

Selichot

By Randy Furash-Stewart and Dane Kuttler for Nishmat Shoom

***elul, breathless bridge into becoming,
narrow, marked by curled shouts
and shadows emerging into haunts
elul promises: you can't outrun reckoning***

What is Selichot?

Selichot is a set of prayers that are said in the month of Elul, leading up to the Days of Awe. These prayers offer us a structure for thinking about asking for forgiveness, preparing our souls to turn and return (teshuvah) as the old year ends and new one begins. We can think of it as preparation for the penitential prayer that will be said on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

***elul glows like judgment on the horizon
elul is the perpetuity of unreadiness
elul, the trepidation, backstage hum
before the house goes down.***

In Sephardi tradition, selichot is recited every evening or early morning of the month of Elul (starting August 9th this year). In Ashkenazi tradition, it is recited after Havdalah on the Saturday night at least a week before Rosh Hashanah (August 28th this year).

Traditionally, the shofar is blown once a day during the month of Elul, in connection with these prayers of Selichot. This serves several purposes - spiritually, it's a call to wake up, to get in gear, to kindle a spark in your soul. (Practically, it's excellent practice for the marathon of shofar blasting that comes on Rosh Hashanah.)

How do I do Selichot?

We encourage you to find a beautiful spot where you can find some peace at night. Dim the lights or read by candlelight, if you'd like. Alternately, find a spot where you can see the sunrise and do this early in the morning.

Before starting, do some thinking or journaling about what has happened over the past year. Where did I misstep? What would I like to change?

Then, dive into the texts below in whatever way feels right for you.

If you'd like to add something that correlates with the shofar blasts, anything that wakes you up will work. Sing a loud fast song, or move in a way that stirs your breath. Mimic the shofar by taking a deep breath and giving a long, long exhale, until you are completely out of breath.

elul, the wandering

elul, the seeking

elul, the compass

with a needle that only points inward,

Selichot texts

And G'd says: The first step is to say, "I am here." To stand barefoot before the fire and let the stones fall from your hands. To recognize your own name in the cacophony and find the strength to answer.--*Dane Kuttler*

We are Good

Batya Levine

We are good

We are flawed

We are the breath of an imperfect god

-- Batya Levine

Atonement
Romeo Romero

Atonement (n):
the moment after chaos
when a body
or an energy
rights itself
hits just the right note
to fall in sync
with another.
I want to call it
attunement
I want to call it
a moment of
meeting
I want to call it
a moment of
remembering
the way it felt
back then
when we were
not prisoners
not survivors
not stewards of trauma
or of grief
not apprentices
to our oppressors
nor oppressors
in our own right.

we were oxygen
igniting spirit
igniting some divine kind of
harmony
the life we create
in a body
on an earth
in this particular
moment of being
a universe

of course
there is a mess
to be made
in all of this
of course
there is no such thing
as perfection
of course
we are a trying people
in a trying time
and of course
we are learning.

Atone
to course correct
Atone
to take responsibility
for where your learning
harmed another
and
for where your learning

harmed yourself.
look for
what is needed
for repair.
Then repair.
Then repeat.

Atone
to find the holy
inside of you
to own up
to wise up
to rise up
to your healing
and your relationships
with everything
you've dug up.
our peoples
and our lands
are waiting
for you to
show up.

so. show up.
every day
and be in awe
of the change
you are changing.

ADON HASELICHOT

אדון הסלכות

Adon Haselichot, bochen levavot
Goleh amukot, dover tzedakot
Chatanu lefanecha, rachem aleynu (x2)

Hadoor beneefla'ot, vateek benechamot
Zocher breet avot, choker kelayot
Chatanu lefanecha, rachem aleynu (x2)

Tov umeteev labreeyot, yodeya kol neestartot
Kovesh avonot, lovesh tzedakot
Chatanu lefanecha, rachem aleynu (x2)

Male zakeeyoot, nora teheelot
Sole'ach avonot, oneh b'et tzarot
Chatanu lefanecha, rachem aleynu (x2)

Po'el yeshu'ot, tzofeh oteedot
Kore hadorot, rochev aravot
Shome'a tefilot, temeem de'ot
Chatanu lefanecha, rachem aleynu (x2)

Source of forgiveness who knows our hearts
Revealer of depths, Speaker of justice.
We have lost our way, guide us home to ourselves with gentleness.

Majestic with ancient wonders, comforting presence,
Remembering the covenant with our ancestors, weighing our insides
We have forgotten who we are, help us remember our goodness.

Goodness flowing to all creations, Knower of all that is hidden
Capturing our careless arrows, Clothed in righteousness.
We have missed the mark, let us draw from the well of your compassion.

Abundant generosity, filling us with awe beyond awe,
Forgiving everything, answering our call,

We have missed the mark, let us draw from the well of your compassion.

Artisan of resilience, visionary of the future
Calling upon the generations, guiding us in the wilderness
Hearing our prayers, aligning us in integrity,
We have missed the mark, let us draw from the well of your compassion.

A Body-Prayer for Teshuvah- from *Fringes*

Holy One of Blessing, we have been stiff-necked: stubborn, angry, resentful.

Help us to hold our heads high with self respect, but not defensiveness,
to let go of old angers.

We have refused to acknowledge any view but our own.
We've seen only the negative things, which have fed our despair.
Help us learn to focus on the fullness of creation.

We have clenched our fists in frustration
Help our hands to build, change, and nurture.

Our knees have trembled with fear. Our feet have shuffled in indifference.

Help us have true faith in ourselves and in life,
to stride with confidence, generosity and clarity of purpose.

We have swallowed injustice, choked on cruelty.
Give us a deep hunger for change.

We have let our hearts sink and our shoulders sag in discouragement.

Let us fill ourselves with faith in the presence of the Shekinah,
faith in ourselves, and in each other.

We have exhausted our bodies with anxieties, resentments, pointless busyness.

Help us feel Your breath within us, our neshama, breath/soul/spirit.

During these days of teshuvah, we will right the wrongs we've done to each other.

We will turn again towards harmony.

Help us to do so in hope and not in despair,
with insight and not with a closed heart,
with deep conviction and not with shallow formality.

May we open ourselves body and soul so that this will be a truly new beginning

Vidui- Acrostic Confession of Missing the Mark

This acrostic list, (meaning each word or phrase begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet) is a litany of All The Things To Repent For. We have lost the original meaning of some of these words, but the intent of an acrostic in Jewish liturgy is that it not only contains the actual words that are listed. It also contains all the other words that could be said. We can think of this as a list of everything, from A to Z, that we feel the need to repent for.

אֲשָׁמְנוּ. בָּגַדְנוּ. גָּזַלְנוּ. דִּבְרַנּוּ דֹפִי. הֶעָוִינוּ. וְהִרְשָׁעְנוּ. זָדְנוּ. חָמַסְנוּ. טַפְלֵנוּ שָׁקַר. יַעֲצָנוּ רָע.
כָּזַבְנוּ. לָצָנוּ. מָרַדְנוּ. נֹאצָנוּ. סָרַרְנוּ. עֵוִינוּ. פָּשַׁעְנוּ. צָרַרְנוּ. קִשְׁיֵנוּ עֵרְף. רָשָׁעְנוּ. שְׂחָתְנוּ.
תַּעֲבָנוּ. תִּעֵינוּ. תַּעֲתָעְנוּ

Ashamnu. Bagadnu. Gazalnu. Dibarnu dofi.

He'evinu. Vehirshanu. Zadnu. Chamasnu. Tafalnu shaker.

Ya'atnu ra. Kizavnu. Latznu. Maradnu. Ni'atznu. Sararnu.

Avinu. Pashanu. Tzararnu. Kishinu oref.

Rashanu. Shichatnu. Ti'avnu. Ta'inu. Titanu.

An interpretation by Fringes:

We have blamed, we have deceived, we have spoiled,
We have been hypocritical,
We have offended, we have been wicked,
We have been presumptuous, we have done violence,
We have deceived, we have ill-advised,
We have lied, we have mocked,
We have rebelled; we have been iniquitous,
We have trespassed, we have oppressed,
We have been obstinate, we have acted wickedly,
We have been corrupt, we have wasted,
We have erred, we have led others astray.

13 Attributes of Compassion and Forgiveness

We cry out, appealing to G'd's forgiving nature. These words come from Moses in the Torah, begging G'd not to punish the people for their transgressions. It's a reminder - a plea to *please remember, G'd, how merciful and compassionate You are.*

יְהוָה אֵל רַחוּם וְחַנּוּן אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם וְרַב־חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת
נִצֵּר חֶסֶד לְאֲלֹפִים נִשְׂא עֵן וְנָשַׁע וְחָטְאָה וְנִקְרָה

Chava Yah, Chava Yah eil rachum ve'chanun erech apa'yim v'rav chesed
v'emet Notzeir chesed la'alafim nosei avon va'fasha v'chata'a v'nakeh

Yah! Yah! Sacred, Nurturing Womb, Compassionate, Patient, Abounding in
Loyal Love, Faithfulness, Assuring Loyal Love for a thousand Generations,
Forgiving bad behavior, intentional and unintentional, when we miss the
mark, and Forgiving.

-- R. Zalman

Avinu Malkeinu

אָבֵינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ
חֲנֵנוּ וְעַנְנוּ כִּי אֵין בָּנוּ מַעֲשִׂים
עֲשֵׂה עִמָּנוּ צְדָקָה וְחֶסֶד וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ

Avinu Malkeinu, chaneinu va-aneinu
ki ein banu ma'asim
Aseh imanu Tzedakah va-chesed
V'hoshiyeinu!

Imeinu Malkateinu (or Shechinateinu), chaninu va'aninu
ki ein banu ma'asim
Asi imanu Tzedakah va-chesed
V'hoshiy-inu!

M'kor Chayeinu (Source of our Life), chaneinu va-anainu
ki ein banu ma'asim
Aseh imanu Tzedakah va-chesed
V'hoshiyeinu!

The Mother's Response by Kohenet Riv Ranney Shapiro

Slow down, child, slow down
Slow down and listen to the wind
All comes together; all falls apart
Forming anew your beating heart

Slow down, child, slow down
Slow down and draw yourself near
The rocks are your keepers
Tell them your stories
Now it is safe to be here

A river flows from within you to where you will go
The current carries you home
Let your life unfold

Slow down, child, slow down
Slow down and you will receive
Life wants to meet you where you are
Not where you think you should be

A river flows from within you to where you will go
The current carries you home
Let your life unfold

Slow down, child, slow down
Slow down and you will be shown
The love that was always lifting you up
You are never alone

A river flows from within you to where you will go
The current carries you home
Let your life unfold

Slow down child, slow down (x4)

Slow down, child, slow down
Slow down and listen to the wind
All comes together; all falls apart

Forming anew your beating heart

From Psalm 27

אַחַת שְׁאַלְתִּי מֵאֵת-יְהוָה אוֹתָהּ אֶבְקֶשׁ
שְׁבִתִּי בְּבֵית-יְהוָה כָּל-יְמֵי חַיִּי
לְחַזוֹת בְּנֹעַם-יְהוָה וּלְבַקֵּר בְּהֵיכָלוֹ

Achat sha'alti me'et adonay otah avakesh shivti beveyt adonay kol yemey
chayay lachazot beno'am adonay ulevaker beheychalo

*Translation: One thing I ask of G!d, one thing do I request: to dwell in The
Eternal's house all of the days of my life to know the bliss of The Eternal to
visit in G!d's palace.- psalm 27*

***elul, the journey to enough
(what if there is such a thing?)
barehearted and trembling,
following call
after call
after call
- Dane Kuttler***