

When we really begin a new year it is decided,  
And when we actually repent it is determined:

Who shall be truly alive and who shall merely exist;  
Who shall be happy and who shall be miserable;

Who shall attain fulfillment in their day and who shall not attain fulfillment in their day;

Who shall be tormented by the fire of ambition and who shall be overcome by the waters of failure;

Who shall be pierced by the sharp sword of envy and who shall be torn by the wild beast of resentment;

Who shall hunger for companionship and who shall thirst for approval;

Who shall be shattered by the earthquake of social change and who shall be plagued by the pressures of conformity;

Who shall be strangled by insecurity and who shall be stoned into submission;

Who shall be content and who shall wander in search of satisfaction;

Who shall be serene and who shall be distraught;

Who shall be at ease and who shall be afflicted with anxiety;

Who shall be poor in their own eyes and who shall be rich in tranquility;

Who shall be brought low with futility and who shall be exalted through achievement.  
But repentance, prayer, and good deeds have the power to change the character of our lives.

Let us resolve to repent, to pray, and to do good deeds so that we may begin a truly new year.

### Third B'rakhah: God's Holiness

May our sanctification ascend to You,  
for You are our God, a forgiving sovereign.

U-NETANEH TOKEF—THE SACRED POWER OF THE DAY  
The ark is opened.

Let us speak of the sacred power of this day—profound and awe-inspiring. On it, Your sovereignty is celebrated, and Your throne, from which You rule in truth, is established with love.

Truly, You are Judge and Prosecutor, Expert, and Witness, completing the indictment, bringing the case, and enumerating the counts. You recall all that is forgotten, and will open the book of remembrance, which speaks for itself, for our own hands have signed the page.

The “great shofar” will be sounded and “the still small voice” will be heard.

Angels will be alarmed, seized with fear and trembling, declaring, “this very day is the Day of Judgment”—for even the hosts of heaven are judged; no one is innocent in Your sight.

All that lives on earth will pass before You like a flock of sheep. As a shepherd examines the flock, making each sheep pass under the staff, so You will review and number and count, judging each living being, determining the fate of everything in creation, inscribing their destiny.

On Rosh Hashanah it is written, and on the Fast of the Day of Atonement it is sealed!—

*B'rosh ha-shanah yikkatevun, u-v'yom tzom kippur yehatemun.*

How many will pass on, and how many will be born;  
Who will live and who will die;  
Who will live a long life and who will come to an untimely end;  
Who will perish 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 will be strangled and who will be stoned;  
Who will be at peace and who will be troubled;  
Who will be serene and who will be disturbed;  
Who will be tranquil and who will be tormented;  
Who who be impoverished and who will be enriched;  
Who will be brought low, and who raised up.

ובכן ולך תעלה קדשה, פי אתה אלהינו  
מלך מוחל וסולח.

ונתנה תקף קדשת היום, פי הוא נורא ואיום. ובו  
תנשא מלכותך, ויכון בחסד כסאך, ותשב עליו באמת.  
אמת פי אתה הוא דין ומוכיח, ויודע ועד, וכותב  
וחותם, וסופר ומונה, ותזכור כל-הנשפחות. ותפתח  
את-ספר הזכרונות, ומאליו יקרא, וחותם יד כל-  
אדם בו.

ובשופר גדול יתקע, וקול דממה דקה ישמע. ומלאכים  
יחפזון, וחיל ורעדה יאחזון, ויאמרו הנה יום הדין,  
לפקוד על צבא מרום בדין, כי לא יזכו בעיניך בדין.  
וכל-באי עולם יעברון לפניך בפני מרון. כבקרת רועה  
עדרו, מעביר צאנו תחת שבטו, כן תעביר ותספור  
ותמנה, ותפקוד נפש כל-חי, ותחתוך קצבה לכל-בריה,  
ותכתוב את-גזר דינם.

בראש השנה יפתבון, וביום צום כפור יחתמו.

כמה יעברון וכמה יבראון.  
מי יחיה, ומי ימות.  
מי בקצו, ומי לא בקצו.  
מי באש, ומי במים.  
מי בחרב, ומי בחיה.  
מי ברעב, ומי בצמא.  
מי ברעש, ומי במגפה.  
מי בחניקה, ומי בסקילה.  
מי יגור, ומי ינוע.  
מי ישקיט, ומי יטרף.  
מי ישלו, ומי יתיסר.  
מי יעני, ומי יעשיר.  
מי ישפל, ומי ירום.

THE “GREAT SHOFAR” WILL BE SOUNDED גדול ובשופר יתקע. In a remarkable exercise of poetic license, the anonymous author of this treasured High Holy Day prayer has transformed the prophetic image of the end of days to today. Isaiah, preaching in Jerusalem in the eighth century B.C.E., had predicted (27:13) that those exiled from the northern kingdom of Israel—the ten lost tribes—would return, and all the nations would gather on God’s holy mountain. Later interpreters, from Second Temple times on, understood this as a vision of final redemption, a time of final judgment. In this prayer, judgment is not of an end time but in the present—now, even as we pray.

ON ROSH HASHANAH IT IS WRITTEN בראש השנה יפתבון. The image of God writing each person’s fate in a book is talmudic (Jerusalem Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 1:3).

פיוט למוסף  
 של ראש השנה  
 ואיך אתה מבין  
 מלמעלה? פותח  
 עוד שנה?  
 ואיך אתה סופר  
 אותנו, כמו כבשים,  
 פועים,  
 קרבים אליך, לבמה?  
 ומה אתה אומר  
 עלינו,  
 על העץ, ועל הפרי,  
 ועל העוף,  
 על החיה, והבהמה?  
 ואיך אתה מונה  
 אותנו לפניך  
 בחגים של השנה?  
 על איזה תעריף  
 דברת? וכמה  
 תבקש?  
 ואיך אתה מדליק  
 אותנו? אתמי תורק  
 למים קדם? ומי  
 ראשון יפל לאש?  
 ומה כתוב לך למעלה,  
 במטותא,  
 על שבעים מיתות  
 בית-דין?  
 ומה הפעם תחדש??  
 תשמע אתה לבד  
 אחד ששט למעלה.  
 אתה גבור, מדהים,  
 אדיר.  
 אנחנו ציץ עובר.  
 אנחנו עדר צאן  
 פועה בדיר,  
 אתה מונה, סופר.  
 אנחנו קש נדף פרוע,  
 על גרגירי-הערמה.  
 ורק אתה משיב  
 הרוח,  
 על קלפתי-האדמה.

*Piyyut for Musaf  
 of Rosh Hashanah*  
 And just how are You  
 looking down from on  
 high? Beginning another  
 year?  
 And just how do You  
 take account of us, as  
 bleating sheep,  
 approaching You, on the  
 platform?  
 And what are You saying  
 about us,  
 about the tree, the fruit,  
 the bird,  
 the animal, and the beast?  
 And just how is it that  
 You measure us front and  
 center on the holidays of  
 the year?  
 Just what tax were You  
 talking about?! How  
 much will You ask?!  
 And just how will You  
 burn us? Who will You  
 throw into the water  
 first? And who will be  
 the first to fall into the  
 fire??  
 What have You written  
 above—please tell me—  
 about the seventy types  
 of death sentences?  
 What new forms will  
 You create this time??  
 Listen, You alone are the  
 One that hovers above.  
 You—Valiant, Dumb-  
 founding, Impressive.  
 We are a withering bud.  
 We are a flock of sheep  
 bleating in the pen.  
 You measure and count.  
 We—straws in the wind,  
 tossed wildly,  
 upon the grain heap.  
 Yet only You stir the  
 spirit  
 on the earth's crust.  
 —ADMIEL KOSMAN  
 (trans. Aubrey L. Glazer)

*But T'shuvah, T'fillah, and Tz'dakah have the  
 power to transform the harshness of our destiny.*  
*U-t'shuvah u-t'fillah u-tz'dakah ma-avirin et ro-a  
 ha-g'zerah.*

Our praise of You accords with Your essential  
 nature: slow to anger and easily appeased.  
 You do not desire the death of the sinner, but  
 rather that we change our ways and live.  
 You wait until the day of death, and if one returns,  
 You accept that person back immediately.  
 Truly, You are their Creator, and know the nature  
 of Your creatures, that they are only flesh and  
 blood.

Each person's origin is dust, and each person will  
 return to the earth having spent life seeking  
 sustenance. Scripture compares human beings  
 to a broken shard,  
 withering grass,  
 a shriveled flower,  
 a passing shadow,  
 a fading cloud,  
 a fleeting breeze,  
 scattered dust,  
 a vanishing dream.

And You—You are the Sovereign, living God,  
 ever-present.  
*V'atah hu melekh El hai v'kayyam.*

Your years never end,  
 Your time has no measure,  
 the extent of Your glory can never be imagined,  
 for there is no understanding of the mystery of  
 Your nature.  
 Your name befits You,  
 as You befit Your name,  
 and You have linked our name with Yours.

*The ark is closed.*  
 Act kindly for the sake of Your name,  
 and sanctify Your name with those who hallow  
 Your name.  
 Do so for the honor of Your revered and holy name.

ותשובה ותפלה וצדקה מעבירין את-רע הגזרה.  
 כי כשמך כן תהלתך, קשה לבעוס ונוח לרצות.  
 כי לא תחפוץ במות המת, כי אם בשובו מדרכו וחיה.  
 ועד יום מותו תחכה לו, אם ישוב מיד תקבלו.  
 אמת כי אתה הוא יוצרם, ואתה יודע יצרם,  
 כי הם בשר ודם.

אדם יסודו מעפר וסופו לעפר. בנפשו יביא לחמו.  
 משול פחרס הנשבר, פחציר יבש, וכצייץ נובל, כצל  
 עובר, וכענן כלה, וכרוח נושבת, וכאבק פורח,  
 וכחלום יעוף.

ואתה הוא מלך אל חי וקיים.

אין קצבה לשנותיה, ואין קץ לארץ ימיה. ואין שעור  
 למרובות כבודך, ואין פרוש לעילום שמך. שמך נאה  
 לך ואתה נאה לשמך, ושמנו קראת בשמך.

*The ark is closed.*

עשה למען שמך,  
 וקדש את-שמך על מקדישי שמך,  
 בעבור כבוד שמך הנערץ והנקדש,

T'SHUVAH, T'FILLAH, AND  
 TZ'DAKAH ותשובה ותפלה וצדקה  
 (from the root  
 ויָדַע (from the root  
 ויָדַע) can mean "repentance"  
 or "turning." It involves self-  
 reflection and critique along  
 with resolve to engage in  
 new and different behavior  
 in greater accord with our  
 ethical and religious under-  
 standings. T'fillah (from the  
 root פָּלַל, palal) commonly  
 is translated as "prayer,"  
 though the Hebrew root  
 also implies self-judgment.  
 Moments of t'fillah can be  
 moments of new insight,  
 affirmation of primary reli-  
 gious commitments, as well  
 as speech directed to God.  
 Tz'dakah (from the root  
 צָדַק, tzadak) is derived from  
 the word for "righteousness"  
 or "justice" and includes  
 all acts treating other hu-  
 man beings with care and  
 respect. In that sense our  
 monetary gifts to the poor  
 and the needy are seen as  
 fulfilling a divine obligation.

SCRIPTURE COMPARES  
 The anonymous au-  
 thor has made extensive use  
 of scriptural allusions. By removing these images from their original contexts and putting them together here,  
 a new poem has been created whose staccato formulation adds to the sense of the brevity and fragility of life.

A BROKEN SHARD הנשבר. Jeremiah 18 develops the image of the potter shattering an ill-formed clay  
 bowl, an image used as well in a prominent Kol Nidrei piyyut.

WITHERING GRASS, A SHRIVELED FLOWER וצייץ יבש, צייץ נובל. Based on Isaiah 40:7.

A PASSING SHADOW צל עובר. Psalms 144:4.

A FADING CLOUD ענן כלה. Based on Job 7:9.

A FLEETING BREEZE רוח נושבת. Isaiah (in 40:7) is referring to God's life-giving breath, which quickly passes  
 through a person, who in the end withers.

SCATTERED DUST אבק פורח. Based on Isaiah 5:24.

A VANISHING DREAM חלום יעוף. Job 20:8.

YOU HAVE LINKED OUR NAME WITH YOURS ושמנו קראת בשמך. God has many names, so which one is this  
 phrase referring to? Some say the line alludes to the Thirteen Attributes describing God's graciousness. More  
 likely it refers to the unpronounceable four-letter name of God (yod, heh, vav, heh) which is a play on the verb  
 "to be," and thus may refer to God's eternal being, referred to in the previous line of this prayer. The ending of  
 the word "Israel" is yet another name for God, El. By being linked to God's name, Israel becomes the "eternal  
 people," and partakes of the mystery of God's timeless nature.