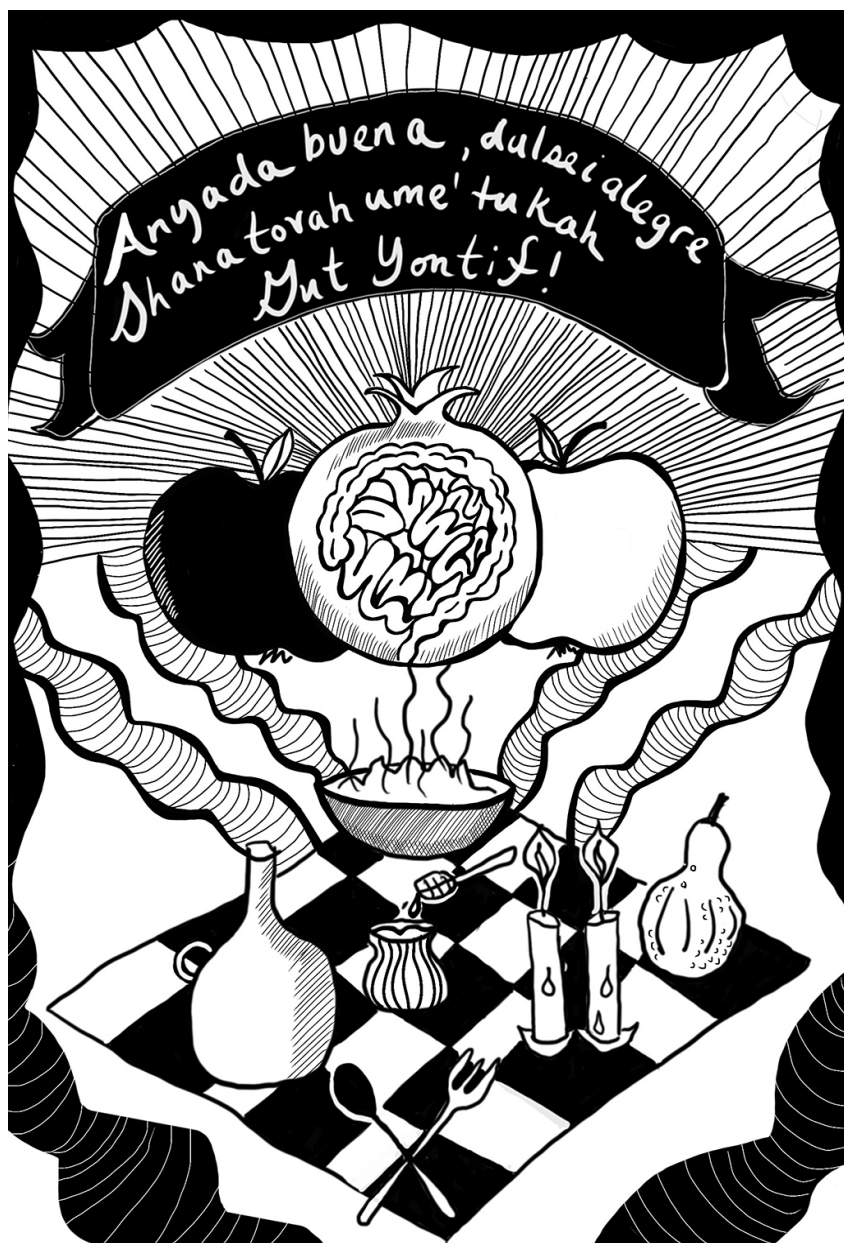


**A HIGH HOLIDAY MACHZOR FOR
JEWS ACROSS AND BEYOND BARS**





**We would love to include your
voices, ideas, dreams, artwork
and your brilliant Torah in
upcoming newsletters.**

UPCOMING DATES & DEADLINES

please send contributions by the following dates

SUKKOT: SEPT 19, 2022
CHANUKAH: DEC 28, 2022
TU BI SHVAT: JANUARY 15

You can also send us writing that is
not directly related to the Holidays!



Submissions can be sent to
Matir Asurim: Jewish Prisoner Care Network
PO Box 18858
Philadelphia, PA 19143

WHO WE ARE

Shalom aleichem, friends—may peace and wholeness find you!

We are writing to you on behalf of Matir Asurim: Jewish Prisoner Care Network. Matir Asurim literally translates as “The One Who Frees Captives.” This phrase from Jewish liturgy refers to God’s power to act for freedom and humanity’s ability to manifest godliness through working for freedom. We are a group of advocates, Jewish clergy, loved ones of incarcerated people, and people with direct experience of incarceration.

We have been meeting regularly since Tevet 5781/January 2021, guided by the questions: What are incarcerated Jews experiencing? What support do incarcerated Jews need that is not being met? We know that many Jewish communities have not done enough to support people inside and people impacted by the prison system.

Since we began meeting, we have started a penpal program and have been creating these holiday mailings, and have been working on building and deepening our relationships with you. We are really glad to be building community with you, across and beyond prison walls.

We would really love to get your input about how these mailings can be the most supportive to you, and we would also love to include your brilliance and wisdom in future holiday mailings! There is a feedback form, so you can let us know what you want to be receiving in these mailings, and a penpal interest form, if you would like to sign up to be a penpal. If you have any writing (short essays, reflections, poetry, drawings, etc) related to any of the Jewish holidays or Jewishness in general, please feel welcome and invited to send us your submissions so that they can be included in future mailings.

All of the filled out forms can be sent to us at:
Matir Asurim: Jewish Prisoner Care Network
PO Box 18858
Philadelphia, PA 19143

HIGH HOLIDAYS

10th of Elul, 5782 ~ September 6, 2022

“Once the Baal Shem Tov (a Jewish mystic from Poland who lived in the 1700’s, known as the founder of Hasidic Judaism) commanded Rabbi Zev Kitizes to learn the secret meanings behind the blasts of the ram’s-horn, because Rabbi Zev was to be his caller on Rosh Hashanah. So Rabbi Zev learned the secret meanings and wrote them down on a slip of paper to look at during the service, and laid the slip of paper in his bosom. When the time came for the blowing of the ram’s horn, he began to search everywhere for the slip of paper, but it was gone; and he did not know on what meanings to concentrate. He was greatly saddened. Broken-hearted, he wept bitter tears, and called the blasts of the ram’s-horn without concentrating on the secret meanings behind them.

Afterward, the Baal Shem Tov said to him: “Lo, in the habitation of the king are to be found many rooms and apartments, and there are different keys for every lock, but the master key of all is the axe, with which it is possible to open all the locks on all the gates. So it is with the ram’s horn: the secret meanings are the keys; every gate has another meaning, but the master key is the broken heart. When a man truthfully breaks his heart before God, he can enter into all the gates of the apartments of the King above all Kings, the Holy One, blessed be He.”

– Or Yesharim

Shana tova! Happy New Year!

As we enter into the High Holidays and embark on a new year, we are reflecting on this parable. In this mailing, you will find many of the traditional prayers that are sung on both Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur along with musings on the meanings of the prayers. We hope that the ancient words, contemporary creative interpretations, and artwork brings

the intentions of each prayer close to your hearts. While we grieve that we cannot pray together, our hope is that these prayers are one small way of moving beyond the limitations of prisons. May our words and our prayers be chanted together on these sacred days, and may they join us in the powerful work of teshuva, returning.

You may notice that this machzor is far from complete, and there are many traditional prayers missing. This machzor is just a starting point, a place for us to begin together, and a way for us to pray together. Our hope is that each year, we can add to it, and slowly, together we can expand and enrich our sacred Jewish tradition.

We know that nobody is free until we are all free. As we bring in 5783, we are reaching towards each one of you, our beloved Jewish community across and beyond bars, with love, with care, with a commitment to justice and healing.

Whether or not the prayers are familiar to you, whether or not you feel prepared for the holidays or for the new year itself, we hope that this offering meets all of us with softness for our broken hearts. We hope that whatever meaning you find in these pages or make of their words, that we remember together that we all have the master key, that we can let our hearts ring out to God as loud as any shofar, and that our broken hearts are held by one another!

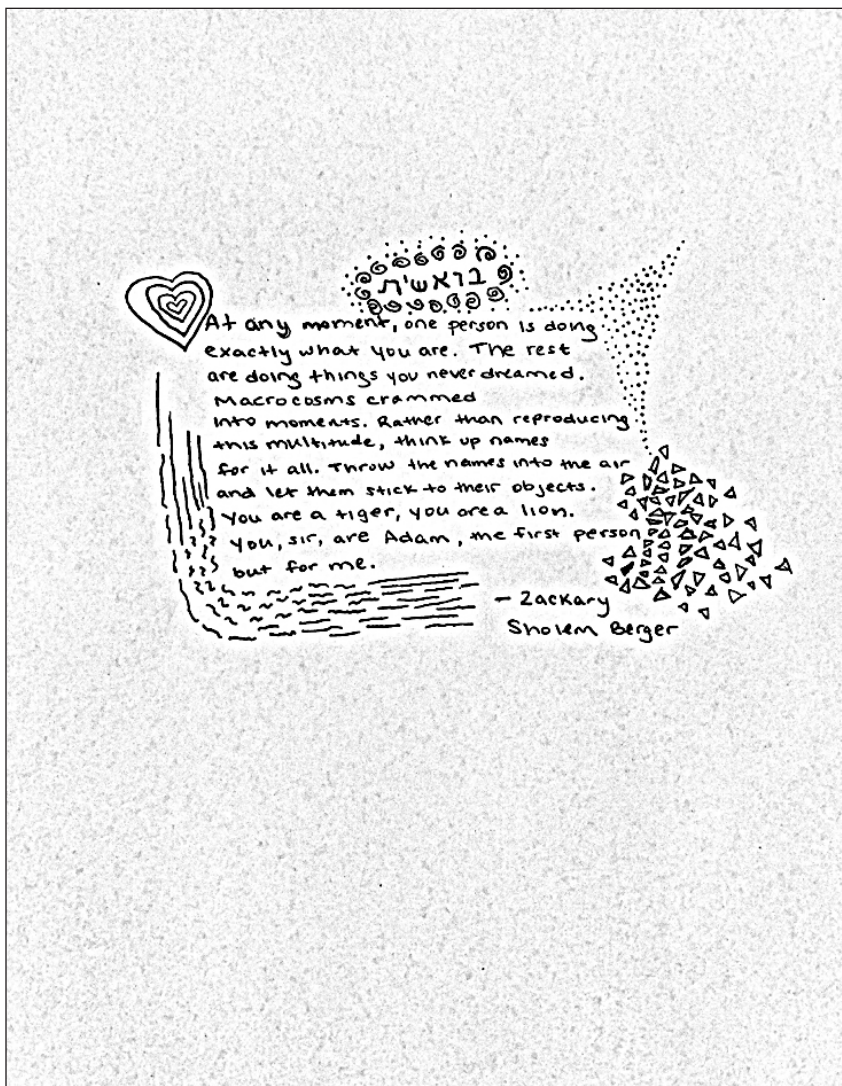
With blessings for tzedek, rachamim, v’shalom,
justice, compassion and peace,

Val, Sarit, Cece, Laynie, Chava, Meli, Callie
and all of us at Matir Asurim: Jewish Care Network for Incarcerated People

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cover artwork:
drawing by Nomy Lamm and Rebekah Erev,
Dreaming the World To Come, Tishrei Art



* drawing made at The Lace Midrash's Talmud study and art-making session *

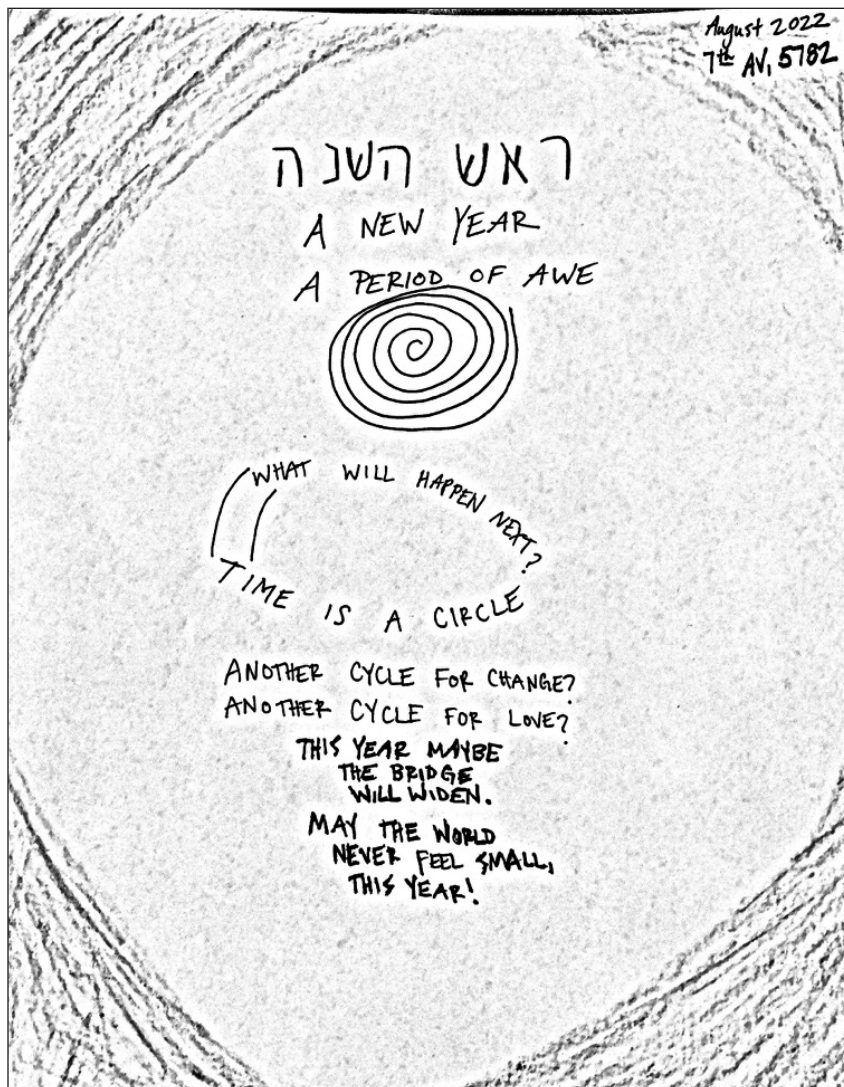
**“PRAYER IS MEANINGLESS
UNLESS IT IS SUBVERSIVE,
UNLESS IT SEEKS TO OVERTHROW AND TO RUIN
THE PYRAMIDS OF CALLOUSNESS, HATRED,
OPPORTUNISM, FALSEHOOD.**

—

**THE LITURGICAL MOVEMENT MUST BECOME
A REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT,
SEEKING TO OVERTHROW THE FORCES
THAT CONTINUE TO DESTROY THE PROMISE,
THE HOPE, AND THE VISION.”**

— Abraham Joshua Heschel

This mailing was compiled by Val Schlosberg and Sarit Cantor. Many of the prayers, translations and poems were sourced from the **Nishmat Shoom 5780 machzor**. Nishmat Shoom was a radical, queer, collaborative, non-zionist, magical, diasporist, inclusive Jewish minyan from Western Massachussets, that recently disbanded. **We are grateful to Nishmat Shoom, and to all those on the fringes, the margins, the freaks, artists, queers and misfits who courageously and steadfastly find powerful meaning and magic in our tradition despite a predominantly patriarchal Jewish world; who broaden and enrich our tradition through their struggle, their brilliance, their generosity; who remind us how beautiful it is to fall in love with Hashem over and over.**



* drawing made at The Lace Midrash's Talmud study and art-making session *

TALMUD STUDY AND ART-MAKING FOR ROSH HASHANA

The Lace Midrash

A dozen or so people gathered in a library in Chicago, IL to think about Rosh Hashanah and what we could send you to make the holiday meaningful. We read this selection from the Mishna (Rosh Hashana 1:2) and had an interesting discussion about how God sees us; our hearts, our deeds, and how God relates to us; as troops, sheep, special individuals, or as all basically the same. Then we had some quiet time to express our thoughts and feelings through making art. It was a special opportunity to gather as a group of friends, some of us who hadn't met each other before, in a library space none of us had been in before, and feel that we were also gathering with you, the readers of this offering.

This is the text that we read together:

בְּאַרְבַּעַת פְּרָקִים הָעוֹלָם נִדּוֹן בַּפֶּסַח עַל הַתְּבוּאָה, בַּעֲצֶרֶת עַל פְּרוֹת הָאֵילָן,
בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה כָּל בְּאֵי הָעוֹלָם עוֹבְרִין לִפְנֵי מֶלֶךְ מְרוֹן שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר הַיּוֹצֵר יֶחֱד לָבָם
הַמִּבְרִין אֶל כָּל מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם. וּבְחַג נְדוּגִין עַל הַמֵּיִם

At four times of the year the world is judged: On Passover judgment is passed concerning grain; on *Shavuot* concerning fruits that grow on a tree; on *Rosh HaShana*, all creatures pass before Him like sheep [benei maron], as it is stated: "He Who fashions their hearts alike, Who considers all their deeds" (Psalms 33:15); and on the festival of *Sukkot* they are judged concerning water, i.e., the rainfall of the coming year.



* the art made in this study group will be featured throughout the newsletter *

CANDLE LIGHTING

Sarit Cantor

In Jewish practice, when the sun goes down, the new day begins. Traditionally, we honor the holiness of Rosh Hashanah and the holiness of time by lighting candles and offering a prayer.

Since most Jews inside prisons do not get to light candles, this is an invitation to invoke the sacredness of Rosh Hashanah in a new way.

Open your hands, with your palms facing up
Imagine a smooth rock in each hand
Imagine yourself standing by a body of water that you have known and loved
Let the stones fall from your palms, down into the water
Listen to the sounds of the rocks meeting the water, listen to the sounds of the water moving over the rocks
Turn your palms towards you, and move your hands in a circular motion three times

We honor the ways we are held by the elements, knowing they are far more powerful than any prison wall. We honor the ways that time moves through us and around us and with us. We are those rocks, and we are that water. We are bringing in the holiness of today, as the wheel of time turns. We are the sacred change.



“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

A Prayer for Time:

Life is Born and life moves on
And the earth has held and will hold it all.
The sun rises and the sun sets
And returns again to rise and fall.
The wind turns south and the wind turns north
Turning, turning, returning still.
The rivers run from the clouds to the sea
And become the rainn, and the sea is never filled.
So the beginning flows to the end
And the end flows on to begin again.
The One at the end is the One who begins
And the breath of breaths is within all things.

– Rabbi Jill Hammer



בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהָיִינוּ וְקִיָּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam, shehecheyanu
v'kiyemanu v'higiyanu laz'man hazeh.

Blessed are You, Source of all Being, who has given us life, established us and allowed us to reach this holy moment.

i am running into a new year

Lucille Clifton

i am running into a new year
and the old years blow back
like a wind
that i catch in my hair
like strong fingers like
all my old promises and
it will be hard to let go
of what i said to myself
about myself
when i was sixteen and
twenty-six and thirty-six
even thirty-six but
i am running into a new year
and i beg what i love and
i leave to forgive me

AHAVAT OLAM | אַהַבַּת עוֹלָם

אַהַבַּת עוֹלָם בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל עִמָּךְ אַהַבַּת תּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת חֻקִּים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים אוֹתָנוּ
לְמַדְתָּ. עַל כֵּן יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּשִׁכְבְּנוּ וּבְקוּמָנוּ נִשְׁיַח בְּחֻקֶּיךָ
וְנִשְׁמַח בְּדַבְּרֵי תַלְמוּד תּוֹרָתְךָ וּבְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. כִּי הֵם חַיֵּינוּ וְאַרְךְ יָמֵינוּ
וּבָהֶם נִהְיָה יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה. וְאַהַבְתָּךְ אֶל תְּסִיר מִמֶּנּוּ
לְעוֹלָמִים. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְקוֹק. אוֹהֵב עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל: אָמֵן

Ahavat Olam beit Yisrael am'cha ahavta. Torah umitsvot, chukim
umishpatim, otanu limad'ta. Al kein Adonai Eloheinu b'shawchveinu
uv'kumeinu nasiach b'chukecha v'nismach b'divrei [talmud] toratecha
u'v'mitzvotecha l'olam va'ed. Ki heim chayeinu, v'orech yameinu
u'v'ahem neh'geh yomam valaila. V'ahavat'cha al tasir mimenu l'olamim.
Baruch atah Adonai, oheiv amo Yisrael. Amein.

With worlds of love
have you loved your people
your people who wrestle with You
You have taught us
wisdom and right action,
principles and truths
when we lie down
and when we rise up
we meditate on our paths
we play forever
with the words of Your Torah and mitzvot
they reside in our lives
and our days
we dwell on them as days and nights go by
let the knowledge of Your love
dwell with us.
blessed are you, Shekhinah
who loves your wrestling people.

– Siddur HaKohanot

ADON HASELICHOT

Adon Haselichot
bochen levavot
Goleh amukot
dover tzedakot
Chatnanu lefanecha
rachem aleynu (x2)
Hadoor beneeffla'ot
vateek benechamot
Zocher breet avot
choker kelayot
Chatnanu lefanecha
rachem aleynu (x2)
Tov umeteev labreeyot
yodeya kol neestartot
Kovesh avonot
lovesh tzedakot
Male zakeeyoot
nora teheelot
Sole'ach avonot
oneh b'et tzarot
Chatnanu lefanecha
rachem aleynu (x2)
Po'el yeshu'ot
tzofeh oteedot
Kore hadorot
rochev aravot
Shome'a tefilot
temeem de'ot
Chatnanu lefanecha
rachem aleynu (x2)

אדון הסליחות
בוֹחֵן לִבָּבוֹת
גּוֹלֵה עֲמוּקוֹת
דּוֹבֵר צְדָקוֹת.
חֲטָאֵנוּ לִפְנֶיךָ
רַחֵם עָלֵינוּ
הַדּוֹר בִּנְפִלְאוֹת
וְתִיק בִּנְחָמוֹת
זֹכֵר בְּרִית אֲבוֹת
חֹקֵר כְּלִיּוֹת
חֲטָאֵנוּ לִפְנֶיךָ
רַחֵם עָלֵינוּ
טוֹב וּמֵיטִיב לַבְּרִיּוֹת
יֹדֵעַ כָּל נִסְתָּרוֹת
כּוֹבֵשׁ עֲוֹנוֹת
לּוֹבֵשׁ צְדָקוֹת
מֵלֵא זְכוִּיּוֹת
נּוֹרָא תְהִילּוֹת
סוֹלֵחַ עֲוֹנוֹת
עוֹנֶה בַּעַת צָרוֹת
חֲטָאֵנוּ לִפְנֶיךָ
רַחֵם עָלֵינוּ
פּוֹעֵל יְשׁוּעוֹת
צוֹפֵה עֲתִידוֹת
קוֹרֵא הַדּוֹרוֹת
רוֹכֵב עֲרֵבוֹת
שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלּוֹת
תְּמִיִּם דְּעוֹת
חֲטָאֵנוּ לִפְנֶיךָ
רַחֵם עָלֵינוּ

Source of forgiveness who knows our hearts
Revealer of depths, Speaker of justice.
“We have sinned before you; have mercy upon us.”
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 sinned before you; have mercy upon us.”
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 sinned before you; have mercy upon us.”
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 sinned before you; have mercy upon us.”
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 sinned before you; have mercy upon us.”
We have missed the mark, let us draw from the well of your compassion.

– Traditional prayer
with translation from Nishmat Shoom Machzor, 5780



* drawing made at The Lace Midrash's Talmud study and art-making session *

UNTITLED

ck

Let us sing together
Through walls
Into phones
With prayer sent daily
With reflection not just
On the highest of holy
Reflection
Illuminated now by
Season changing
Eternal light
Light
Eternal
We are ours
And we are yours
As yours
Shechinah
We are bound
To belong
To each other

SHOFAR: A COLLECTIVE CALL

To everyone everywhere
No one, no one is excluded, from my heart.
To everyone everywhere
No one, no one is excluded, from my heart.
I wish you well, my beloved.
I wish you well, dear sweet soul.
I wish you well, my beloved. May you live with ease.

– Pablo Das



Suddenly you are awakened by a strange noise, a noise that fills the full field of your consciousness and then splits into several jagged strands, shattering that field, shaking you awake. The ram's horn, the shofar, the same instrument that will sound one hundred times on Rosh Hashanah, the same sound that filled the world when the Torah was spoken into being on Mount Sinai, is being blown to call you to wakefulness. You awake to confusion. Where are you? Who are you?

The horn blows to usher in Elul, and it is blown every morning of the ninth of Elul as well, lest we forget and slip back, lest we surrender to the entropic pull of mindlessness. The Torah also stands ready to help keep us awake. As we move through the month of Elul, we also move through the Book of Deuteronomy, and each of the weekly Torah readings – Re'eh, Shoftim, Netzavim, Ki Tetze – whispers to us, “Wake up! Wake up!” Each of these readings offers a subtle rhyme to the process of awakening to which the month of Elul has called us.

– Passage from *This is Real and You are Completely Unprepared*, by Rabbi Alan Lew

On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we blow the shofar. The piercing call of the ram's horn is meant to shatter us, startle us, spiritually awaken us to the work of repentance, accountability and the collective need for transformation. The shofar's call breaks open our hearts and it is from this place that we can heal.

In a prison, there is much that shatters and reminds us of the immensity of healing that is needed. But for most, there is no shofar. May the collective sound of our shofars across Turtle Island reverberate, move through the air to find each one of you. May the shofar blasts mingle with my prayers to meet your prayers. May the air that you breathe feel thick with care and may you feel the yearning in the shofar vibrations that call us towards a world where healing, transformation and abounding love for all is possible. May our shattered hearts meet your shattered hearts in the wind and in the breeze that knows no limits, no walls, no borders, no bars. May we feel the many ways that we are connected despite impossible circumstances. May the shofar remind us that we are not alone in this work.



And G!d says: Hear the sounds of the shofar! And if you cannot hear the shofar, if you cannot step foot in the synagogue for whatever reason, then hear what is meant to wake you.

Hear: I Can't Breathe, Hear: Black Lives Matter, Hear the cries of the refugees, Hear the names of the restless dead. Wake. Stay woke. It is all a shofar.

– Dane Kuttler

UNETANEH TOKEF | וְנִתְּנָה תִּקְוָה

Many of us struggle with the notion of a God Who decides “who [shall die] by fire and who [shall die] by water” in the year to come.

But perhaps this prayer is more about us than about God. We decide what kind of year we will author. The book of life opens itself, and we write deeds of the coming year in our own handwriting: will we be cruel, or will we be kind?

Teshuvah (repentance / turning-toward-God), tefilah (prayer), and tzedakah (righteous giving) have the power to temper even the harshest decree. We always have the power to choose these as our guiding lights.

– Rabbi Rachel Barenblat



Unetaneh Tokef

We lend power to the holiness of this day. For it is tremendous and awe filled, and on it your kingship will be exalted, your throne will be established in loving-kindness, and you will sit on that throne in truth.

It is true that you are the one who judges, and reproves, who knows all, and bears witness, who inscribes, and seals, who reckons and enumerates. You remember all that is forgotten. You open the book of records, and from it, all shall be read. In it lies each person's insignia.

And with a great shofar it is sounded, and a thin silent voice shall be heard. And the angels shall be alarmed, and dread and fear shall seize them as they proclaim: behold! the Day of Judgment on which the hosts of heaven shall be judged, for they too shall not be judged blameless by you, and all creatures shall parade before you as a herd

of sheep. As a shepherd herds his flock, directing his sheep to pass under his staff, so do you shall pass, count, and record the souls of all living, and decree a limit to each persons days, and inscribe their final judgment.

בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה יִכְתָּבוּן, וּבְיוֹם צוֹם כְּפוּר יִחְתָּמוּן

On Rosh Hashanah it is inscribed, and on Yom Kippur it is sealed.

How many shall pass away and how many shall be born, who shall live and who shall die, who in good time, and who by an untimely death, who by water and who by fire, who by sword and who by wild beast, who by famine and who by thirst, who by earthquake and who by plague, who by strangulation and who by lapidation, who shall have rest and who wander, who shall be at peace and who pursued, who serene and who tormented, who shall become impoverished and who wealthy, who shall be debased and who exalted.

וְתִשׁוּבָה וְתַפְלָה וְצִדְקָה מַעֲבִירִין אֶת רֵעַ הַגְּזֵרָה

But repentance, prayer and righteousness avert the severity of the decree.

For your praise is just as your name. You are slow to anger and quick to be appeased. For you do not desire the death of the condemned, rather, that they turn from their path and live and you wait for them until the day of their death, and if they repent, you receive them immediately. (It is true -) [For] you are their Creator and You understand their inclination, for they are but flesh and blood.

We come from dust, and return to dust. We labour by our lives for bread, we are like broken shards, like dry grass, and like a withered flower; like a passing shadow and a vanishing cloud, like a breeze that passes, like dust that scatters, like a fleeting dream. But You are the king who lives eternal.



NOTES ON SUFFERING & HOPE

Chava Shapiro

אדם יסודו מעפר וסופו לעפר. בנפשו יביא לחמו. משול כחרס הנשבר
כחציר יבש, וכציץ נובל, כצל עובר, וכענן כלה, וכרוח נושבת, וכאבק
פורח, וכחלום יעוף. ואתה הוא מלך אל חי וקיים.

We come from dust, and return to dust. We labour by our lives for bread, we are like broken shards, like dry grass, and like a withered flower; like a passing shadow and a vanishing cloud, like a breeze that passes, like dust that scatters, like a fleeting dream. But You are the king who lives eternal.

- Unataneh Tokef from the High Holy Days liturgy

A year ago I was studying Menachot 29b with SVARA, a queer yeshiva, and found out that my estranged father was beginning his death journey. Because of this unexpected transition and the emotional upheaval it brought into my world, I had to withdraw from the class mid session.

I was estranged from my father because of abusive patterns long established in his life. I chose to sever our relationship. This allowed me the freedom and space to establish the life I wanted to carve out for myself and the people I held closest.

In Menachot 29b, we're presented with a time traveling Moses conversing with Hashem about the greatness of Rabbi Akiva's teachings. When Moses asks G-d what the reward is for such Torah as R' Akiva's, he time travels once again to see the horrific and violent end that R' Akiva suffered. The text then reads:

Artwork by Chava Shapiro, founder of Jewish Zine Archive.

Write the zine archive for a one-time zine mailing:

JZA PO Box 381 Tucson, AZ. 85702

אמר לפניו רבש"ע זו תורה וזו שכרה א"ל שתוק כך עלה במחשבה לפני

Moses said before Him: Master of the Universe, this is Torah and this is its reward? G-d said to him: Be silent; this intention arose before Me.

I have often struggled with the idea that our goodness in life would present us a great reward. Because, like so many throughout time, I have noticed that it simply doesn't play out that way. We see people live life with little regard for others, even causing immense suffering for others, and yet life continues on seemingly without consequence. Sometimes I have been the one to cause pain and suffering for others, adding to the injustice that grieves me. It hurts our hearts to see this and it rightly feels like a vast and cosmic injustice.

What the Sages offered us is that the reward is incomprehensible. The outcomes of our individual acts are simply unknowable.

When my father died in the month of Av in 5781, I was still grappling with Menachot 29b. I was still grappling with the idea that even someone with beautiful, rich, impactful Torah and countless students could end their life torn limb from limb and someone else who had caused immense harm and pain could end their life at peace.

My father had made it clear he was not interested in repairing our relationship, nor his relationships with my siblings. He left my life without resolution, instead digging into his rejection of my experiences as a child hurt by him.

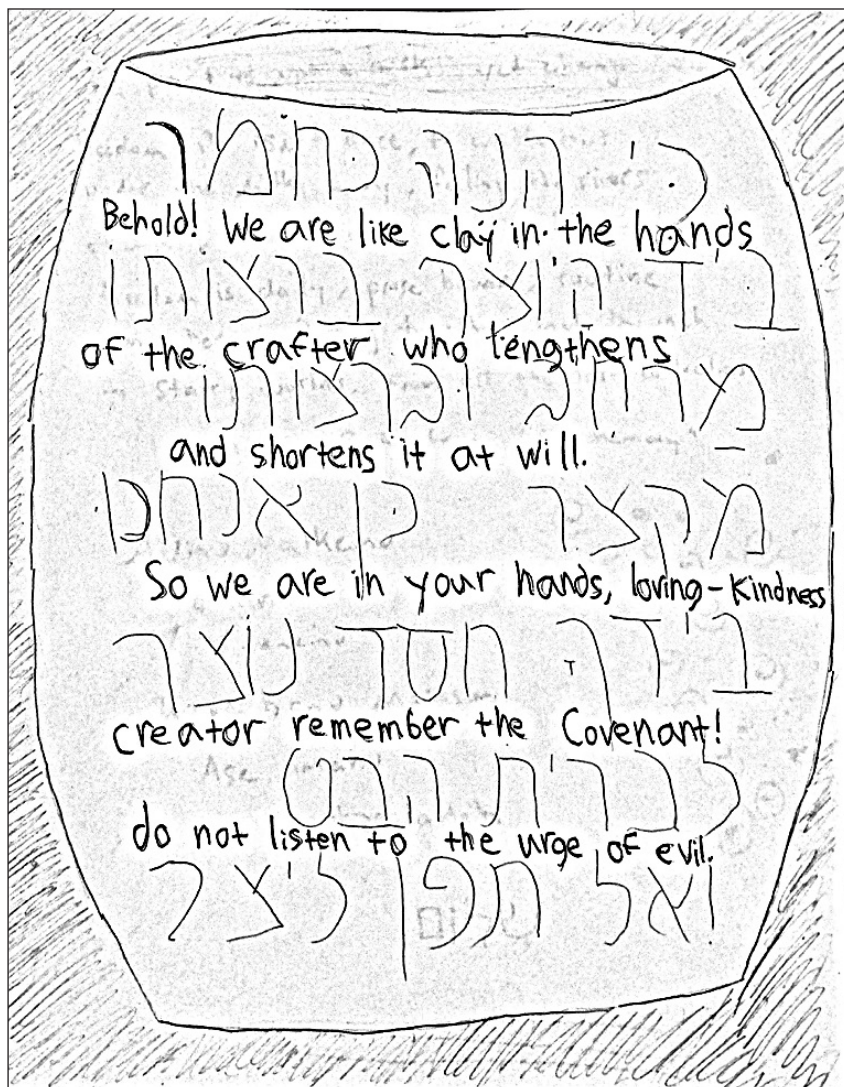
A little more than a month later on Rosh Hashana, I prayed U'Nataneh Tokef and the lines on the front of this poster (page 22) that appear towards the end of the piyyut (liturgical prayer) struck my grieving heart deeply. Our lives are fleeting dreams, specks of dust, passing shadows, and vanishing clouds. Our suffering is so significant to us and simultaneously so insignificant in

the cosmic sense. Our wickedness, our righteousness, our indifference, and even our most resolutely good moments are all a breeze that passes.

Just before the lines about the fleeting nature of a human life, we are reminded that three things can be done to reverse the harshest judgement. We sing the words tefillah (intercession), tzedakah (doing justice), and teshuva (return) because those are the only things we have within our own power. Making sense of the suffering, the insignificance, the pain, or even the reward are not within our power.

Amidst the pain of the death of a parent I had spent most of my life grieving the loss of relationship with, I found a small seed of hope.

Our suffering isn't meaningless, but it is fleeting.



* drawing made at The Lace Midrash's Talmud study and art-making session *

ALEINU

We sing *Aleinu* near the end of the service. The name of the prayer, *Aleinu*, means, it is upon us. When saying these words, consider what that might mean to you. What does it mean for the work of healing, praising, honoring, returning, releasing, changing, repenting, holding, breaking, crying, learning, repairing—this holy, unending work—to be upon us? In this prayer, we bow all the way down to the ground towards G!d, goddess, shechinah, our creator. We bow in reverence and in knowing that it is upon us to keep trying. To keep remembering that we are not alone. To keep praying together. From the depths of our struggle, our sorrow, our hardship and our brokenness, it is upon us to keep reaching towards one another.

עֲלֵינוּ לְשַׁבַּח לְאָדוֹן הַכֹּל. לְתַת גְּדֻלָּה לְיוֹצֵר בְּרֵאשִׁית. שְׁלֹא עָשֵׂנוּ כְּגוֹיֵי
הָאֲרָצוֹת. וְלֹא שָׁמְנוּ כְּמִשְׁפָּחוֹת הָאֲדָמָה. שְׁלֹא שָׁם חָלְקֵנוּ כָּהֵם וְגוֹרְלָנוּ כָּכָל
הַמוֹנָם: וְאִנְחָנוּ כּוֹרְעִים וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִים וּמוֹדִים לִפְנֵי מֶלֶךְ מַלְכֵי הַמַּלְכִּים הַקְּדוֹשׁ
בָּרוּךְ הוּא

Aleinu l'shabeiach la'adon hakol lateit g'dula l'yotseir b'reishit. Shelo
asa-nu k'go-yei ha-a-ra-tzot v'lo sa-ma-nu k'mishp'chot ha'adama.
Shelo sam helkeinu kahem v'goraleinu k'chol hamonam: Vaanachnu
kor'im umishtachavim umodim, lifnei melech, malchei ham'lachim
hakadosh baruch hu.

ALEINU

It is upon us to praise the Source of all,
to offer up abundance to creation's driving force,
who made us a part of the divine among all the peoples on the earth,
and made us holy beings among all the beings on the globe,
who gave u a divine purpose along with all peoples,
and intertwined our fate with all the multitudes.
We bend
and bow

in gratitude
before the Ground of All,
who guides all guides and teaches all teachers,
the Holy One of Blessing.

– Romemu Siddur

ALEINU

It is ours to praise
the beauty of the world
Even as we discern the torn world.
For nothing is whole
that is not first rent
And out of the torn
we make whole again.
May we live with promise
In creation's lap
redemption budding
In our hands.

– Marcia Falk

TASHLICH

Laynie Soloman

Tashlich (תְּשַׁלֵּיךְ) means “casting off” or “sending away,” and is a customary brief ceremony during which Jews symbolically cast away moments from the previous year in which we acted with misalignment or transgression. During this ceremony, we “cast away” these actions and moments from the previous year by tossing small stones or bread into flowing water. Watching the bread as it is carried away by the stream of moving water helps us remember that our actions and relationships—to each other, to G!d, and to ourselves—are constantly moving and flowing. This ceremony is full of symbolism, and creates an opportunity to physically embody a sense of teshuva—of restoration and relational repair.

This *minhag* (“custom”) custom dates back to the 13th century, and is now a popular and widespread practice. Because this custom was a later grassroots practice that emerged from the people rather than rabbinic leadership, there is no fixed way to do tashlich, and creativity is encouraged. The most important aspect of this practice is the *kavana* (“intention”) of letting go.

WHAT TO DO

Typically, this ceremony includes tossing bread or crumbs or pebbles into flowing water, and reciting several verses from the Tanakh, the Hebrew Bible. *Tashlich* is performed during the high holiday season anytime after the afternoon of the first day of Rosh Hashanah before the last day of Sukkot.

- Find a source of running, flowing water. For those that cannot access a river or a stream, any source of running water can be used for this practice, including a sink or a shower.
- You can use any material that you’d like as a substitute for bread crumbs or small pebbles including small seeds, or pieces of paper or tissue. If you do not have access to any materials that can be “tossed” into the water source you are using, you can set your intention to watch the flow of the water and concentrate on its movement.

- As you toss things into the water or concentrate on the water's flow, visualize what you are letting go of, casting off, or tossing away from this year.
- If you want, you can close by reading the following text from the book of Micah in Hebrew or English.

MICAH 7:18-20

G!d, who is like you? You are forgiveness; you forgive all transgressions and release your people from guilt. You release your anger, you delight in love, kindness, and abundance. You take us back in love, you wipe clean the harm we have done, and you cast away all of our transgressions into the depths of the sea. You keep faith with Jacob, loyalty to Abraham as you swore to our ancestors throughout time.

מִי־אֵל כְּמוֹךָ נִשְׂא עוֹן וְעֵבֶר עַל־פֶּשַׁע לְשִׁאֲרִית
נִחַלְתּוֹ לֹא־הִחְזִיק לְעַד אָפוּ כִי־חַפֵּץ חֶסֶד הוּא:
יָשׁוּב יִרְחָמֵנוּ יִכְבֹּשׁ עֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ וְתַשְׁלִיךְ בַּמַּצְלוֹת יָם כָּל־חַטָּאוֹתָם:
תִּתֵּן אֱמֶת לְיַעֲקֹב חֶסֶד לְאַבְרָהָם אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לְאַבְתָּינוּ מִימֵי קֶדֶם

mi el kamocha nosei avon ve'over al-pesha lisheirit
nachalato lo he'chezik la'ad apo ki-chafetz chesed hu
yashuv ye'rachameinu yichbosh avonoteinu ve'tashlich bimtzulot yam
kol chatotam
titen emet le'yaakov chesed le'avraham asher nishba'at la'avoreinu
mimei kedem

ISAIAH 58

On Yom Kippur, we chant Isaiah chapter 58 as the haftarah. It is reproduced below:

Cry with full throat, without restraint;
Raise your voice like a ram's horn!
Declare to My people their transgression,
To the House of Jacob their sin.

To be sure, they seek Me daily,
Eager to learn My ways.
Like a nation that does what is right,
That has not abandoned the laws of its God,
They ask Me for the right way,
They are eager for the nearness of God:

“Why, when we fasted, did You not see?
When we starved our bodies, did You pay no heed?”
Because on your fast day
You see to your business
And oppress all your laborers!

Because you fast in strife and contention,
And you strike with a wicked fist!
Your fasting today is not such
As to make your voice heard on high.

Is such the fast I desire,
A day for men to starve their bodies?
Is it bowing the head like a bulrush
And lying in sackcloth and ashes?
Do you call that a fast,
A day when the LORD is favorable?

No, this is the fast I desire:
To unlock fetters of wickedness,
And untie the cords of the yoke
To let the oppressed go free;
To break off every yoke.

It is to share your bread with the hungry,
And to take the wretched poor into your home;
When you see the naked, to clothe him,
And not to ignore your own kin.

Then shall your light burst through like the dawn
And your healing spring up quickly;
Your Vindicator shall march before you,
The Presence of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

Then, when you call, the LORD will answer;
When you cry, He will say: Here I am.
If you banish the yoke from your midst,
The menacing hand, and evil speech,

And you offer your compassion to the hungry
And satisfy the famished creature—
Then shall your light shine in darkness,
And your gloom shall be like noonday.

The LORD will guide you always;
He will slake your thirst in parched places
And give strength to your bones.
You shall be like a watered garden,
Like a spring whose waters do not fail.

Men from your midst shall rebuild ancient ruins,
You shall restore foundations laid long ago.
And you shall be called

“Repairer of fallen walls,
Restorer of lanes for habitation.”

If you refrain from trampling the sabbath,
From pursuing your affairs on My holy day;
If you call the sabbath “delight,”
The LORD’s holy day “honored”;
And if you honor it and go not your ways
Nor look to your affairs, nor strike bargains—
Then you can seek the favor of the LORD.
I will set you astride the heights of the earth,
And let you enjoy the heritage of your father Jacob—
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

– Translation from Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures,
published by Jewish Publication Society;
shared from Sefaria.org under the CC BY-NC 4.0 license.

ASHAMNU

*Ashamnu, bagadnu, gazalnu, dibarnu dofi.
He'e'vinu, v'hirshanu, zad'nu, chamas'nu, tafalnu sheker.
Ya'atz'nu ra, kizav'ny, latz'ny, marad'nu, ni'atz'nu,
Sara'nu, avinu, pasha'nu, tzarar'nu, kishinu oref.
Rashanu, shichat'nu, ti'av'nu, ta'i'ny, tita'nu.*

We have transgressed. We have betrayed our values.
We have taken what is not rightfully ours.
We have spoken false or hurtful words.
We have failed to respect others.
We have failed to listen to our best instincts.
We have harmed others and contributed to societal harm.
We have transgressed through selfishness, unkindness, and
unmindfulness.

*Ahavnu, batachnu, natanu, divarnu yofi.
Taharnu, tzadaknu, chayinu b'anava, cheyn v'chesed.
Hidrachnu, hallahnu, dibarnu emet, kidashnu.
Kibadnu, he'eminu, kibalnu patachnu, yatzarnu tiferet.
Galgalnu, hitachnu, heramnu, noladnu, adavnu.
Malachnu, anu habrachnu, chazarnu, zacharnu ahava.*

We love, we build trust, we gift, we credit and praise.
We align and purify, we make right, we assume nothing,
we live kindness.
We counsel compassion, we speak truth, we value and affirm.
We accept, we create beauty, we cycle, we empower.
We surrender, we are virtuous, we are upright, we bestow blessing.
We are the blessing, we return to rightness, we embrace divinity,
we remember love.

– Hebrew of *Ahavnu* by Yael Schonzeit and Tal Mazal Etedgi
English by Taya Mâ Shere

NEILAH

adapted by Meli Sameh

At the end of Yom Kippur, we pray the *Ne'ilah* service. In synagogues around the world, the doors of the ark (in which we keep the torah scroll) remain open for this service in its entirety. These doors are open to symbolize the gates of heaven, which are open not only for the people able to attend services in community, but also for those of us who are not.

We pray through a service, repeating prayers that have become familiar over the past years or the past days or the past hours. The key comes in the middle of the amidah, with *Atah Notein Yad*, a penitential prayer speaking to Hashem himself in the second person, excerpted here:

“You reach out Your hand to transgressors,
and Your right hand is extended to receive those who truly repent.

[...]

You have taught us, Adonoy, our God, to confess before You all our iniquities
so that we may refrain from the injustice of our hands;
so that You will accept us in perfect repentance before You.

[...]

What are we? What is our life? What are our acts of kindness?
What is our righteousness? What is our deliverance? What is our strength?
What is our might? What can we say before You, Adonoy, our God and God
of our fathers?”

During Yom Kippur, the books of life and death in the coming year have been written but not sealed. This is a chance for last minute changes or additional fixes and forgiveness. Our connections to G-d are closer and dearer and unique in unintelligible ways during these final hours as we consider ourselves, our actions, our potential for forgiveness, our values, our fellowship with other Jews, even our devotion to G-d.

The service ends with a powerful finish. Out loud, we declare:

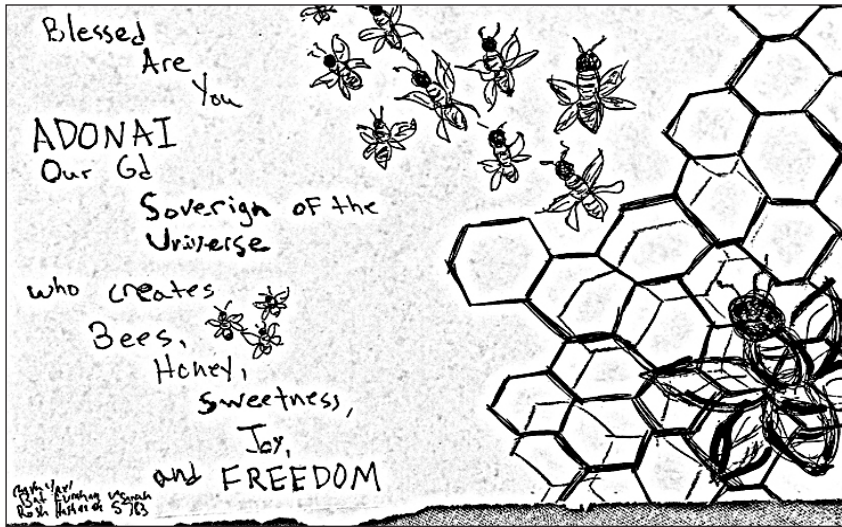
שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד
Shema yisrael, adonai eloheinu, adonai echad.
Hear Yisrael, Adonoy is our God, Adonoy is One.

בָּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד
Blessed [is His] Name, Whose glorious kingdom is forever and ever.
Baruch shem kevod malchuto le'olam vaed.

יְהוָה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים
Adonoy, He is God.
Adonai hu ha'elohim.

And with this, the day ends. The sun sets. The fast ends. The books are closed. The gates shut until the next year.

We are together, apart, as before, but we are changed; the rituals of imitating angels completed, we ready ourselves to approach living in the realm of humanity once again.



* drawing made at The Lace Midrash's Talmud study and art-making session *



Matir Asurim is looking for art or images to accompany our holiday mailings. Offerings might include: illustrated prayers, *Birkhat Ha'bayit* (house blessing), blessings of protection, interactive art, coloring pages, comic strips, shvitim (meditative images of the name of Hashem), illustrated depictions of Torah, and other treasures.

Please include a brief (2-3 sentences) description of your work.

Honorariums will be provided for selected artwork.



Submissions can be sent to
Matir Asurim: Jewish Prisoner Care Network
PO Box 18858
Philadelphia, PA 19143