



HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Congregation Beth El, Sunbury PA

Rosh Hashana
Supplemental Readings

5781

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**Rosh Hashana Greeting,
by Barbara Kavadias**

The words take on an extra resonance this year
Normally, I see you
In the halls, at the doors,
In the rotunda, in the pews, at the store
My heart leaps, happy
To feel your presence
To see your smiling face
And like the coming light elicits birdsong
As the dawn brings on
Wakefulness and prayer
Shanah Tovah comes forth
From my heart and lips
It embraces you
Ties us together in a timeless dance
An eternal circle of lived memory
Of celebration
This year
I see you from a distance
Masked
I see you on Zoom
Our connection is
Muted. Disembodied

But the circle
The dance
The season
Draws me in
I have to dig in, to listen
But it is there

Shanah Tovah bursts forth
From my heart, my pen,
My computer pixels
I wish you a good year
A year of good health
A year of hope
A year of connection
However we find it
Whatever form it takes
May it be enough
To keep our souls singing
Our hearts happy
To rid the world of evil
And hate and lies
May it be enough
To tide us over
Until I can hug you again

To sit next to you
To sing with you
To pray with you
Our voices joined together
In celebration and love
Shanah Tovah!

To the New Year, by W. S. Merwin

With what stillness at last
you appear in the valley
your first sunlight reaching down
to touch the tips of a few
high leaves that do not stir
as though they had not noticed
and did not know you at all
then the voice of a dove calls
from far away in itself
to the hush of the morning

so this is the sound of you
here and now whether or not
anyone hears it this is
where we have come with our age
our knowledge such as it is
and our hopes such as they are
invisible before us
untouched and still possible

**Hope is the Thing with Feathers,
by Emily Dickinson**

“Hope” is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -
And sore must be the storm -
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chillest land -
And on the strangest Sea -
Yet - never - in Extremity,
It asked a crumb - of me.

A New Year, by Rabbi Annie Lewis

I am running now
into a new year.
How it hurts
to run into something,
even to walk into it
instead of passing it by,
to pause here
at this doorway
in time,
age-old and brand new,
to stand in this arch and
cry out
to the dome of the universe,
to break through the ceiling
with song.
Follow the light through
the cracks now
and find your way back
to the Source.

No Matter How Many Times, by Jaden Diamond

Adonai, glory be Your name for all eternity.
Wherever I walk may I find You always,

In the kindness of strangers,
In the stars,
In the warm summer's breeze,
In the laughter of my friends,

In the fields of flowers,
In the transition of the seasons,
In music set to glorify You.

And in my darkest moments may I find You,
In my doubts,
In my despair,
In my stumbling off the path of righteousness,
In my shame,
In my fear,
In my failings,

In the moments I was rude,
In the moments I should have done better.

No matter how many times I fall,
No matter how many times I return,
No matter how many times I have sought You out,

You were always there,

At every moment,
Just You,
Only You,
Forever You,

Adonai, how beautiful is Your name.
Adonai, how holy are Your works.
Adonai, how gorgeous is the universe so filled with
wonder and beauty.

Adonai, God of Israel, holy are You.

October 2008, by Shara McCallum

Most mornings this fall I wake to rain
stitching across the lawn, crows
not yet cawing. I know dawn will collect
wayward moon, scattered stars into night's pocket.
But in the still dark, quiet room where I am,
my body forms an absence, frayed
hole in the centre of my suburban home.

Soon news will break, promising
nothing new—endless war, the election—
mirroring the natural world's
notion of change, leaves burning scarlet,
announcing autumn as if it were a first.
Upstairs, my husband and children
breathe into pillows their dreams.

I turn to see the woman I've become
reflected in the window's glass: a stranger
moving her finger across my cheek, trying to
decode
an old story, etched as if in Braille on my flesh.

Poem Without an End, by Yehuda Amichai

Inside the brand-new museum
there's an old synagogue.
Inside the synagogue
is me.
Inside me
my heart.
Inside my heart
a museum.

Inside the museum
a synagogue,
inside it
me,
inside me
my heart,
inside my heart
a museum

Blessing for Healers during the Corona Virus by
Rabbi Ayelet Cohen

May the One who blessed our ancestors
Bless all those who put themselves at risk to care
for the sick
Physicians and nurses and orderlies
Technicians and home health aides
EMTs and pharmacists
Hospital social workers and respiratory therapists
(Please include other frontline healthcare workers.
And bless especially _____)
Who navigate the unfolding dangers of the world
each day,
To tend to those they have sworn to help.

Bless them in their coming home and bless them in
their going out.
Ease their fear. Sustain them.
Source of all breath, healer of all beings,
Protect them and restore their hope.
Strengthen them, that they may bring strength;
Keep them in health, that they may bring healing.
Help them know again a time when they can
breathe without fear.
Bless the sacred work of their hands.
May this plague pass from among us, speedily and
in our days.

The Jewish Cemetery at Newport
by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1852

How strange it seems! These Hebrews in their
graves,
Close by the street of this fair seaport town,
Silent beside the never-silent waves,
At rest in all this moving up and down!

The trees are white with dust, that o'er their sleep

Wave their broad curtains in the south-wind's
breath,
While underneath these leafy tents they keep
The long, mysterious Exodus of Death.

And these sepulchral stones, so old and brown,
That pave with level flags their burial-place,
Seem like the tablets of the Law, thrown down
And broken by Moses at the mountain's base.

The very names recorded here are strange,
Of foreign accent, and of different climes;
Alvares and Rivera interchange
With Abraham and Jacob of old times.

"Blessed be God! for he created Death!"
The mourners said, "and Death is rest and
peace;"
Then added, in the certainty of faith,
"And giveth Life that nevermore shall cease."

Closed are the portals of their Synagogue,
No Psalms of David now the silence break,
No Rabbi reads the ancient Decalogue
In the grand dialect the Prophets spake.

Gone are the living, but the dead remain,
And not neglected; for a hand unseen,
Scattering its bounty, like a summer rain,
Still keeps their graves and their remembrance
green.

How came they here? What burst of Christian hate,
What persecution, merciless and blind,
Drove o'er the sea — that desert desolate —
These Ishmaels and Hagars of mankind?

They lived in narrow streets and lanes obscure,
Ghetto and Judenstrass, in mirk and mire;
Taught in the school of patience to endure
The life of anguish and the death of fire.

All their lives long, with the unleavened bread
And bitter herbs of exile and its fears,
The wasting famine of the heart they fed,
And slaked its thirst with marah of their tears.

Anathema maranatha! was the cry
That rang from town to town, from street to
street;

At every gate the accursed Mordecai
Was mocked and jeered, and spurned by
Christian feet.

Pride and humiliation hand in hand
Walked with them through the world where'er
they went;
Trampled and beaten were they as the sand,
And yet unshaken as the continent.

For in the background figures vague and vast
Of patriarchs and of prophets rose sublime,
And all the great traditions of the Past
They saw reflected in the coming time.

And thus forever with reverted look
The mystic volume of the world they read,
Spelling it backward, like a Hebrew book,
Till life became a Legend of the Dead.

But ah! what once has been shall be no more!
The groaning earth in travail and in pain
Brings forth its races, but does not restore,
And the dead nations never rise again.

In the Jewish Synagogue at Newport by Emma Lazarus, 1867

Here, where the noises of the busy town,
The ocean's plunge and roar can enter not,
We stand and gaze around with tearful awe,
And muse upon the consecrated spot.

No signs of life are here: the very prayers
Inscribed around are in a language dead;
The light of the "perpetual lamp" is spent
That an undying radiance was to shed.

What prayers were in this temple offered up,
Wrung from sad hearts that knew no joy on earth,
By these lone exiles of a thousand years,
From the fair sunrise land that gave them birth!

How as we gaze, in this new world of light,
Upon this relic of the days of old,
The present vanishes, and tropic bloom
And Eastern towns and temples we behold.

Again we see the patriarch with his flocks,
The purple seas, the hot blue sky o'erhead,
The slaves of Egypt,—omens, mysteries,—
Dark fleeing hosts by flaming angels led.

A wondrous light upon a sky-kissed mount,
A man who reads Jehovah's written law,
'Midst blinding glory and effulgence rare,
Unto a people prone with reverent awe.

The pride of luxury's barbaric pomp,
In the rich court of royal Solomon—
Alas! we wake: one scene alone remains,—
The exiles by the streams of Babylon.

Our softened voices send us back again
But mournful echoes through the empty hall:
Our footsteps have a strange unnatural sound,
And with unwonted gentleness they fall.

The weary ones, the sad, the suffering,
All found their comfort in the holy place,
And children's gladness and men's gratitude
'Took voice and mingled in the chant of praise.

The funeral and the marriage, now, alas!
We know not which is sadder to recall;
For youth and happiness have followed age,
And green grass lieth gently over all.

Nevertheless the sacred shrine is holy yet,
With its lone floors where reverent feet once trod.
Take off your shoes as by the burning bush,
Before the mystery of death and God.

Unetaneh Tokef, adapted from Rabbi Rachel Goldenberg

Every year we have to face this prayer, and every
year it is so painful.

Who shall live and who shall die
And this year even more so – these words are too
real.

I don't believe that God is up there somewhere literally writing names down in a book – determining our destiny.
But I do know that I need to say these words, especially this year.

Since COVID hit, the curtain has been pulled back revealing the truth that is always there the truth that this prayer forces us to confront:
Each of us truly is a shattered urn,
Grass that must wither,
A particle of dust floating on the wind.
When we sit with the truth of our vulnerability, the fragility of this life,
that is when it feels most precious.
And from that place of knowing how precious this all is we are moved
to pray from an even more genuine place, to do real teshuva in our relationships and for the sake of our community,
and to devote ourselves to the pursuit of justice and equity.

Because, as we have so vividly seen this year, we do know who is most likely to live and who is most likely to die
in this country when a pandemic hits,
or when a car gets pulled over by the police,
or healthcare is made inaccessible.
Or environmental crises destroy already vulnerable neighborhoods.
We are all vulnerable, but in an imbalanced world, some are more vulnerable than others. And others are facing new insecurities.
And that is something we can vow to change.
The question be asked is: when will we?

Shofar's Cry: Sarah and Hagar Speak, adapted from the reading by Heather Paul

This interpretive reading combines Hagar's story from the first day of Rosh Hashanah and Sarah's from the second day.

Sarah and Hagar, together: My child nearly died.
Hagar: Sarah sent us into the wilderness. *Abraham* spoke the words but it was her voice in his throat. I've never forgiven her.

Sarah: I woke up to an empty home. My heart roared and there was a metallic taste in my mouth. Abraham and *Isaac* were climbing the mountain.
Sarah and Hagar: I was alone.
Hagar: There was no water. I lay my child down beneath a tree. I couldn't bear to watch *Ishamel* die.
Sarah: Isaac knew something was wrong. He asked about the lamb for the sacrifice. "God will see to the offering," my husband said. They walked on together.
Sarah: *Min hametzar karati Yah*, I called out to God from the narrow place
Hagar: *anani bamerkhav Yah* And God answered me. God showed me a well. The water saved my child from death in the wilderness
Sarah: I never heard God's voice, but I know God saved my child from my husband's hand. Abraham would have done it. I've never forgiven him.
Sarah and Hagar: I loved Abraham but he abandoned me.
Hagar: My son and I survived. God never broke the promise.
Sarah: I died when I heard what happened. But God never broke the promise.
Hagar and Sarah: My son became a great nation.
Hagar: You remember me on Rosh Hashanah
Sarah: My voice echoes in every generation on Yom Kippur.
Sarah and Hagar: We are the shofar's cry.
Sarah: Wailing, like I did when I learned the truth.
Hagar: Sobbing, like I did when God called back to me, and I knew my child was safe.
Sarah and Hagar: *Tekiah Teruah Shevarim*
Sarah: Broken
Hagar: Triumphant
Sarah and Hagar: And free.