

The Reform Advocate

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THE SOCIETY FOR
CLASSICAL
REFORM
JUDAISM

Renewing the Heritage
of American Liberal Judaism
for the 21st Century



THE HIGH HOLY DAYS

A Special Edition

Prayers and Resources from The Union Prayer Book Sinai Edition, Volume II



The High Holy Days Experience From the Perspective of Reform Judaism

One of the most distinctive dimensions of the High Holy Days in our tradition is that among the major observances of the Jewish calendar, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are experienced primarily in the Synagogue. Whereas most of our Festivals are celebrated mainly in the home, with family gatherings and ritual ceremonies, these “Days of Awe” are shared in the temple, as a congregation, through the Worship Service. Consequently, for most of us, the Prayer Book takes on the central role in our impressions and perceptions of this most sacred season of the year.

The development of the liturgy of the New Year and Day of Atonement over the centuries has reflected this singular importance. Mindful of the reality that these particular Services were a highlight of most people’s religious lives—and for many in the modern world, their primary encounter with formal worship—the Holy Days Prayer Book has emerged as a virtual “intensive course in Basic Judaism.” All of our faith’s major spiritual ideals and ethical teachings are reflected in this rich tapestry of prose and verse. Many of the most important texts of the Bible and later Jewish literature are highlighted in these prayers and readings.

The effect of the full cycle of Services for these two sacred days, both evening and morning, can be a powerful experience for the sensitive, attentive worshipper. For the knowledgeable, committed Jew, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur can be an inspiring reaffirmation of personal faith and a continuing cycle of Jewish celebration. And yet, even for those whose faith is less defined, or whose connection might be somewhat ambivalent, these observances can be deeply meaningful. The complex levels of emotional stirrings, the intellectual challenge and the aesthetic interplay of language and music, all have the potential to be a compelling and renewing encounter with our tradition. The cadence of familiar words and phrases...the strains of ancient and well-loved melodies...the experience of community...are all elements that combine to touch so many people of varying degrees and styles of personal spirituality, in many significant ways.

For Reform Judaism, this counterpoint of emotion and intellect, so inherent in our experience of the Holy Days, is a primary focus. Whereas this season might otherwise be perceived as a time of nostalgic memories and vaguely felt cultural ties, our Reform Prayer Book squarely confronts us with the deeper meanings and life-transforming challenges that these observances are meant to embody. Throughout the course of the development of the Union Prayer Book over the past century, the timeless themes of repentance and renewal have been expressed in contemporary readings that reflect these ancient concepts in fresh new ways. Characteristically, our liberal Jewish liturgy echoes an essential spiritual humanism. Our interpretations of the traditional texts focus on the distinctive Jewish ideal of the Covenant—our partnership with God in the ongoing process of Creation. Our worship calls us not only to offer heartfelt repentance to God, but also to seek active renewal and reconciliation in our own lives and relationships. *Teshuvah* means not only penitence and the petition for Divine forgiveness... it also embraces a return to the best within ourselves and one another...



As the sun sets on Yom Kippur afternoon, and the Shofar is sounded for the last time, all of this volume's inspiring words and majestic music will inevitably fade into memory. And yet they will have enduring meaning if each of us strives to integrate the ideals and values they so eloquently proclaim, into our daily lives throughout the year... in the phrase of *Kol Nidre*, "from this Day of Atonement until the coming Day of Atonement..."

We offer this new version of our beloved Union Prayer Book in hope and prayer that this volume will be a meaningful resource in our experience of the timeless ideals of the High Holy Days observance. We have sought to retain the best of Reform Judaism's distinctive worship traditions, enhancing them with a greater response to the concerns and perspectives of our contemporary culture. In striving for this balance of continuity and change, this effort is clearly grounded in the great historical legacy of our past, while seeking to inspire us as we face the challenges of the future.

As we join together in reaffirming our faith and love of God, our devotion to our Jewish tradition, our sense of community with one another, and our commitment to working for justice and peace in the world, may this new guide to our Holy Days worship empower and sustain us on our way!

Rabbi Howard A. Berman

"All the World Shall Come to Serve You"

Tradition and Innovation in the History of Reform Music for the High Holy Days

by Cantor Aaron Kaplan, Board Member, SCRJ

In Jewish tradition, Rosh Hashanah is referred to as Yom haZikaron: The Day of Memory. The concept of memory is a very prevalent theme during this sacred season. The Shofar Service proclaims the concept of God's memory of our deeds. On a personal level, this season sparks many personal memories within us. It is these memories that can connect us spiritually to the Holy One in deeper and more profound ways than perhaps at any other time during the year. The same holds true for the liturgy and music of this season. For it is often our personal memories where we develop very

strong, meaningful connections to the liturgy and music of this season. For most of us, the Avinu Malkeinu prayer, just wouldn't be the same, unless it is sung to the beloved setting by the great American synagogue composer Max Janowski. No Cantor or choir in an American synagogue, irrespective of denominational affiliation, would dare deliver a rendition of Kol Nidrei in any other melody other than the familiar version we all know and love. The juxtaposition of the words, spiritual ideas, and music elicit powerful, emotional reactions.

For many American Reform Jews, there is probably no other text and melody that so stirs our passions and elicits these powerful emotional reactions than “All the World Shall Come to Serve You,” the hymn that concludes Rosh Hashanah morning worship and is sung on Yom Kippur afternoon as well. Ironically, what lies at the core of all of our emotions and passions toward this text is our collective memory as Reform Jews. For those who identify as Classical Reform Jews, “All the World” symbolizes one of the most moving, and meaningful highlights of High Holy Day worship. However for others, “All the World” symbolizes the opposite. And sadly, those visceral reactions are examples of how our memories can play tricks on us. It has often been said that memory is the most precious gift that God can bestow upon us, so let us indulge in that gift in the hope of gaining new insight, appreciation, and meaning into this powerful text.

“All the World” is not so much a prayer, but a piyyut, a liturgical poem, known in Hebrew by the title; “Vaye’etayu.” Contrary to popular opinion this poem is not a product of Reform liturgical innovation. It is in fact, an alphabetical acrostic that was composed by an unknown author during the seventh century, and has been part of the High Holy Day liturgy for centuries! The poem gives expression to the hope that ultimately there will be a united humanity when God shall be acknowledged and worshiped by all peoples. Professor Larry Hoffman explains that “All the World” is a testimony to the timeless hope and resolve of the Jewish People through history. The translation that Reform Jews are most familiar with was, interestingly, composed by Israel Zangwill (1864-1926), the famous Jewish writer and Zionist activist.

The melody for which we most associate with “All the World” and which is featured on the Society’s latest recording; “Open the Gates Unto Us,” was composed by Abraham Wolf Binder for the 1932 edition of The Union Hymnal. Prior to that time, the hymn was sung to a melody that appeared in the 1914 edition, composed by Leon Kramer. Kramer was a synagogue choral conductor in New York during the early twentieth century, who, prior to immigrating to the United States, also served as an assistant to the great European synagogue composer, Louis Lewandowski at Berlin’s famed Oranienbergerstrasse Synagogue.

When the CCAR published the 1932 edition of the hymnal, their intent was in the words of the committee; “to stimulate congregational singing, inspire Jewish devotion, revive the value of Jewish melody, make use of neglected poetry, lean heavily where possible on

Jewish motifs, and contribute to the field of hymnology a publication which would be essentially Jewish in color, spirit, and purpose.” For this edition, who better to provide a musical setting to “All the World” than Abraham Wolf Binder, a composer for the Reform synagogue who was in his own words; “sensitive to the beautiful subtleties of our traditional synagogue music.”



What has remained constant throughout the evolution of Jewish hymnody, is the effort to meet the needs of modern synagogue life, namely the adaptation of traditional Jewish music to the tastes of our own time. Thus, the question continues to be; “What elements of synagogue melody best expresses our religious ideals musically?” The great mid-twentieth century composer Max Janowski, and contemporary composers such as Cantor Benjie Ellen Schiller and Michael Isaacson have all tried to address this critical question musically in their respective settings of “All the World.” Cantor Schiller and Michael Isaacson’s settings are published by URJ Press in the anthology Yamim Noraim, and are featured on the accompanying recording. Max Janowski’s setting can also be found via URJ press.

Though the musical settings of this powerful text have consistently been creatively renewed to resonate with the hearts and minds of Reform Jews in our time, what has constantly endured is the expression of the age-old vision of the Messianic Era, a vision expressed powerfully both in the text of “All the World,” and in the other timeless, beloved prayer “May the time not be distant.” As we gather during this most awesome and holy season, let us make use of this most precious gift of memory and creatively renew our connection both spiritually and musically to the powerful, timeless, ideals proclaimed in “All the World,” in our own time, while also in the words of Abraham Binder, “returning to these beautiful tunes, and zealously guard that which our ancestors deemed sacred.”

ALL THE WORLD

All the world shall come to serve You,
 And bless Your glorious name!
 And Your righteousness triumphant,
 The islands shall proclaim.
 And the people shall go seeking
 Who knew You not before,
 And the ends of earth shall praise You
 And tell Your greatness o'er!

They shall build for You their altars,
 Their idols overthrown,
 And their graven gods shall shame them,
 As they turn to You alone!
 They shall worship You at sunrise,
 And feel Your Sovereign might,
 And impart their understanding,
 To those astray in night!

When we see Your vast dominion,
 The hills shall shout with song,
 And the islands laugh exultant,
 That they to God belong!
 And through all Your congregations,
 So loud Your praise shall ring,
 That the utmost people, hearing,
 Shall joyfully Your greatness sing!

Prayers for Rosh Hashanah The New Year

Reader

Heavenly Creator! In the twilight of the vanishing year, we lift up our hearts to You in gratitude for all of Your gifts in the past, as we seek Your guidance and Your blessings for the future. You have watched over us and Your loving kindness has sustained us. In affliction You have strengthened us. In sorrow You have comforted us. You have brightened our lives with the happiness of home and the joys of friendship. You have blessed us with the satisfaction that comes from performing our daily tasks and serving others.

Congregation

As we thank You for the joys of life, so do we acknowledge the wisdom that has come to us through our sorrows. Many burdens have been laid upon us. Many tears have moistened our cheeks. Many tender ties have been broken. With a parent's love You have guided us that we might learn more fully to appreciate life's holy purposes.

Reader

In deep humility we approach You, O God, at this sacred and joyous season. May we listen reverently to its solemn lessons. Give us the will to serve You with singleness of heart, so that, as we grow older in years, we may also grow stronger in wisdom, deeper in kindness and more steadfast in our faith.

Congregation

Hidden from our sight are the events of the future. Yet we trust in You and shall not fear. Open unto us the gates of the New Year, and grant us life and health, contentment and peace.

**From the Rosh Hashanah
Shofar Service***Reader*

In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall hold a sacred assembly and abstain from all work; you shall mark it by sounding the Shofar.

Reader

The stirring sound of the Shofar proclaimed the covenant at Mount Sinai which bound our people Israel to God as a community of priests and a holy people. Ever since that distant day, the voice of the Shofar has resounded throughout the communities of Israel, awakening our allegiance to God and the Torah. At the new moon, on joyous festivals as well as on solemn days of repentance, and in the jubilee year when liberty was proclaimed throughout the land, our ancestors hearkened to the sound of the Shofar and recalled their obligation to serve God with all their hearts and with all their strength.

Congregation

Thus do we, their descendants, prepare to hearken once again to the solemn sound of the Shofar. May it challenge us to struggle against the forces of evil within our hearts and in the world. May it arouse within us the will for righteousness and strengthen our trust in God's justice and love. May it direct our thoughts to the day when the Shofar will sound for the redemption of all humanity.

**Prayers for Yom Kippur
The Day of Atonement**

I

Reader

This is the Day of God. On this day, we are called to the sanctuary by a summons as exalting and enduring as the everlasting hills: Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!

This is the Day of Awe. What are we, as we stand in Your Presence, O God? A leaf in the storm, a fleeting moment in the flow of time, a whisper lost among the stars.

This is the Day of Decision. Today we invoke You as the Molder of our destiny. Help us to mend our ways, to right the heart's old wrongs. On this Sabbath of the soul, inscribe us for blessing in the Book of Life.

This is Yom Kippur, the Day of our Atonement. We would return to God as children long to return to their loving parents. Before God we confess our sins knowing that the gates of repentance are always open. We yearn to be at one with God's way and blessed by God's embracing love.

II

Reader

The Day of Atonement demands that we examine not only our personal lives, but also the life of the society about us. Before God we confess our share of responsibility for the evils which inflict hardship and loneliness on so many: injustice and inequality, the selfishness of individuals and groups, the insensitivity of the strong to the weak.

Congregation

This Day demands of us that we acknowledge our faults: Each of us shares, in some measure, these and many other failings. No one is so righteous as to say: "I have not sinned." May this Day impress on us anew that personal faith is only a part of our religion; that we must work to establish a society acceptable to God, a family of families united in mutual concern and compassion.

Reader

How much hurt we inflict on others! Through our failures, poverty and crime degrade our cities. The weak are robbed of their rights. Heedless of the cost to future generations, nature is greedily exploited. Starvation claims its victims. Nations fall upon one another in savage wars. These faults, by which we damage ourselves and one another, estrange us from the Divine; as it has been said: "Your iniquities have separated you from God, and your sins have hidden God's face from you."

*From the
Yizkor Memorial Service*

Reader

Heavenly Creator, the solemn call of this hour revives within us the memories of our dear ones who have passed through the portal of death. We recall the happy days when they walked among us and when, blessed with their love, we lived our lives. They are near us even now, though the snow of many winters may have covered their graves. Precious links binding heart to heart remain unbroken. Transfigured by memory, our dear ones are with us, particularly at this sacred hour. We remember them with gratitude and name them in our prayers.

We recall those who but yesterday were part of this congregation and who shared in the tasks of our faith community. We offer our never ending respect and affection for all those whose devotion has contributed to the growth of our sacred institutions and to the well-being of our people.

We think, too, of the whole household of our people Israel. We behold the vacant places once filled by brave spirits who, by noble teaching and personal example, stood forth as faithful guides to our people and a pride to all humanity.

In gratitude for all the blessings they brought to us, to our people, and to all people, we dedicate ourselves anew to the sacred tasks they have entrusted to us. May they be remembered for blessing among the righteous of the world.

*From the
Ne'ilah Concluding Service*

Reader

The day is fading; the sun is setting; the silence and peace of night descend upon the earth. Give rest now, O Author of peace, to our troubled hearts. Lift up those spirits oppressed by guilt. Turn, O God, turn to Your children. Turn to every broken heart and every burdened soul. Let us at this hour be sure of Your forgiveness.

Congregation

From Your house, we are about to return to our homes. Enter them with us, O God, that they may become Your sanctuaries, dwelling-places of Your spirit. Then will our homes stand firm against the storms of life, to be a shelter for all that is good, and a refuge from evil.



Reader

And still another dwelling-place have You destined for us, O Source of life, an eternal home to which we shall go when our brief day on earth has passed. Open for us then the gates of everlasting peace, and keep alive in those who will follow us the truths, the visions, and the hopes we have struggled to make real.

Congregation

This twilight hour reminds us also of the day when, if we are faithful to our mission, Your light will arise over all the world, and Israel's spiritual descendants will be as numerous as the stars of heaven. Teach our people to recognize the meaning of our history and the challenge of our destiny, to proclaim to all people the truth of Israel's message: one human family on earth even as there is One God in heaven.

Reader

You alone know when this great hope shall be fulfilled. But that day will surely come. Then joy will thrill all hearts, and from one end of the earth to the other will ring the exultant cry: "Hear, O Israel, hear, all Creation: The Eternal is our God, the Eternal God is One." Your house shall be a house of prayer for all people. All nations shall flock to it and exclaim in triumphant song: "Lift up your heads, O gates! Lift yourselves up, O ancient doors! Let the God of glory enter."



All texts taken from *The Union Prayer Book for the High Holy Days*,
Sinai Edition, Volume II. Chicago Sinai Congregation. 2001



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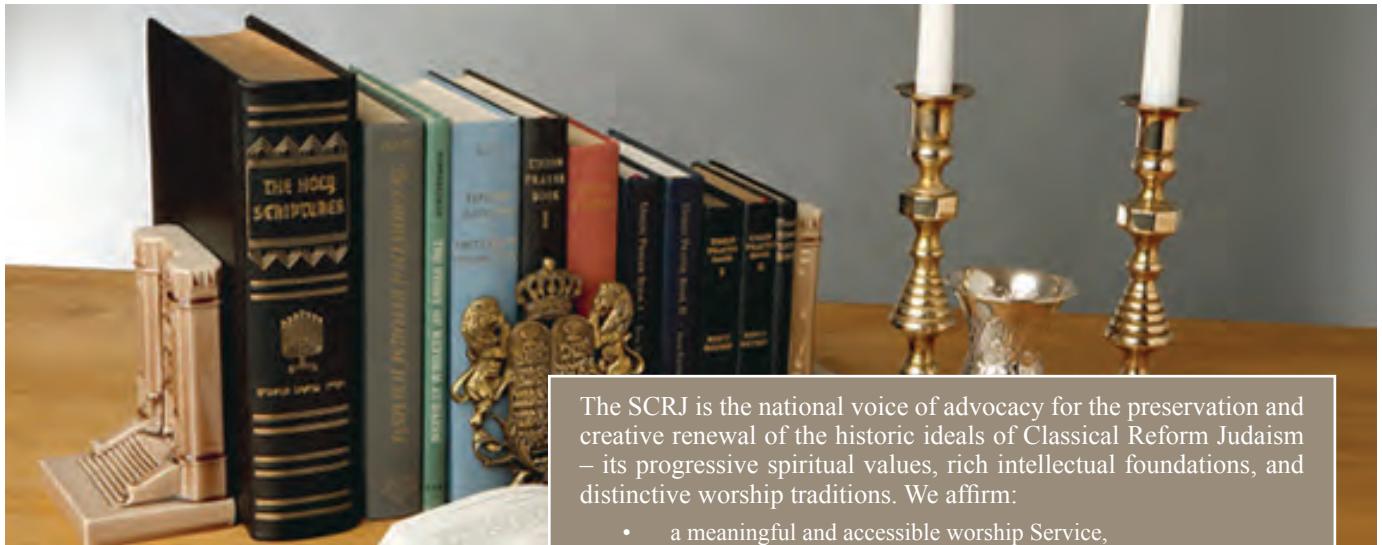
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THE SOCIETY FOR CLASSICAL REFORM JUDAISM

15 Newbury St. Boston, MA 02116
local: 617. 247. 4700 *toll free:* 877. 326. 1400
e-mail: info@renewreform.org
web site: www.RENEWREFORM.org

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