of those who worked for us?

Did we acquire only possessions

Or did we acquire new insights as well?

Did we fear what the crowd would say

And keep quiet when we should have spoken out!

Did we mind only our own business

Or did we feel the heartbreak of others?

Did we live right, and if not,

Have we learned and will we change?

Breaking with the accepted custom
There was a child who sent her parents
Flowers on her birthday each year.
She enclosed a note with them,
“Thank you for the gift of life.”

We gather this day, to give thanks for the gift of life.
But what can we offer our Creator
That will fully express our gratitude?
What do we have that we can offer to God?
All we can offer are the gift of words.

Words that express *Malkhuyot*,
Our belief in God’s sovereignty.
All life is Yours, all life comes from You
Your Presence gives meaning
To what we say and do.

We offer words of *Zichronot*, words which speak of God
As the source of compassion and caring

Even when we are alone, You with us.
In moments of sorrow, You comfort us
In moments of despair, You bring us hope.

We offer words of *Shofarot*, words which speak of the call to return,
The hope for redemption, the sound of Mount Sinai.

We hear the sound of the Shofar and think of You.
Of Abraham, and his ram
Of Sinai and its covenant
Of the Messiah and its Promise.

These are the only gifts we can offer: The gift of words
And the promise to live by them.
Thanking God for life, for meaning, and for hope.

--- Rabbi Mark Greenspan

Listen

Judaism begins with the commandment: Hear O Israel,

But what does it really mean to hear?

The person who attends a concert with their mind on business,
Hears-but does not really hear.

The person who walks amidst the songs of birds
And thinks only of what they will have for dinner,
Hears-but does not really hear.

The person who listens to the words of their friends, or their partner or child,
And does not catch the note of urgency:

"Notice me, help me; care about me,"
Hears - but does not really hear.

The person who listens to the news
And thinks only of how it will affect the stock market,
Hears - but does not really hear.

The person who stifles the sound of their conscience
And tells themselves they have done enough already,
Hears - but does not really hear.

The person who hears the hazzan pray and does not feel the call,
Hears - but does not really hear.

The person who listens to the rabbi's sermon
And thinks that someone else is being addressed,
Hears - but does not really hear.

The person who hears the Shofar sound
And does not feel the need to change their ways,
Hears - but does not really hear.

As the New Year begins, Adonai, strengthen our ability to hear.

May we hear the music of the world,
And the infant's cry, and the lover's sigh.

May we hear the call for help of the lonely soul,
And the sound of the breaking heart.

May we hear the words of our friends,
And also their unspoken pleas and dreams.

May we hear within ourselves the yearnings
That are struggling for expression.

May we hear You, Adonai our God,
For only if we hear You do we have the right to hope
That you will hear us.

Hear the promises we make to You this day, Adonai
And may we hear them too.

Prayer for Change
By Cathy Cohen

The sky is so wide, without boundary.
We try, but gaze
through a narrow lens,
bird's eye, human eye,
view from the window of a plane.

God, without boundary,
please widen our gaze.

When faced with change,
night into day or
day into night, please
let us meet transition without fear.
Let moments of change lift us into possibility.
Please wrap us
in Your limitless presence.

The Shape of the Shofar
By Devon Spier
silhouette of person blowing shofar
it is a wonder

the shofar
is shaped
like the inside
of an ear

because at the moment
we are blasted with sound

and our whole world becomes the ancient voice,
longing
calling
demanding

we are meant to listen to whom is below noise

and there, underneath the usual commands
and allegiances

is Torah
listening and weeping
in all the invisible, eternal ink