

Yom Kippur by Phillip Schultz

You are asked to stand and bow your head,
consider the harm you've caused,
the respect you've withheld,
the anger misspent, the fear spread,
the earnestness displayed
in the service of prestige and sensibility,
all the callous, cruel, stubborn, joyless sins
in your alphabet of woe
so that you might be forgiven.

You are asked to believe in the spark
of your divinity, in the purity
of the words of your mouth
and the memories of your heart.

You are asked for this one day and one night
to starve your body so your soul can feast
on faith and adoration.

You are asked to forgive the past
and remember the dead, to gaze
across the desert in your heart
toward Jerusalem. To separate
the sacred from the profane
and be as numerous as the sands
and the stars of heaven.

To believe that no matter what
you have done to yourself and others
morning will come and the mountain
of night will fade. To believe,
for these few precious moments,
in the utter sweetness of your life.

You are asked to bow your head
and remain standing,
and say Amen.