

STEPHEN
WISE TEMPLE

Elul Guide

*Words of reflection inspired
by the new Stephen Wise Temple machzor*

2019 | 5779

No matter your stage of life, the late days of summer bring with them certain feelings and rhythms. There is the sense of ending: the carefree summer days come to a close. But there is also a sense of new beginnings: we all remember the excitement of the first day of school. The month of Elul offers that same paradox and opportunity. It is meant to be a month of reflection and preparation prior to the High Holy Days, a month of thinking about the changes we want to make when the new year begins.

In celebration of the new Stephen Wise Temple *machzor*, your clergy and educators

have chosen to reflect on the words of prayers that speak most deeply to us—the ones that challenge us and move us to become our best selves. On these pages, you will find our writing as well as texts and readings from the new *machzor* itself. We hope that these words will inspire you to begin 5780 as your fullest self.

Chodesh Tov—may it be a month of meaning-making.

L'Shalom,
Rabbi Sari Laufer
Director of Congregational Engagement

☑ *Elul 1*



Cantor Emma Lutz

Modim Anachnu Lach—We Offer Thanks to You

Though our *machzor* includes a special collection of prayers reserved just for our Days of Awe, it is sewn together by the familiar liturgical staples of our everyday prayer books, including our *Modim* prayer for gratitude. Even—or perhaps especially—when we are participating in services intended for repentance and deep reflection, we may notice with greater lucidity all of the blessings and gifts in our lives. We acknowledge with special thanks the rare allowance of full days set aside for such meaningful contemplation and precious time with family and community.

*Modim anachnu lach sha'atah hu
Adonai eloheinu v'elohei avoteinu
v'imoteinu l'olam va'ed, Tzur chayeinu,
magein yish'einu, atah hu l'dor vador.*

מוֹדִים אֲנַחְנוּ לָךְ, שְׂאֲתָהּ הוּא
יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ
וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. צוּר חַיֵּינוּ,
מָגֵן יִשְׁעֵנוּ, אַתָּה הוּא לְדוֹר וָדוֹר.

We offer thanks that You are Adonai, our God and the God of our ancestors forever. You are the rock of our lives, the shield of our salvation. In every generation we will thank You.

☑ Elul 2



Jennifer Shankman
Director of
Early Childhood

Modim Anachnu Lach—We Offer Thanks to You

I spend a lot of time thinking, planning and strategizing ways the youngest of children in our community can connect to our holidays, and not just through stories, food and song. While those are certainly valuable in painting the tapestry of their early Jewish holiday experiences, I know the children are capable of understanding so much more, for I have observed them connecting through the values that are so very important to us as a People. Nad of course, they do this every day, not just on our holidays.

My own relationship with the High Holy Day liturgy was challenging at best for most of my early memories, and through my adolescence. I always felt a looming presence – and, as a child, I thought that if I didn't pray hard enough or do well enough, that it would truly threaten my very existence into the next year. And so I came to dread some of our holiest days of the year, simply based on all the ways the liturgy DIDN'T speak to me.

I DID, however, learn how to reconcile those feelings, as I focused on how I could approach the *Yamim Noraim* with joy, excitement, and thanks for the opportunity to renew. I have learned to find the spaces and prayers that allow me to connect with the tremendousness of the holidays and the range of emotions and connection. It's no surprise to me that the way I connect best is not by separating the holiday liturgy from the everyday, but by focusing on the every day blessings to guide me. I work to come to the holidays from a place of deep gratitude, for the blessings and the challenges that have brought me to this moment in time, as I thank God for strength, safety, kindness and compassion.

☑ Elul 3



Rabbi David Woznica

The Shema

Every time we recite the Shema we offer the ultimate declaration of Jewish faith. The words of the Shema are some of the first Hebrew words we memorize as children. They are also the words we recite as we near the end of life. For many, reciting the Shema evokes an emotional tie with our Creator. These words reflect our love and our supreme commitment to our one true God.

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְהוָה אֶחָד.
 בָּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

*Sh'ma Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad.
 Baruch sheim k'vod mal'chuto l'olam va'ed.*

Hear O Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One.
 Blessed is God's glorious sovereignty forever and ever.

(Deuteronomy 6:4)

☑ Elul 4

A story is told by Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav (1772–1810) about a man who studied with our master and teacher Rabbi Yitzchak of Nedborna. Before Rosh Hashanah, the man came to his teacher to ask permission to leave early. Rabbi Yitzchak said to him, "What's your hurry?" He replied, "I am a shaliach tzibur (prayer leader) and I need to examine the machzor and prepare my prayers." Rabbi Yitzchak said, "The machzor is the same as last year in God's eyes. Better that you should examine your deeds and prepare yourself!"

☑ Elul 5

God of Our Ancestors: as Jews on a spiritual quest, we recognize that we are, first of all, inheritors. Our spiritual vocabulary, our values, the lives that we lead are pathways built on markers laid down by those who came before us. Beginning on the roads that they surveyed, we are each able to proceed on our own religious journey. Surely, as we grow spiritually, we will end up in a different place; but as we look back, we will always be reminded that it was possible for us to begin on our way because of the journey they undertook.



Elul 6


Rabbi Ron Stern

Intro to Uv'chen**"And then, grant honor to your people..."**

We forget, perhaps, that someone wrote this, hundreds of years ago. Perhaps they sat in the darkest recesses of Europe, perhaps in a sweltering alleyway in Aleppo, perhaps following a pogrom, a crusade, a massacre that so marks much of Jewish history and they wrote: "grant honor." "Grant joy...grant confident speech...grant light ...and then the righteous will rejoice the upright jubilant." What astounding words of optimism and hope, of faith in the future, of trust that ultimately despair will give way to exuberance. Our setting at Wise, by Michael Isaacson, to these very words is surely a highpoint of our High Holy Day music. We tap our feet, bob our heads, sense the beauty of the piece and the way the music masterfully fills us with anticipation as it builds towards joy. To hear these words, to be lifted up by the music is to affirm the age-old Jewish hope that life matters, that living has purpose, and that our very existence gives us cause for hope.

*Uv'chein tein kavod, Adonai,
l'amecha, t'hilah lirei'echa v'tikvah
tovah l'dor'shecha, ufit'chon peh
lam'yachalim lach, simchah
l'artzecha, v'sason l'irecha,
utz'michat keren l'David av'decha,
va'arichat ner l'ven Yishai
m'shichecha, bim'heirah v'yameinu.*

וּבְכֵן תֵּן כְּבוֹד, יי',
לְעַמְּךָ, תְּהִלָּה לִירְאֵיךָ וְתִקְוָה
טוֹבָה לְדוֹרְשֵׁיךָ, וּפְתִחוֹן פֶּה
לְמַיְחֲלִים לָךְ, שִׂמְחָה
לְאַרְצֶךָ, וְשִׂשׂוֹן לְעִירֶךָ,
וְצִמְיַחַת קֶרֶן לְדָוִד עַבְדְּךָ,
וְעֲרִיכַת נֵר לְבֵן יִשָּׁי
מְשִׁיחֶךָ, בְּמַהֲרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ.

Therefore, grant honor to Your People, glory to those who revere
You, hope to those who seek You, and praise to those
who yearn for You. Joy in the land and gladness in the city, giving
strength to David, Your servant, a shining light to the son of Jesse,
Your chosen one, speedily and in our days.

☑ Elul 7



☑ *Elul 8*



Avinu Malkeinu

The last verse of *Avinu Malkeinu* reminds us that, in the end, so much of life is about God's grace - those things that come our way as gifts. Often it's not because we've earned them or because we deserve them. We are blessed with so much simply because of God's compassion, God's *chesed*.

Rabbi Yoshi Zweiback

*Avinu Malkeinu, choneinu va'aneinu,
ki ein banu ma'asim. Aseih imanu
tz'dakah vachessed, v'hoshi'einu.*

אָבִינוּ מֶלְכֵנוּ, חֲנֻנוּ וְעָנֵנוּ,
כִּי אֵין בָּנוּ מַעֲשִׂים. עֲשֵׂה עִמָּנוּ
צְדָקָה וְחֶסֶד, וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ.

*Avinu Malkeinu, O God our Sovereign, be gracious to us and
answer us for we are unworthy.
Deal with us in charity and lovingkindness and save us.*



Elul 9


Judaism encourages us to reach out to God in prayer at any time, in any place. And yet on Yom Kippur, our tradition teaches that God is especially near, reaching out to us, waiting to hear our prayers. What a beautiful image, as God judges our actions and, we hope, inscribes and seals us in the Book of Life; God is close, listening and waiting for our prayers.

Our machzor helps us to reflect upon the year gone by in order to realize the central goal of Yom Kippur: repentance. And yet we can also look forward. On Yom Kippur, let us ask ourselves: this year do I want to be more charitable and more honest in my business dealings? Do I wish to gossip less? Do I want to be more observant of Shabbat or the kosher laws? Do I hope to be kinder and more loving or to use my time more thoughtfully? Do I hope for moral courage to speak out? How might I be a better parent, sibling, child, and friend?

We commit ourselves to the work necessary to become that person. We pray that God will walk alongside us throughout this journey.

We pray with gratitude for the gifts God has given us. We are thankful for the blessings that fill our lives.

And with great humility, we turn to God. With optimism and hope, we ask to be inscribed and sealed in the Book of Life for the coming year as we travel, on this holiest of days, toward our loving God.

Elul 10



☑ Elul 11



Cantor Nathan Lam

Hin'ni is a supplication composed by a cantor in the Middle Ages. The prayer, in which the *shaliach tzibur* (prayer leader) walks amidst the congregation from the last row of the sanctuary to the *bimah*, reflects the heavy responsibility upon this individual to represent the congregation before God. The *shaliach tzibur*, surrounded by the community, has been trained for this holy and awesome purpose. The *Hin'ni* prayer shares a spirit of sincerity, piety, and an awe of the Holy One on these days that demand our deepest self-reflection as individuals and as a community.

Here I stand, impoverished in merit, trembling in Your presence, pleading on behalf of Your People Israel even though I am unfit and unworthy for the task. Therefore, gracious and compassionate God, awesome God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Jacob, wondrous God of Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah, I plead for help as I seek mercy for myself and for those whom I represent. Charge others not with my sins. May they not be shamed for my deeds, and may their deeds cause me no shame. Accept my prayer as the prayer of one uniquely worthy and qualified for this task. Remove all obstacles and adversaries. Draw Your veil of love over all our faults. Transform our afflictions to joy and gladness, life and peace. May we always love truth and peace, and may no obstacles confront my prayer.

הִנְנִי הָעֲנִי מִמַּעַשׁ, וְנִרְעַשׁ /
 וְנִרְעַשְׁתָּ, וְנִפְחַד / וְנִפְחַדְתָּ
 מִפְּחַד יוֹשֵׁב תְּהֵלוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל.
 בָּאתִי לְעַמֵּד וּלְחַנּוּן לְפָנֶיךָ עַל
 עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַחְוֹנִי, וְאַף
 עַל פִּי שְׂאִינִי כְדָאִי / כְּדָאִית
 וְהַגּוֹן / וְהַגּוֹנָה לְכַף. עַל כֵּן
 אֲבַקֶּשֶׁךָ, אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם, אֱלֹהֵי
 יִצְחָק, וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב, אֱלֹהֵי
 שָׂרָה, אֱלֹהֵי רַבְקָה, אֱלֹהֵי רַחֵל
 וְאֱלֹהֵי לֵאָה, יְיָ יְיָ אֵל
 רַחוּם וְחַנוּן, אֱלֹהִים, שְׂדֵי
 אִים וְנוֹרָא: הֵיָה נָא מִצְּלִיחַ
 דְּרַפִּי אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי הוֹלֵךְ / הוֹלֵכֶת
 לְעַמֵּד לְבַקֵּשׁ רַחֲמִים עָלַי
 וְעַל שׁוֹלְחִי.

Elul 12


Rabbi Sari Laufer

Unetaneh Tokef

Each day is a scroll. Write on it what you wish to be remembered. These words, which I encountered each High Holy Day season in the front of my *machzor* growing up, always come to mind as the *Unetaneh Tokef* begins. Facing a God who, according to the theology of the prayer, sees and knows all, we are confronted with the knowledge that our deeds—for good and for bad—leave lasting imprints. But, embedded within the challenging words and images, even with God presented as judge, counselor, witness, and plaintiff—our texts are clear that we are actors in our own story. When God opens the Book of Memories, it is not God’s writing, not some supernatural force, but our own hand which signs in, marking our choices and the imprint we leave in the world.

*V'tiftach et seifer hazichronot,
umei'eilav yikarei—v'chotam yad kol
adam bo.*

וְתַפְתַּח אֶת סֵפֶר הַזִּכְרוֹנוֹת,
וּמְאֵלָיו יִקְרָא – וְחֹתָם יָד כָּל
אָדָם בּוֹ.

When You open the book of records, it reads itself, for it bears the signature of every human being.

 Elul 13

1. What moments from this year are written in your scroll?
2. What are you hoping to write in the year ahead?



*B'Rosh Hashanah yikateivun, uv'Yom
Tzom Kippur yeichateimun: Kamah
ya'avurun, v'chamah yibarei'un. Mi
yichyeh, u'mi yamat. Mi v'kitzo, u'mi
lo v'kitzo. Mi va'eish, u'mi vamayim.
Mi vacherev, u'mi vachayah. Mi
vara'av, u'mi vatzama. Mi vara'ash,
u'mi vamageifah. Mi vachanikah,
u'mi vas'kilah. Mi yanu'ach, u'mi
yanu'a. Mi yashkit, u'mi y'toraf. Mi
yishaleiv, u'mi yityaseir. Mi ya'ani,
u'mi ya'ashir. Mi yushpal, u'mi yarum?*

בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה יִכָּתְבוּן, וּבַיּוֹם
צוֹם כִּפּוּר יִחַתְמוּן: כַּמָּה
יַעֲבֹרוּן, וְכַמָּה יִבְרָאוּן. מִי
יַחְיֶה, וּמִי יָמוּת. מִי בְּקִצּוֹ, וּמִי
לֹא בְּקִצּוֹ. מִי בְּאֵשׁ, וּמִי בַמַּיִם.
מִי בַחֶרֶב, וּמִי בַחַיָּה. מִי
בָרֶעֱב, וּמִי בַצָּמָא. מִי בְרַעַשׁ,
וּמִי בַמַּגֵּפָה. מִי בַחֲנִיקָה,
וּמִי בַסְּקִילָה. מִי יָנוּחַ, וּמִי
יָנוּעַ. מִי יִשְׁקִיט, וּמִי יִטְרַף. מִי
יִשְׁלֹו, וּמִי יִתְיַסֵּר. מִי יַעֲנִי,
וּמִי יַעֲשִׂיר. מִי יִשְׁפַּל, וּמִי יָרוּם?

On Rosh Hashanah it is written, and on Yom Kippur it is sealed:
How many shall pass away, how many shall be born?
Who shall live and who shall die;
Who shall come to a timely end and who to an untimely end;
Who by fire and who by water;
Who by sword and who by beast;
Who by hunger and who by thirst;
Who by earthquake and who by plague;
Who by strangling and who by stoning;
Who shall be at ease and who shall wander;
Who shall be tranquil and who shall be troubled;
Who shall be poor and who shall be rich;
Who shall be humbled and who shall be exalted?

☑ *Elul 14*



Rabbi David Woznica

Unetaneh Tokef

On Rosh Hashanah it is written and on Yom Kippur it is sealed: Who will live and who will die.

We cannot know if God decides our fate during the days beginning with Rosh Hashana and concluding with Yom Kippur. I believe these words are in the prayer book so that we understand that our future is in the balance and that during these days we should do good deeds and pray with fervor to be sealed in the book of life for the coming year. Life is not forever. Time is precious. And life is not fully in our hands. Those realizations are the gift of this prayer.

☑ *Elul 15*



Rabbi Josh Knobel

Unetaneh Tokef

On Rosh Hashanah it is written and on Yom Kippur it is sealed: Who will live and who will die.

Like any passage that questions humanity's free will, the *unetaneh tokef* prayer has received ample and often well-deserved criticism from today's minds, both religious and secular. However, the prayer serves an invaluable purpose, especially in an era when revolutionary technology empowers our freedom of choice and expression like never before. In the age of free will, the *unetaneh tokef* reminds us that our powers have limits and that the most important things in our lives lie firmly beyond our control.

☑ *Elul 16*

1. Over what elements of my life do I continue to seek control?
2. Over what must I relinquish the illusion of control to find serenity in the coming year?

☑ *Elul 17*



Rabbi Ron Stern

T'shuva, Tephilah, and Tzedakah Maverin at Roah HaGezerah (end of Unetaneh Tokef)

With these words we end what is, for many of us, one of the most disturbing poems in our High Holy Day liturgy. *Unetaneh Tokef* declares that God determines how we shall die and how we live—a fatalistic interpretation of the human condition that has likely created more atheists than any single prayer. And yet...and yet...if prayer is poetry and not dogma then perhaps it rings more true when it becomes a reflection on how we live our lives. It has been said that a long life may not be good enough but a good life is often long enough. Even as *Unetaneh Tokef* acknowledges the essential inevitability of death, its poetry affirms that a life of purpose (≈*tzedakah*), wholeness (≈*tephilah*), and meaningful relationships (≈*t'shuvah*) can be the spiritual strength that allows us to meet life's pain with a certain fortitude and perspective that can change our experience. We often cannot change what is but we can change who we are—and that is what makes all the difference.

*Ut'shuvah, ut'filah, utz'dakah
ma'avirin et ro'a ha'g'zeirah.*

וּתְשׁוּבָה, וּתְפִילָּה, וּצְדָקָה
מַעֲבִירִין אֶת רֹעַ הַגְּזֵירָה.

But repentance, prayer, and charity
temper judgment's severe decree.

☑ *Elul 18*

1. What are the new commitments to living a life of purpose do you want to make in the year to come?
2. What experiences have been changed for you by your choices to live a life of purpose?

☑ Elul 19



Tami Weiser,
Head of School

Kol Nidrei

Every year at the High Holy Days we open the *machzor*, hear the familiar tunes, read the familiar prayers, and feel the sense of our broader Jewish community and our immediate Stephen Wise Temple community. There are many moving opportunities in our liturgy to connect, one of the strongest being the night of Yom Kippur when we begin with the *Kol Nidrei* prayer. When the Torah scrolls are carried in and the cantor begins to chant the words “*Kol Nidrei*” there is a sense of the awe of this moment in time. As I hear the first notes I think of the many times I have heard this in the past, whether standing by my parents as a child or standing as a parent with my own family. I think about the year that just passed—what did I accomplish? What am I especially proud of? What do I wish I would have done differently? And ten days into the new year I think of what lies ahead—what am I hoping for this year on a personal level? What am I hoping for on a professional level? What vows have I been able to truly keep, and what vows will I not make again? As I am listening to this year’s *Kol Nidrei* am I embodying my best self, my best values? As I close my eyes and breathe in, how will this *Kol Nidrei* be meaningful to me?

*Kol nidrei, ve'esarei, vacharamei,
v'konamei v'chinuyay, v'kinusei
ush'vu'ot, din'dar'na ud'ish'tabana,
ud'achariym'nah v'di'asar'na al
naf'shatana, miYom Kippurim zeh ad
Yom Kippurim haba aleinu l'tovah:*

כָּל נִדְרֵי, וְאֶסְרֵי, וְחָרְמֵי,
וְקֹנָמֵי וְכִנּוּיֵי, וְקִנּוּסֵי
וְשְׁבוּעוֹת, וְדִנְדָרָנָא וְדִאֲשָׁתְבַּנְנָא,
וְדִאֲחַרְיִמְנָא, וְדִאֲסָרְנָא עַל
נַפְשָׁתְנָא, מִיּוֹם כְּפֻרִים זֶה עַד
יּוֹם כְּפֻרִים הַבָּא עֲלֵינוּ לְטוֹבָה:

All personal vows we are likely to make, all personal oaths and pledges we are likely to take between this Yom Kippur and the next Yom Kippur, we publicly renounce.

☑ *Elul 20*



Rabbi Josh Knobel

Jonah and the Whale

Few chapters in our *machzor* bring the simultaneous sense of elation and puzzlement as the Book of Jonah, which we read on Yom Kippur afternoon. The principal conflict, created when Jonah flees God's command to visit Nineveh, appears resolved when the people of Nineveh repent. However, all is not finished, as Jonah sits outside the city to await its destruction and begins to grieve over the loss of a gourd that provided him with shade. The text then drives home an enduring lesson: So preoccupied do we often become with our lives that we show more concern for trivial matters than for the fate of an entire civilization. In a single short anecdote, the text clearly underscores the absurdity of our tendency toward egocentrism and tribalism. All people are creations of the living God, and all people deserve our empathy and compassion.

☑ *Elul 21*

1. When do I privilege inconsequential matters over the pressing needs of others?
2. How might I serve as an agent of God's mercy to all peoples?



☑ Elul 22



Sara Anderson,
Cantorial Intern

Vidui—Confessional Prayers

In the Vidui section of our Yom Kippur liturgy, we confess our sins in the plural. While not all of the sins we admit to out loud together are ones we have committed as individuals, we assume responsibility for the collective guilt of our people. In the communal confession, we have the opportunity to grow in our relationships as individuals from the shared experience of confessing. I find the Vidui particularly meaningful because it characterizes how as a Jewish community we support one another, and are responsible for each other. It is easy to let the voices of those around us carry the weight of a sin that we have independently been unable to atone for. Listening for my own voice as I pray with so many others is an intention I carry with me during the Days of Awe.

Asham'nu, bagad'nu, gazal'nu,

dibar'nu dofi. He'evinu, v'hir'shanu,

zad'nu, chamas'nu, tafal'nu sheker.

Ya'atz'nu ra, kizav'nu, latz'nu, marad'nu,

ni'atz'nu, sarar'nu, avinu, pashanu,

tzarar'nu, kishinu oref. Rashanu,

shichat'nu, ti'av'nu, ta'inu, titanu.

אֲשָׁמְנוּ, בָּגַדְנוּ, גָּזַלְנוּ,

דִּבַּרְנוּ דְּפוּי. הִעֲוִינוּ, וְהִרְשָׁעְנוּ,

זָדְנוּ, חָמָסְנוּ, טָפְלֵנוּ שֶׁקֶר.

יַעֲצֵנוּ רָע, כִּזְבַּנוּ, לֹצְנוּ, מְרֹדְנוּ,

נִיאֲצֵנוּ, סָרָרְנוּ, עֵוִינוּ, פָּשַׁעְנוּ,

צָרָרְנוּ, קִשִּׁינוּ עֹרֵף. רָשָׁעְנוּ,

שִׁחַתְנוּ, תַּעֲבַבְנוּ, תַּעֲוִינוּ, תַּעֲתַעְנוּ.

We have trespassed, we have dealt treacherously,
we have robbed,

We have spoken slander, we have acted perversely,
we have caused wickedness,

We have been presumptuous, we have been violent,
we have framed lies,

We have counseled evil, we have spoken falsely,
we have scoffed,

We have revolted, we have provoked, we have rebelled,
we have done wrong,

We have transgressed, we have oppressed,
we have been stiff-necked,

We have been wicked, we have committed abomination,
we have gone astray,

We have led others astray.

☑ *Elul 23*

1. How do I see my wrongdoings through the lens of my community?
2. What are ways that I can help my community atone for global wrongdoings?

☑ *Elul 24*



Rabbi Sari Laufer

Tavo L'fanecha

When my almost 3 year old knows she has done something wrong—she gets the contrite look. You know the one. Eyes downward, lips pouted out. Sometimes even a tremble. It is real (and really cute), but also artifice, and I often wonder where she learned it.

In the moments before the Vidui, the confessional prayers of the Yom Kippur service, we come before the Divine contrite. “We are arrogant and stubborn, claiming to be blameless and free of sin.” Eyes downward, we stand in contemplation and preparation. “In truth, we have stumbled and strayed, we have done wrong.” It is hard to acknowledge to ourselves, sometimes. It is harder to say out loud. It’s okay if we are trembling a bit.

*Eloheinu v'Eilohei avoteinu
v'imoteinu, tavo l'fanecha
t'filateinu v'al titalam
mit'chinateinu.*

אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ
וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ, תְּבוֹא לְפָנֶיךָ
תְּפִילָתֵנוּ, וְאַל תִּתַּעַלֵּם
מִתְחַנְּתָנוּ.

Hear our prayer, do not ignore our plea. We are neither so insolent nor so obstinate as to claim that we are righteous, without sin. We have surely sinned.

☑ *Elul 25*

1. For what am I truly contrite?
2. How might I change my posture—literally or metaphorically—in preparation to do *teshuvah*?



☑ *Elul 26*



*Sara Anderson,
Cantorial Intern*

On Psalm 16:

Tehilim, Psalms, is where we often turn when our emotions have left us speechless. During our Yizkor service, I often find myself meditating on the verbs of psalm 16. To level, to rejoice, to tremble, to dwell, to leave behind, to give, to see, to know. As we recall those we have lost, the words of Psalm 16 address all of the emotions we feel as we remember them each year on Yom Kippur.

*Shiviti Adonai, l'neg'di tamid,
ki mimini bal-emet. Lachein samach*

שִׁוִּיתִי יי, לְנֶגְדֵי תָמִיד,
כִּי מִיְמִינִי בַל־אֶמוֹט. לָכֵן שָׂמַח

I have placed the Eternal before me; God is at my side,
I will not be shaken.

☑ *Elul 27*



Cantor Emma Lutz

P'tach Lanu Sha'ar-Open the Gates for Us

The service of *Ne'ilah* is my favorite ritual moment of the year. The physical hunger of fasting has (mostly!) worn off and there is a shared spiritual energy in the room that is unnamable yet palpable. We keep our own “gates”—the doors of our holy ark—open throughout this entire final service, symbolizing our shared longing that the Gates of Heaven will remain open to our prayers into the final moments of the hour and, indeed, throughout the year to come. We hope that the prayers of these Days of Awe have opened the gates of our own hearts, leaving us inspired for a sweet and significant year to come.

*P'tach lanu sha'ar,
b'eit ne'ilat sha'ar,
ki fanah yom.*

פְּתַח לָנוּ שַׁעַר,
בְּעֵת נְעִילַת שַׁעַר,
כִּי פָנָה יוֹם.

Open the gates for us, even now, even now, when the gates are closing, and the day begins to fade. The day is fading, the sun is setting; let us enter your gates.



☑ *Elul 28*

Where have you been “closed” (uncertain, disconnected, uneasy) in your life this past year and how might you work to open yourself to the experiences offered in the year ahead?

☑ *Elul 29*



Eil Nora Alila

The rhyming structure, the exquisite Hebrew, and the beautiful melodies to which this poem has been set combine to make it one of the Jewish People’s most beloved prayers for the Days of Awe. I love that it is sung just once a year. As *Ne’ilah* begins, we hear the melody and anticipate with hope God’s forgiveness.

Rabbi Yoshi Zweiback

*Eil nora alilah, ham'tzei lanu
m'chilah bish'at ha'ne'ilah.*

אל נורא עליִלה, המְצֵא לָנוּ
מְחִילָה בְּשַׁעַת הַנְּעִילָה.

God of mercy
God of might
God of mercy
God of might

May it be pleasing in Your sight
To grant us pardon on this night

STEPHEN
WISE TEMPLE

15500 Stephen S. Wise Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90077
WiseLA.org