



SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS

ROSH HASHANAH AND YOM KIPPUR

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Torah in our prayers



Praised be our God who created us for His glory,
Setting us apart from those who go astray
By giving us His Torah of truth,
Thus planting within us eternal life.

*With everlasting love,
You have loved Your people Israel;
You have taught us the Torah and its Mitzvot.*

This is My covenant with them, says the Lord.
My spirit which is upon you
And My words which I have put in your mouth,
Shall remain with you, and with your children
And with your children's children forever.

*Take to heart the words which I teach you this day.
Teach them diligently to your children.*

Merciful Father, imbue us with the will
To understand, to discern, to learn, to teach,
And to fulfill in love the teachings of Your Torah.

*May our eyes be enlightened by Your Torah;
May our hearts cling to Your commandments.*

May we rejoice in the words of Your Torah;
And may we and our children, and all future generations,
Know Your name and study Your Torah for its own sake.

*For it is a tree of life to those who take hold of it,
And happy is everyone who upholds it.*

Its ways are ways of pleasantness,
And all its paths are peace.

*How fortunate are we! How good is our portion!
How pleasant our lot! How beautiful our heritage!*

Praise to You, O God, who has shown us the way
To holiness and wisdom through the study of Torah.

Adapted from the Prayer Book

To live the words of Torah



Let us affirm our faith in Torah,
Our people's legacy of learning and faith.

There are no words more challenging than
"You shall be holy!"
No command more basic than "You shall love!"

There is no insight so fundamental as
"In the beginning, God,"
No words so life-enhancing as "You shall rest!"

No cry is more compelling than "Let My people go!"
No consolation more comforting than
"I am with you in your distress."

There is no vision more hopeful than
"They shall beat their swords into plowshares,"
And no summons more demanding than
"Justice, justice shall you pursue!"

These words have outlived monuments and empires;
We want them to live through us, until the end of time.

We owe it to our ancestors to keep Torah alive;
They struggled and suffered to preserve our way of life;
They knew this to be their most precious gift to us.

We owe it to our children to keep Torah alive;
For why should they be spiritual paupers
When the riches of this heritage can be theirs?

We owe it to the world to keep Torah alive;
This is a message which the world needs to hear.

We owe it to God to continue as a people,
To share His dream, to bear witness to His sovereignty,
And to live the words of Torah.

Jack Riemer and Harold Kushner

We render thanks



We must often revive the gladness of gratitude
And retrain our lips to utter words of thanks.

God's gifts often go unnoticed in our haste;
And disappointments may blind us to our blessings.

We render thanks for life itself,
For sight, hearing, smell, and touch,

For the certainty that an ever-renewing vital force
Infuses us and vibrates in the glory about us.

We give thanks for the beauty of nature and its gifts,
And pray that we may share as richly as we have received.

We stand in wonder before the birth of children,
The miracle of their growth, their love, and laughter.

We are grateful for love and the opening of hearts
Between man and wife, parents and children.

We give thanks for our freedom, while knowing its frailty,
And recognize our obligation to nurture and protect it.

We are grateful for the blessings we enjoy in this land,
And hope that we may share in the renewal of its vigor.

We are grateful for the gifts of knowledge and conscience,
Enabling us to know truth from falsehood, right from wrong,

Disturbing our peace when the blessings we enjoy
are denied to others,
When their need for justice and compassion is unfilled.

We give thanks to God who shares with us
A small spark of His glory and wisdom,

Involving us in the drama which is both His and ours—
The partnership of completing the work of creation.

Nahum Waldman

For these gifts we give thanks



O God, to whom we come so often with needs to be satisfied, we come to You now in gratitude for what we already have and are.

For gifts beyond deserving or counting, we give thanks.

You have given us the ability to become more than we have been, the urge to be more than we are, and a gnawing hunger to attain heights only dimly imagined.

For the power to grow, we give thanks.

You have endowed us with the capacity to discern the difference between right and wrong; and You have enabled us to follow the right, to avoid the wrong.

For the power to choose, we give thanks.

You have blessed us with the ability to fashion things of beauty, to sing new songs, to spin new tales, to add to the treasure-house of human civilization.

For the power to create, we give thanks.

You have equipped us with the yearning to commune with You, to bring You our fears and our dreams, our hurts and our joys, our guilt and our gratitude; to share hopes and concerns with You and with others.

For the power to pray, we give thanks.

You have fortified us with the ability to rise above disappointment and failure, to go on after we have been bruised and bereaved, to refuse to submit to defeat and despair.

For the power to hope, we give thanks.

You have enlarged us with the ability to cherish others, to make their lives as dear to us as our very own, to share their hopes, to feel their hurts, to know their hearts.

For the power to love, we give thanks.

You have ennobled us with the strength to abandon our sins, to overcome our faults, to mend our ways, and to answer the summons of this day "to turn to You with all our heart and soul."

For the power to repent, we give thanks.



Judaism begins with the commandment:
Hear, O Israel!

But what does it really mean to "hear"?

*The person who attends a concert
While thinking of other matters,
Hears—but does not really hear.*

The person who walks amid the songs of birds
Thinking only of what will be served for dinner,
Hears—but does not really hear.

*The person who listens to the words of a friend,
Or mate, 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 stifles the sound of conscience
Saying, "I have done enough already,"
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 sense its call to change,
Hears—but does not really hear.

*As the new year begins, O Lord,
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, O God. For only if we hear You
Do we have the right to hope that You will hear us,
*Hear the prayers we offer to You this day, O God,
And help us to hear them too.*

Harold Kushner and Jack Riemer (adapted)

Not guilty?



As I read the sins for which I ask forgiveness,
I glance at the listings, hurry through them,
And say, "No—that is not true;
I am not guilty."

"Hardening our hearts?"—No. I gave.
But did I give as much as I could?
Did I give not only money, but also of myself?
No? Mark: *Guilty!*

"Sinful speech" "slander" "deceit"—
Did you not curse, blaspheme, lie, . . . ?
Oh yes, even once is enough. Well then, mark: *Guilty!*
"Sinful thoughts,"

"Spurning teachers and parents,"
"Violence," "Evil inclination."
Check them out. Did you wish your colleague ill?
Did you wish someone dead, even for a second?
If so, mark: *Guilty!*

"Haughty eyes"—as you passed a one-time friend;
"Effrontery"—as you cut in too sharply as a learned man spoke.
"Stubbornness"—did you create a quarrel where one
need not have been?

"Envy"—you never said "why him—not me?"

The list is long.
And now, after the glance,
The long look, the steady eye,
I mark: *Guilty!*

No—I did not commit "violence" or "treachery."
I did not "ensnare my neighbor."
But then there is that "sinful thought."
Yes, yes, I thought of violence
And the short list of other offenses I did not count—
And so, "sinful meditation"
Makes me mark: *Guilty!*

And I am now repentant
And will repair what damage I have done,
Repay the debts I owe,
And pray to wipe the word "Guilty" from the book,
And ask again this year
That my name be inscribed in the Book of Life.
Then, when next year the list is read again,
Perhaps somewhere—some one place, at least—
I can say "not guilty"—no repentance due.

Dore Schary

To begin again



What is the difference between a wise person and a fool?
Even fools will say a wise thing now and then,
And the wisest will at times descend to foolishness.
So what distinguishes a wise person from a fool?

A fool is one who never has a change of mind.

*Conditions change, situations alter, and new times
make new demands, but the fool remains the same.*

What is the difference between a good and an evil person?
There is some goodness even in the worst.
And is there a person who has not sinned?
So, what makes one person good and another evil?

An evil person refuses to change—

Doing wrong, knowing it,

And yet persisting in evil ways.

There is no sadder confession than “I know I am doing wrong,
but it’s too late now to change.”

This is surrender to despair.

Rosh Hashanah comes with a great gift—

The opportunity to begin again.

No one has sunk so low that repentance is beyond reach.

The old year is gone. The ledger is closed.

Our Book of Life is now open to a new page.

No sins blot it, no indiscretions blemish it.

Slowly the invisible pen begins to record our life;

And it is given to us to direct the pen.

If we have fallen into the habit of blot and smudges, it is
harder to write clear and fine words and phrases.

But we are invited to try and we are challenged to succeed.

“If I had my life to live over . . .”

“If I had known then what I know now . . .”

On Rosh Hashanah we receive the gift of beginning again.
We know now what we did not know then.

What will we do with the knowledge?

How will we use the gift?

Abraham J. Karp

We wait too long



We often wait too long to do what must be done today, in a world which gives us only one day at a time, without any assurance of tomorrow. While lamenting that our days are few, we procrastinate as though we had an endless supply of time.

We wait too long to discipline ourselves and to take charge of our lives. We feed ourselves the vain delusion that it will be easier to uproot tomorrow the debasing habits which we permit to tyrannize over us today, and which grow more deeply entrenched each day they remain in power.

We wait too long to work at the self-renewal of which these holy days remind us. While we wait, our lives become progressively depleted of spiritual content. The estrangement between us and our heritage grows larger and more painful.

We wait too long to become more deeply involved in Jewish life—in Jewish observance and in Jewish study. While we wait, the time for the harvest comes and we haven't even planted.

We wait too long to show kindness. We wait too long to speak words of forgiveness which should be spoken, to set aside hatreds which should be banished; to express thanks, to give encouragement, to offer comfort.

We wait too long to be charitable. Too much of our giving is delayed until much of the need has passed and the joy of giving has been largely diminished.

We wait too long to be parents to our children—forgetting how brief is the time during which they are children, how swiftly life urges them on and away. We wait too long to express our concern for parents, siblings, and dear ones.

We wait too long to read the books, to listen to the music, and to see the art which are waiting to enlarge our minds, to inspire our spirits, and to ennoble our souls.

We wait too long to utter the prayers which are waiting to cross our lips, to perform the duties waiting to be discharged, to show the love that may no longer be needed tomorrow.

God, too, is waiting—waiting for us to stop waiting, and to begin to do now, all the things for which this day was made.

The call to justice and brotherhood



Justice, justice shall you pursue,
That you may live in your land.

*Love your neighbor as yourself;
Bear no hatred in your heart.*

The stranger who sojourns with you,
Shall be as the native among you;

*You shall love the stranger as yourself,
For you were strangers in the land of Egypt.*

Have we not all one Father?
Has not one God created us?

*Why then do we deal treacherously
Against one another?*

Hate evil and love what is good,
Yea, establish justice in the land.

*Give of your bread to the hungry;
Bring the poor that are cast out into your house.*

Let justice well up as water,
And righteousness as a mighty stream;

*For righteousness and justice
Are the foundation of God's throne.*

The Lord of hosts is exalted through righteousness,
And God, the Holy One, is sanctified through justice.

Selections from the Bible

Prayer alone is not enough



We cannot only pray to You, O God, to end war;
For we know that You have made the world in such a way
That we must find the path to peace
Within ourselves and with our neighbors.

*We cannot only 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 only 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 only 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 only 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 only to pray,
To become instead of merely to wish,*

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

*May the words that we pray, and the deeds that we do
Be acceptable before You, O Lord,
Our Rock and our Redeemer.*

Jack Riemer

There are two seas

☞ There are two seas in the Land of Israel. One is fresh, and fish are in it. Splashes of green adorn its banks. Trees spread their branches over it, and stretch out their thirsty roots to sip of its healing waters. Along its shore children play.

The River Jordan makes this sea with sparkling water from the hills. So it laughs in the sunshine. And people build their homes near to it, and birds their nests; and every kind of life is happier because it is here.

The River Jordan flows on south into another sea. Here there is no splash of fish, no fluttering leaf, no song of birds, no children's laughter. The air hangs heavy above its waters and neither people nor animals will drink here.

What makes this mighty difference in these seas? Not the River Jordan. It empties the same good water into both. Not the soil in which they lie; not the country 'round about.

This is the difference.

The Sea of Galilee receives but does not keep the Jordan. For every drop that flows into it another drop flows out. The giving and receiving go on in equal measure.

The other sea is shrewder, hoarding its income jealously. It will not be tempted into any generous impulse. Every drop it gets, it keeps.

The Sea of Galilee gives and lives.

This other sea can not sustain life. It is named the Dead Sea.

There are two seas in the Land of Israel.

There are two kinds of people in the world.

Bruce Barton

Loving deeds—our gift to God

✎ Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sasov taught us how to “love our neighbor.” Said he: A peasant taught me what is true love of others. He was sitting in an inn drinking with a companion. Suddenly he turned to him and asked:

“Do you love me?”

“I love you very much.”

“If you love me, tell me what gives me pain?”

“How would I know that?”

“If you don’t know what gives me pain, how can you say you love me?”

To love one’s neighbor, Rabbi Moshe taught, is to know what gives that person pain and to bear the burden of that person’s sorrow.

✎ It is told of Rabbi Moshe Leib that whenever he saw anyone else’s suffering, either of spirit or body, he shared it so earnestly that the other’s suffering became his own. Once someone expressed his astonishment at his capacity to share in another’s troubles.

“What do you mean *share*?” said the rabbi. “It is my own sorrow; how can I help suffer it?”

To Rabbi Moshe Leib someone else’s pain was his own.

When do I truly love my neighbor? When his pain is my sorrow.

✎ Rabbi Moshe was teaching his disciples. “Every human quality and power was created for a purpose. Even base and corrupt qualities can be uplifted to serve God.”

A bystander challenged him: “You say even base, corrupt qualities can be used to serve God. How can the denial of God be used to serve Him?”

Rabbi Moshe Leib replied: “If someone comes to you for help, you should not turn that person away with pious words, saying, ‘Have faith! Trust God; He will help you.’ No! You should act as if there were no God, as if there were only one person in the world who could help this human being—you!”

Retold by Abraham J. Karp

The restoration of Zion



If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
May my right hand forget its cunning.

May my tongue cleave to my mouth,
If I remember you not,
If I set not Jerusalem above my greatest joy.

The Lord will arise and have compassion upon Zion,
For it is time to be gracious unto her.

The Lord builds up Jerusalem;
He gathers together the dispersed of Israel.

He will make her wilderness like Eden,
And her desert like the garden of the Lord.

Joy and gladness shall be found therein,
Thanksgiving and the voice of melody.

The ransomed of the Lord shall return,
And come with singing unto Zion.

Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
They shall obtain gladness and joy;
And sorrow and sighing shall vanish.

They shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them;
They shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof.

They shall abide in peaceful habitations,
In safe dwellings, and in quiet resting places.

Zion shall be redeemed through justice,
And they that dwell there through righteousness.

Then shall Zion be saved,
And Jerusalem shall dwell in safety,

For out of Zion shall go forth the Law,
And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Biblical verses

Jerusalem



She heard the prophets' condemnations and consolations.
She was an ear to the yearnings of countless sages and saints,
An ear to prayers that flowed from distant places.

She is more than an ear.

Jerusalem is a witness,

An echo of eternity.

We know Isaiah's voice second hand;

The stones of Jerusalem heard him when he said—

It will come to pass

That out of Zion will come forth Torah,

And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem . . .

They will beat their swords into plowshares,

And their spears into pruning hooks;

Nation will not lift up sword against nation,

And men will not learn war any more.

These words went forth from Jerusalem

And entered the pages of the holy books.

But Jerusalem has not given herself away.

She is the city where waiting for God was born,

Where anticipation of peace came into being.

What is the secret of Jerusalem?

Her past is only a prelude;

She is not yet at the end of the road.

What is the mystery of Jerusalem?

A promise:

Peace and God's presence.

First there was a vision,

God's vision of what human life could be.

Then He created humanity according to His vision,

According to His image.

But the human resemblance to God is fading rapidly;

So God created a city and called it "City of Peace,"

Hoping and praying that the Jerusalem on earth

Would resemble the Jerusalem in heaven.

Jerusalem is a recalling, an insisting,

A waiting for the fulfillment of God's vision.

Abraham J. Heschel

A vision of the future



We perceive a community great in numbers, mighty in power,
Enjoying life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness;

True life, not mere breathing space;

Full liberty, not mere elbow room;

Real happiness, not that of pasture beasts;
Actively participating in the progress of the country,

Sharing and increasing its spiritual possessions,

Doubling its joys, halving its sorrows,

Yet deeply rooted in the soil of Judaism;
Clinging to its past, working for its future,

True to its traditions, faithful to its aspirations,

One in sentiment with their brethren everywhere;

Attached to the land of their ancestors
As the cradle and resting place of the Jewish spirit;

People with straight backs and raised heads,

With big hearts and strong minds,

With no conviction crippled, with no emotion stifled;
Receiving and resisting,

Not yielding like wax to every impress from the outside,

But blending the best they possess

With the best they encounter;

Adding a new note to the richness of American life,
Leading a new current into the stream of civilization;
A sharply marked community, distinct and distinguished;

Trusted for its loyalty, respected for its dignity,

Esteemed for its traditions, valued for its aspirations;

“And marked will be their seed among the nations,
And their offspring among the peoples;

Everyone that will see them will point to them

As a community blessed by the Lord.”

Israel Friedlaender

A believing Jew



I believe because the divine image within me mirrors the God of galaxies and moral purpose, and urges me to seek union with the Sovereign of the universe, the Source of all life.

I believe because my reaching out for God is as real to me as the cravings of my impulses and appetites.

I believe because beyond the sphere on which my mind sheds light, I sense the presence of the holy, the inexpressible, the divine.

I believe because being frail, I reach for strength; being vulnerable to sorrow, I need comfort; being erratic, I wish to be guided; and being a searcher, I need the assurance that my quest is not doomed to futility.

I believe because Judaism respects the mind, purifies the heart, exalts the spirit, and sanctifies all of life.

I believe because Judaism invites me to engage in an unending quest for truth, righteousness, and justice.

I believe because when I strive for these, I sense that I am experiencing the most human part of me.

I believe because Judaism opens wide the door that leads me into a sense of companionship with all humanity.

I believe because, while sharing the inheritance of aeons which made me a human being, I am also heir to a Jewish inheritance of millennia which crowns me descendant of prophets and sages; and I claim both legacies.

I believe because, having entered the world as a Jew by birth, I wish to leave it as a Jew by worth.

Morris Adler (adapted)

The eternal riddle



Israel, my people,
God's greatest riddle,
Will your solution
Ever be told?

Fought—never conquered,
Bent—never broken,
Mortal—immortal,
Youthful, though old.

Egypt enslaved you,
Babylon crushed you.
Rome led you captive,
Homeless your head.

Where are those nations,
Mighty and fearsome?
You have survived them,
They are long dead.

Nations keep coming,
Nations keep going,
Passing like shadows,
Wiped off the earth.

You are eternal,
You remain a witness,
Watching their burial,
Watching their birth.

Pray, who revealed to you
Heaven's great secret:
Death and destruction
Thus to defy?

Suffering torture,
Stake, inquisition,
Pray, who taught you
Never to die?

Yes, and who gave you
Faith, deep as ocean,
Strong as the rock-hills,
Fierce as the sun?

Hated and hunted,
Ever you wander,
Bearing a message:
God is but One!

Israel, my people,
God's greatest riddle,
Will your solution
Ever be told?

Philip M. Raskin (adapted)