

September 29, 2025

Daily Reflections



RETURN AGAIN

By Julie Mussché

A Quote

*“Return again, return again, return to the land of your soul.
Return to who you are, return to what you are, return to where you are
Born and reborn again.”*

MISHKHAN HANEFESH, MACHZOR FOR THE DAYS OF AWE, ROSH HASHANAH, 17

Reflection

The last week or so, I have been celebrating the Jewish New Year and ushering in the most sacred time of the Jewish calendar. The ten-day period beginning with *Rosh Hashanah* and ending with *Yom Kippur*, also known as the Days of Awe, is a time of intentional reflection and discernment evaluating personal actions throughout the year. Preparation for the holy time in fact begins weeks ahead of the New Year with reminders such as God’s invitation to “choose life”

(Deuteronomy 30:19), in essence to make right choices in regard to the commandments and the covenant with God. It is a period of taking account and reconciling toward making relationships whole.

The liturgies guiding the Days of Awe are beautiful and evocative with synagogues traditionally packed during the season. One of the most startling liturgical movements on *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* is the *Unetaneh Tokef* (“let us cede power” or “we shall ascribe holiness to this day”). It is perhaps one of the oldest prayers of the liturgy and was composed as a poem which is chanted to a powerful melody (you can check it out on YouTube).

It begins, “On Rosh Hashanah this is written, on the Fast of Yom Kippur this is sealed. How many will pass away from this world, how many will be born into it...” This is then followed by a litany scripting out the various ways people can suffer, die or prosper. Old age, famine, earthquakes, drought, plague, prosperity, poverty -- the descriptions are vivid and particularly compelling this year. Just when it seems like a hopeless existential reality, the last line of the prayer offers a glimpse of possibility: “But through return to the right path, through prayer and righteous giving, we can transcend the harshness of the decree.” Whew! There’s hope! The following reflection will explore the intent and layers of meaning of these redemptive actions and how they can brighten the darkness of our time.



For Pondering

- Where do you find light in the darkness? What brightens your way?
 - What is your covenant with God and how has it been fulfilled recently?
 - How have you been invited by God to restorative wholeness?
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For Prayer

*God who is ours
God of all generations,
to You we are grateful forever.*

*Rock and Protector of our lives
Your saving power endures from age to age.
We thank You and tell the tale of Your praise:
Your power in our lives,
Your caring for our souls,
the constant miracle of Your kindness;*

*Morning, noon and night
we call You Goodness—for Your compassion never ends;
we call You Mercy—for Your love has not limit;
we call You Hope, now and for all time.*

MISHKHAN HANEFESH, MACHZOR FOR THE DAYS OF AWE, ROSH HASHANAH, 322

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