

# KEREN OR

Keren Or (Beam of Light) is a publication of Or Shalom Synagogue  
High Holydays 5774 Edition

## TESHUVAH

*(Walking meditation on the grounds of Newbold House retreat centre in Forres, Scotland)*

You met me in the garden  
As I walked along the path  
You waved to me, you called to me  
“Come back, come back, come back”

You were the bird, unseen but heard,  
That chirped as I went by  
You were the feeble glimmer of sun  
In the grey and cloudy sky

You were the daisies and buttercups  
Thornbushes and pine cones  
You were the carved stone faces  
Fashioned by hands unknown

You were the lichen-clad fruit trees  
With limbs contorted and wild  
You were the grunting, rooting hogs  
That made everyone smile

You were the bees sucking nectar  
From the hearts of the flowering plants  
You were the wind and the rustling leaves  
In their undulating dance



Keith Saunders photo

You were the gliding, soaring gulls  
Circling high above  
And You were my fellow walkers  
Their silence and their love

You followed me through the garden  
Along the grassy path  
You called to me, you spoke to me  
“Come back, come back, come back.”

– *Miriam Eguchi*

Or Shalom Synagogue is a Jewish spiritual community in Vancouver, BC, affiliated with ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal. We are creative, egalitarian, traditional and participatory.

For more information about Or Shalom, see our website [www.orshalom.ca](http://www.orshalom.ca)  
or call the Or Shalom office 604.872.1614. email: [office@orshalom.ca](mailto:office@orshalom.ca)

Keren Or was produced by Lorne Mallin and Rabbi Laura Duhan Kaplan.

# GREAT STAFF AND PARTICIPATORY CONGREGATION

## MESSAGE FROM OR SHALOM'S BOARD

5753 has been another wonderful year in the life of Or Shalom, in many aspects. Programs have increased, fundraising continues to grow and attendance at events is high.

Our excellent staff, Reb Laura and Lily, continued to go beyond the call of duty to make Or Shalom the place we love to come to daven, learn and celebrate together.

Among the many activities this year were ongoing adult education, including several Shabbat "Tischen" – after-kiddush discussions on a range of topics – a five-session Kabbalah class, the annual Exploring Judaism class, and an adult Bnei Mitzvah class with five dedicated learners who celebrated their Bar and Bat Mitzvah this summer.

Young adult programming continued with a number of Rosh Chodesh events and a Philosopher's Cafe, while youth programming saw the Kids Club, Family Shabbatot, several Toddler parties and of course our Bnei Mitzvah program, a unique program for kids and parents to explore Jewish learning and projects like tikkun olam in this very special year.

This year we also held a monthly Kabbalat Shabbat program and monthly Chanting & Chocolate.

Reb Laura continues to both extend her learning as well as teach a wide range of courses over the year.

We're indeed blessed to have great staff and a participatory congregation who take active roles in davening, leadership and learning.

Our Strategic Financial Planning Committee is a group of talented and dedicated Or Shalomniks who coordinate our annual fundraising campaign,



Dave Kauffman photo

*Strategic Financial Planning Committee canvassers dinner.*

and are setting our strategy for long term sustainability of Or Shalom. Thank you for your financial support through this very labour-intensive annual campaign – it's what keeps Or Shalom able to offer these services.

Board members are of course volunteers, and if you have a chance, please thank them for their service. This year's board members have included Laura Rosenthal, Dave Kauffman, Mark Winston, Jordana Cornblum, Martin Gotfrit, Pam Atnikov, Robert Ezzy, Linda Peritz and Ron Einblau.

Serving on the Or Shalom board is a mitzvah and a privilege. Members meet monthly and often discuss topics ranging from *tikkun olam* to renting the shul, and we try to bring the principles of Torah and Jewish Renewal to our deliberations.

– Dave Kauffman, Chair

# FREEDOM TO REPAIR

BY RABBI LAURA DUHAN KAPLAN

*Unetaneh Tokef*. An anonymous, medieval prayer-poem declaring the holiness of Rosh Hashanah, fountain of the New Year, the Day of Judgment.

*All creatures pass before You. You open the book of chronicles. Yes, it's true, we human beings write the book in our own personal handwriting. But you, God, issue the verdict. On Rosh Hashanah it is written, and on Yom Kippur it is sealed. How many will pass away? How many will be born? Who will live peacefully? Who will be agitated? Who will be in trouble with the law? Who will experience earthquake, fire or flood? Teshuvah (repentance), tefillah (prayer), and tzedakah (righteous giving) avert the evil of the decree.*

A legend has grown up around the origins of *Unetaneh Tokef*. Rabbi Amnon of Mainz, Germany, is a Crusades-era Jewish leader. One day shortly before Rosh Hashanah, the Archbishop of Mainz sends for Rabbi Amnon and says, "I order you to convert to Christianity." Rabbi Amnon says, "Let me think about this for three days." When Rabbi Amnon fails to return, the archbishop sends for him. Rabbi Amnon, deeply upset that he expressed a willingness to consider conversion, asks that his tongue be cut out. But the archbishop decides instead to cut off Rabbi Amnon's hands and feet. Rabbi Amnon asks to be carried to synagogue on Rosh Hashanah. There he presents the poem he has just written, *Unetaneh Tokef*. He does not survive the day.

Before you cry: the story is not true. Rabbi Amnon was not a real person; *Unetaneh Tokef* was not written in Europe; and the Christian establishment of Mainz during the Crusades was not anti-Jewish. But the story invites creative interpretations of the poem. For example: Rabbi Amnon's final actions and words teach that we, even in the face of suffering, are always free to respond with *teshuvah*, *tefillah* and *tzedakah*.

What does the poet mean by these terms? Does *teshuvah* require a change of inner perspective or a new plan of action? Is *tefillah* self-examination or ritual communal prayer? Is *tzedakah* a financial donation or a righteous action or both? Is the "decree" a divine plan or the ordinary course of cause and effect? How can these three activities avert the evil of a decree?

Contrast the poet's statement with one of its sources. The *Yerushalmi* (Jerusalem) Talmud says: "Three things cancel the difficult decree, and they are: prayer, righteous deeds and repentance" (Ta'anit 2). In the *Yerushalmi*'s version, the decree is cancelled, while in *Unetaneh Tokef*, the evil of the decree is averted. In the *Yerushalmi*, prayer is the first step; in *Unetaneh Tokef*, *teshuvah* is first. The *Yerushalmi* seems to suggest that, through prayer, a person could connect with the Divine Mind and, by force of will, redirect material cause and effect.

With only a subtle shift, *Unetaneh Tokef* says the opposite. Through a change in perspective, people can affirm their freedom even in a world of cause and effect. Much of what happens in life lies beyond our control; even the most innocent and most careful experience loss and pain. Our response to events, however, is within our control. We can affirm our power, examine our situation and support each other.

*Teshuvah (change in perspective), tefillah (self-examination), and tzedakah (righteous deeds of all kinds) avert the evil of the decree.*

Imagine Rabbi Amnon as the author: his poem *Unetaneh Tokef* invites us to live all year as he did on his last day: exercising our freedom to repair the world.

– Thanks to members of the Aug. 17 Shabbos Tisch at Or Shalom for a discussion of these issues. Thanks to scholar Daniel Golinkin for an analysis of the sources of *Unetaneh Tokef*.

# JUNIOR KEREN OR

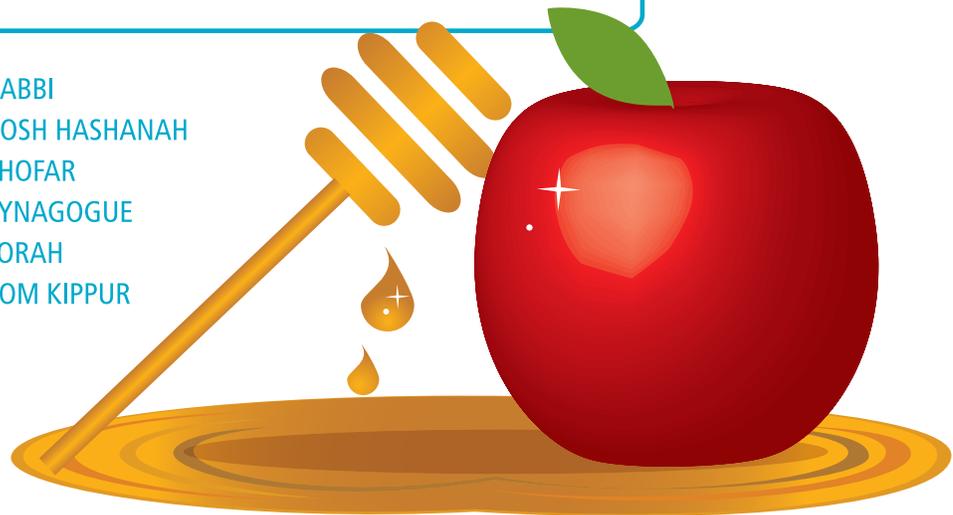
## Jewish New Year Word Search

See how many words related to the Jewish High Holy Days you can find in this word search from the list at the bottom. Words can be backward, forward, up, down, or diagonal. Circle each word you find, then cross it off the list.

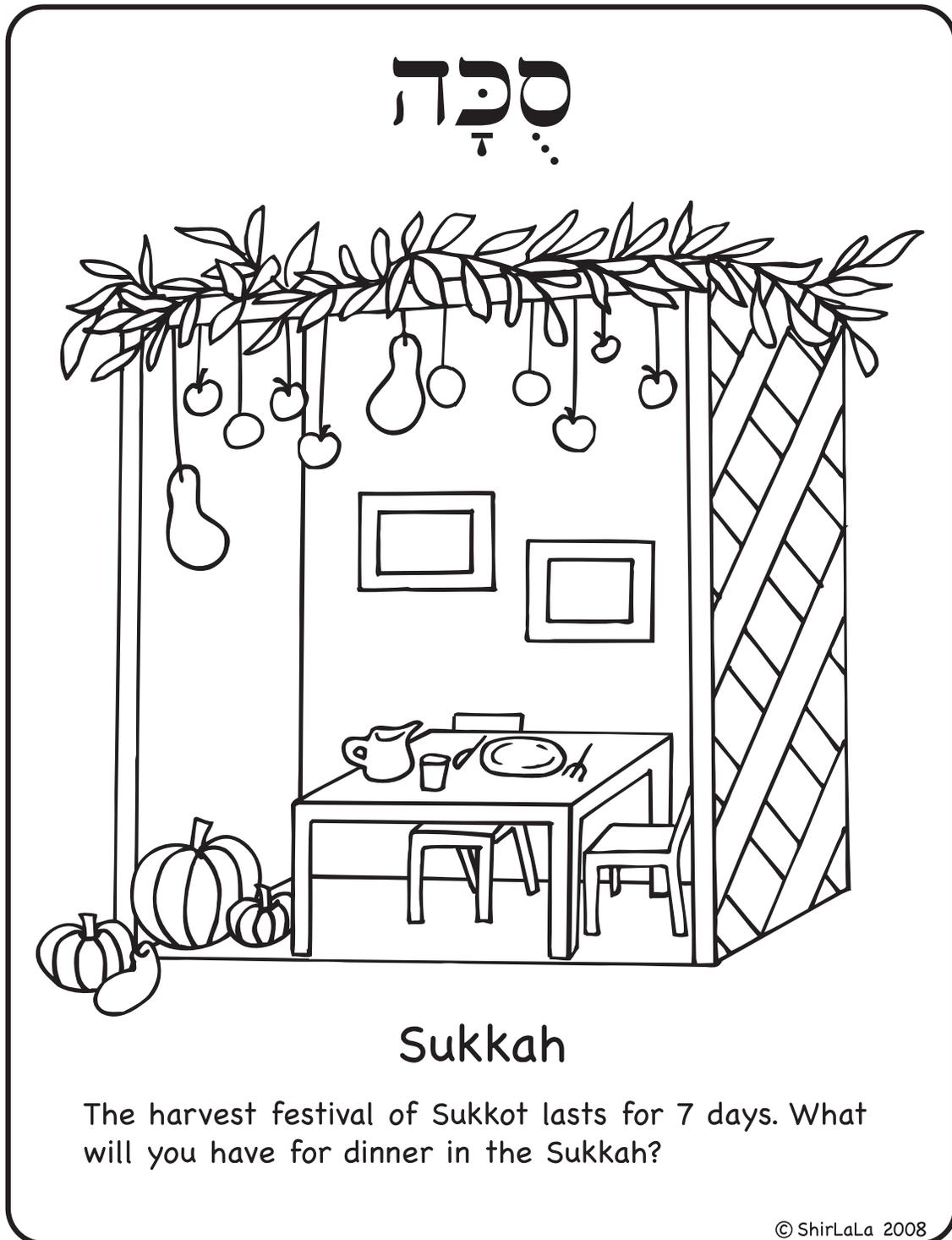


ABRAHAM  
CHALLAH  
HEBREW  
JERUSALEM  
KIPPAH  
NEW YEAR

RABBI  
ROSH HASHANAH  
SHOFAR  
SYNAGOGUE  
TORAH  
YOM KIPPUR



# SUKKAH COLOURING PAGE



## Sukkah

The harvest festival of Sukkot lasts for 7 days. What will you have for dinner in the Sukkah?

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## ONGOING EDUCATION FOR ALL AGES

### **Parent and Baby Group**

A place for parents to talk about being parents.

Facilitated by Miriam Leo Gindin and Valerie Lev Dolgin. Sundays 11 a.m-12:30 p.m, Oct. 6, Nov. 3, Dec. 1.

### **Kids Club**

For elementary schoolers. Fun with holidays, stories, ethics and Hebrew. Led by Camp Miriam counsellors under the supervision of R. Laura. \$180 per term. Wednesday afternoons 4-6 p.m, Sept. 18-Dec 4.

### **Family Shabbat**

Younger kids enjoy a parsha-themed program; older youth and Bnei Mitzvah rehearse a parsha play; everyone enjoys an all-ages Torah service including the play and a multi-age discussion. 10:15 am -1 p.m., Saturdays Oct. 5, Nov. 2, Dec. 7, Feb. 1, March 1, April 5, May 3, June 7.

### **Bnei Mitzvah program**

Seven Sunday afternoons and seven Shabbat mornings. Part of the preparation for youth planning a Bar or Bat Mitzvah this year. Led by R. Laura and friends. Sept. 29, Oct. 20, Nov. 17, Dec. 15, Jan. 19, Feb. 16, March 23.

### **Young Adult Havdalah Discussion Series**

- Oct. 19, 7:30 p.m., home of Rabbi Yoni Gordis and Robbie Chesick.
- Dec. 7, 7:30 p.m., home of Rabbi Laura Duhan Kaplan and Charles Kaplan.
- Jan. 18, 7:30 p.m., home of Rabbi Hillel Goelman and Sheryl Sorokin.



### **Exploring Judaism**

For adults. Advance sign-up and full-year commitment required. Free to

members; \$500 for non-member individual; \$550 for non-member couple. Taught by R. Laura.

Tuesdays, 7:30-9:30 p.m., Sept. 17, Oct. 1, Oct. 15, Nov. 5, Nov. 19, Dec. 3, Jan. 7, Jan. 21, Feb. 4, Feb. 18, March 4, March 18, April 1, May 6, May 20, June 3.

### **Beginner Hebrew**

For adults. Taught by Claire Cohen. Free to members and Exploring Judaism students; non-member fees TBA. Monday evenings, September-December, dates TBA.

## MUSICAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

### Musical Kabbalat Shabbat

Followed by dairy-vegetarian potluck dinner. Led by R. Laura, Charles Kaplan, Susan Katz and friends. Third Fridays of most months, 7-9:30 p.m. Oct. 18, Nov. 15, Jan. 17, Feb. 21, March 21.

### Chanting & Chocolate

Evenings of sweet Hebrew kirtan led by Lorne Mallin, Charles Cohen, Martin Gotfrit, Noah Gotfrit, Charles Kaplan, Joan de Verteuil and friends. Last Sunday of each month, 7:30-9 p.m. Sept. 29, Oct. 27, Nov. 24, Dec. 29, Jan. 26, Feb. 23, March 30, April 27, May 25, June 29. \$10 donation.



### Sukkot Party

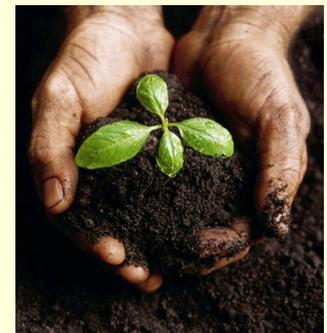
Dance to the Jewish world music of Yeteev; donations for the Rabbi's Benevolent Fund accepted. Saturday, Sept. 21, 8 p.m.

## A POSITIVE CONFESSION FOR 5773



We have **A**ccomplished,  
**B**lessed, **C**reated, **D**elighted,  
**E**nergized, **F**antasized,  
**G**oogled, **H**elped, **I**nvited,  
**J**ested, **K**ibbitzed, **L**oved,  
**M**otivated, **N**oticed, **O**ffered,  
**P**lanted, **Q**ueered, **R**ested,  
**S**oothed, **T**asted, **U**plifted,  
**V**alidated, **W**elcomed,  
**X**eroxed, **Y**ielded, **Z**oomed!

– Heidi Mannis  
 & Rabbi Laura Duhan Kaplan



## FROM CURING TO CARING

BY SUSAN J. KATZ

*R. Johanan once fell ill and R. Hanina went in to visit him. He said to him: Are your sufferings welcome to you? He replied: Neither they nor their reward. He said to him: Give me your hand. He gave him his hand and he raised him. Why could not R. Johanan raise himself? II-They replied: The prisoner cannot free himself from jail.*

Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 5b

Why bring this story to you at the Yamim Noraim? because I see in it much about the relationships and parallels between illness and health, and *teshuvah*. I am not suggesting that someone will become ill because they have sinned. In fact, we can all think of examples of well-meaning children and adults who are ill, while many seemingly wicked people enjoy good health. So, that is not the connection.

The first hint: notice in the story the question R. Hanina asks: “Are your sufferings welcome to you?” Now, take a deep breath, and ask yourself this question, too. Go ahead . . . ask. And listen for the answer. Are your sufferings welcome to you, and are you ready to turn this around for yourself? That is how our Jewish practice of *teshuvah* can help.

This summer at ALEPH’s annual Smicha Week for Ordination students, I took a course on *teshuvah*. Oy, did I learn that we commit *avairos*, as Reb Zalman calls them. Mistakes,

Oopsies, some intentional, some we didn’t know we did until we find out later. The practice of *teshuvah* helps us to reckon with these so they don’t stay stuck to us, like toxic sticky notes, making us anxious or even ill.

Two steps are involved in this *teshuvah* practice, acceptance and forgiving of our self, and reaching out to another who may have been hurt or hurt us, too, with acceptance or forgiveness. We are limited creatures; it’s good to remember that sometimes.

The second thing to notice in this quote is the last line: “The prisoner cannot free himself from jail.” My teacher at the Jewish Theological Seminary, Rabbi Simkha Weintraub, has it in his office as a reminder. In *teshuvah*, in caring about ourselves and about others, we recognize that we cannot do *teshuvah* alone; that having someone to reach out to or enlighten us as to our foibles is needed. In my Clinical Pastoral Education program this summer, our favourite reason for reaching out for support was because “you don’t know what you don’t know.”

Spiritual health is an essential part of physical health. May you be blessed with a year of health, happiness and long life.

[www.compassionateboe.com](http://www.compassionateboe.com)

## ROSH HASHANAH GREETINGS FROM DC TO BC

Greetings and Shana Tova from the Washington, DC, chapter of the Or Shalom diaspora! It has been, nearly to the day, one year since we left Vancouver. We’ve long since forgotten the material items that seemed so hard to give up before our move, but hardly a

day goes by in which we don’t think or talk about the friends and community – our family – that we came to know and love through Or Shalom. We miss you so much.

OrSh is where we each learned – through courses, ritual and casual conversation – how

to engage and own our Jewish practices and identities. It is where we found our place in community, praying, gardening, cooking, cleaning and schmoozing.

Or Shalom wrapped us in the Torah during Rosh Hashanah, and it gave us a bit too much to drink during Purim. We met at a YAC Kabbalat Shabbat, celebrated our Aufruf at OrSh, and were showered on the bimah with love and blessings before beginning our journey to the east. At the time, our beautiful daughter (puh puh puh!), Netta Gan, was getting those blessings too; we just didn't know it yet.

DC is great too and has been very kind to us. Work is fun, and we have a wonderful view of the Washington Monument.

Living with a five-month-old is a wellspring of joy and uncertainty. We have a regular Shabbos crew and we are slowly finding our way through (into) the local Jewish communities. And when we daven, as always we face Jerusalem, to the east. But now there is also a part of our hearts that always faces west, toward Or Shalom.

– Ben Harris, Yona Sipos and Netta Gan

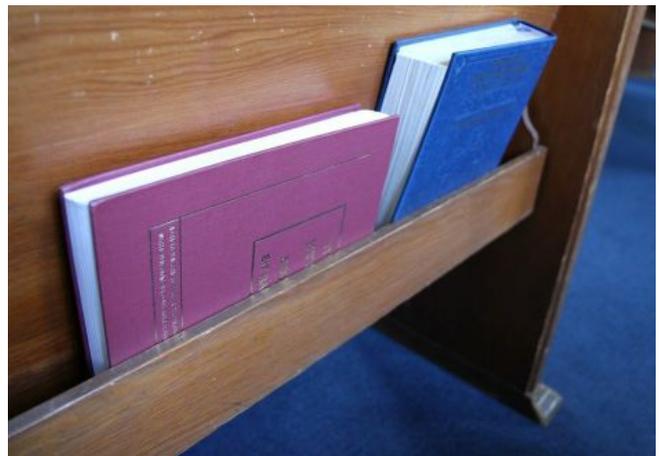
## STRONG BACKS, RELAXED SPINES

BY DAVE KAUFFMAN

Many Or Shalomniks have a regular exercise or wellness regimen - we've learned that spiritual questing is best enabled when minds are clear and bodies are pain-free.

Several years ago, thanks to a group of volunteers and a generous donation, Or Shalom ordered an entire set of new siddurim – prayer books for holidays and Shabbat. *Siddur Eit Ratzon*. (<http://www.newsiddur.org/>) was designed by Joseph Rosenstein of New Jersey, who says one of his reasons for creating this siddur was to answer his own questions about prayer.

Another common trait of Or Shalom members is our love of books. Many of us have walls of bookshelves of titles that have helped us learn and enjoy for years. Some books, alas, last longer than others. Libraries typically order books to be “library bound,” an extra level of sewing and glue that ensures that hardbound book last a long time. Our siddurim and chumashim rest in the pewbacks most of the week, and as the years have gone by, we've seen that the siddurim have started to sag



*To protect the binding, put your siddur back into the pewback racks with its spine down.*

from their bindings a bit, the binding separating from the spine with the weight of the pages.

Perhaps in the next year we can coordinate a few hours to repairing them, but for now, if you remember, just put your siddur back into the pewback racks with its spine down. You can almost hear the book say “Ah . . .”

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## POETRY

### A Peace Prayer

Dear G-d  
Who blesses us with Life  
Who calls us forth to live Kind and Good and to bring Light and Peace into this  
world of Yours  
Please this year  
Be with me on my path of Making Peace

This past year  
I have been bruised by those close to me and those not so close to me  
I have been wounded by those who would not see me who turned away from  
me who misunderstood me who told me I was wrong  
This past year  
My heart has shattered hearing or seeing those who inflicted pain upon  
themselves or upon those I love or upon those I do not even know  
And so this past year without even knowing it I have turned away from  
Your world  
And so this past year I have turned away from myself

Dear G-d  
This past year I have made walls around my heart  
And inside the walls which I have made around my heart is a bitter frozen place  
A place of no answer  
And I have been sleepwalking

Beloved G-d  
This year  
Help me to circumcise my heart  
Help me to trust  
To open in the midst of all the grief and sorrow and fear  
Into all that You have asked of me  
Into all that You have given me  
Help me to stand upright and willing in the midst of all our sorry unmet needs  
And wake up and go forth

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## POETRY

This year  
Help me to feel to be Your Compassion everywhere  
And help me to remember that we are all miracles

Let my right hand reach out to understand to comfort to support to touch  
the light of the other  
Let my left hand reach in to source always the Lovingkindness of You in me and  
that You have made us from the stuff of stars

Dear G-d  
Help me to remember this place of You  
in all I think all I say all I do  
So that I add to the blessed becoming of this Your world and not to the pain of it  
So that I make this world of Yours  
Ours

Here is The Place  
Here is Wholeness  
Here is Shalom

Beloved G-d  
May we in this year  
love our selves and this world more fully  
Yes for all our sakes

Here is Your Light  
Here is Your Lamp  
Here is our Peace

Amen

*– Dael Adams Segal  
Rosh Hashbanah 5773*

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## POETRY

### Forgiveness

Slichah....Forgiveness.

It really does play such a huge part in our lives.

My favorite quote about forgiveness is by civil rights & freedom advocate

Mahatma Gandhi "The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong."

My 2nd favorite quote is by writer Oscar Wilde.

He said "Always forgive your enemies; nothing annoys them so much."

Forgiveness is an enabler.

It allows us to soften our gaze on matters and move past the past.

Past the intentional, hurtful remarks, and the unintentional honest mistakes.

Forgiveness enables us to have empathy for others,

to walk beside them, arm around for comfort, and makes compassion possible.

We see the separation of doer and deed, and we can forgive the action

without needing to dismiss the person.

We forgive children so readily, with innocence and immaturity as

their doorway to reprieve.

We allow them many "get out of jail free" cards; very, very many.

With our friends, and our loved ones, we make allowances for them, ignore &

disregard their questionable behaviour, laugh it off, downplay it, excuse it or deny it ever happened.

We try not to be petty, and that's a good thing, but forgiveness rarely comes

that easily. Sometimes it feels like we are being asked to forgive the unforgivable.

We forgive our partner's indiscretions; we forgive our leaders' misguidance; we

forgive our doctors their errors in diagnoses; we even forgive Avraham and Sarah.

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## POETRY

We forgive God,  
However we internalize God in our hearts and in our lives,  
We wrestle with our anger, we wrestle with our understanding;  
And when God is silent and barely there at all,  
When we feel betrayed, abandoned, let down, and deflated from spirit,  
We pray harder, and we forgive.

Forgiveness for one's self could be the most challenging form and so powerful  
for it can open the heart with relief from self-loathing and contempt.  
We are hardest on ourselves with criticism and judgment, but really what that  
uncovers to me is a mindfulness to be a good person and inject positive  
energy into an often bitter and unforgiving world.  
We need constant reminding that it is human to miss the mark, to not succeed  
all the time, to fail, to fall, to be less than what we imagine perfect looks like.  
Perhaps, because of that, we need to value forgiveness more than we do.

We need to accept that it is the act of asking for forgiveness that is the true  
essence not the receiver's acknowledgement and subsequent nod of "it's okay."  
You can forgive without saying a word, and sometimes words are not enough.

I ask these three critical questions:

Can we let go of our humanness and our foibles

and remember we are spiritual beings first and foremost?

Can we show ourselves the same compassion we would show a friend?

Can you speak the words "I forgive you" when there's nobody in the room but  
you?

– *Kymn Bonfield*  
*Tishrei 5773*

## POETRY

*Four sonnets by Marissa Fischer*

### Sonnet 28: Winter Walk

Hoarfrost glitters amid the yellow leaves,  
a soft rime dusts the path I've often trudged,  
Was it the changing seasons I begrudged?  
Or the long lost spring for which winter grieves?

Summer's harvest now gone to withered sheaves,  
as I sit frozen, waiting to be judged,  
til nagging questions towards answers nudged,  
lest too much time be lost to silent thieves

Start with the search, if you want to be found,  
embrace only that which lends strength to life,  
focus on the gain, rather than the lack

Stand between the profane and the profound,  
though always there are days when both are rife,  
How can I see beyond the white and black?

### Sonnet 31: Spring *Shabbos*

A dream of dawn's light drifting drowsily,  
through cherry blossoms of pink perfection,  
spiralling downwards in idle reflection,  
a morning miracle for all to see.

A lonely willow weeping for her friend,  
now stands alone against the wind's violence,  
her prayers should not echo in the silence,  
together twined, a sapling's strength to lend.

Joy and sorrow, Your holy day has wrought,  
of pain and peace, ruin and rest we partake,  
In community, a soul is rooted.

Sheltered by the commandments You have taught,  
we may yet yield, but never will we break,  
as for each challenge, one's gifts are suited.

### Sonnet 35: Summer Scattering

Her train passes, drumming under my feet.  
The wind, gentle as her ways, on my face,  
carries with it her spirit, love and grace,  
From the tracks, I hear her final heartbeats.

Beside me, a monk recites silent prayers,  
As people strew her ashes on the ground,  
telling her story in round after round,  
Whilst the bard strums music, sombre and fayre.

We gather one last time to say good-bye,  
to she who embodied this game we play,  
She was our founder, and our guiding beam.

Live life so when you leave no eye is dry,  
and that those who will come after say  
She truly was In Service to the Dream.

### Sonnet 37: Autumn Answers

Blessed is God, the One, the only One.  
Ha'Shem, who is creator of all.  
He led us from Egypt into the sun,  
He chose us; She held us, through ruin and fall.

40-years wandering, though we wander still,  
separation has come to define us.  
Yet, we still feel Her love, and know His will,  
through 613 mitzvot thus.

The 7<sup>th</sup> day God rested; we rest, too.  
Kept with two candles, braided bread, and wine,  
and nothing between me and you.  
At the close of day, is the start of time.

All of this also marks our renewal,  
our community's focus, and our shul.

# GETTING . . . AND GIVING

BY HELEN WALDSTEIN

Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur. Words that to me spell stocktaking, both inwardly and outwardly. I visualize a giant scale of justice, the two empty platforms suspended from a horizontal beam waiting for me to balance what I give with what I get. And as part of a spiritual community, I picture us all as weighing, assessing and taking stock.

Into the platform suspended on the left goes the fact that we get to live in one of the most beautiful places in the world, and despite our constant carping about those who govern, we live in a democracy that is the envy of millions. We get access to clean drinking water, to an education commensurate with our goals and abilities, to health care and sanitation and to police and fire protection and to a multiplicity of organizations where well-intended staff at least try to help.

Into the same platform goes the fact that we get to live within the protection of circles of support. Like a stone dropped into a pool of water, we are each at the centre of outwardly expanding rings. Circles of family, friends and community. Expanding ever outward are the rings of those who first gained a foothold here, allowing us to thrive, each in our own way. Beyond them are the circles of more distant ancestors whose customs and values in some measure have shaped us and brought us to this moment.

The left platform sinks even lower when we add the laughter of children at play. The warm, fuzzy fur of a beloved pet curled up beside us. Music, books, art, culture, sports, entertainment. The smell of fresh sheets on the bed. The wonders of nature. Our bodies, functional even if sometimes creaky or slow or painful. Sunshine and rain, each in good measure. The sight of a beloved face. The left



platform just keeps sinking under the weight of what we get, and be it schnitzel with noodles or wild geese that fly with the moon on their wings, we all get to add even more of our favourite things.

But we are enjoined to give, not only as individuals but also as a spiritual community. Before the solemn notes of Kol Nidre are sounded, our tradition is to give. We may feel that we cannot possibly give enough to balance that scale, and yet, giving is the tangible expression of a key Or Shalom value:

We believe in *tikkun olam*, and *tzedakah*: therefore we consciously grow in our ability to care for our environment and for the people in it.

When we come on Erev Yom Kippur, we remember to bring cash. Members of Or Shalom's Tikkun Olam committee will be waiting with baskets to receive contributions. Some of what is given will go to Israel, some will go to Jews in need, wherever they may be in the diaspora. Some of what is given will help locally, and some will go to alleviate suffering and deprivation elsewhere. We may not balance the scale completely, but we can try.

# RETURN AGAIN: THREE REASONS

BY ROS KUNIN

“Return Again” is the title and often repeated phrase in a song we sing each year at the time of the now-approaching High Holydays. But sometimes we question, should we be returning, again and again, to repeat the same services we have done before? Did our life change after last year’s services? Since we sense time as a proportion of how long we have lived, the years keep getting shorter and the holidays more repetitious. We’ve been there, done that. Here are three reasons for returning for services yet again.

First, psychologists tell us that we have to hear something seven times before we believe it. If it is challenging or difficult, we may need more than seven repetitions until a new idea sinks in. So maybe this will be the year when we will see or hear the word or idea that will help us change our lives for the better even if we did not notice it before.

Second, holidays in general, and the High Holydays in particular, provide the punctuation for our lives. Time is a major dimension in Judaism.

There is the seven-day cycle of Shabbat, a weekly day of rest that has been adopted by just about every major society. And the annual holidays with their times of sadness and joy not only commemorate specific events like leaving Egypt, but also offer the colour, texture, change and variety to what could otherwise be a long, grey series of just one boring day after another. The holidays remind us to look both forward and back and put our lives in perspective.

Finally, coming together for services on the holidays brings us into community. Every new study now shows that it is community, associating with people, that keeps us well and healthy, lengthens our lives and makes those lives worth living. Getting together with people to open our hearts in reflection and prayer and mouths in song is one of the deepest ways to connect and be part of a community.

Looking forward to seeing you at services at the JCC and to the beginning of a great new year for us all.



Dave Kauffman photo