



grass roots

INDEPENDENT ROSH HASHANA AND YOM KIPPUR SERVICES IN LONDON 5771

DESCRIPTION OF GRASSROOTS ARTWORK OVER THE BIMA (REPRODUCED ON FRONT PAGE OF THIS BOOKLET)

The Rosh Hashana service is beautiful and meaningful and the high point on our calendar. To help us connect with the purpose, themes and different elements of the service, we invite you to engage with the visual representation of the service you see before you today. The architecture of the service was certainly the inspiration for this painting as explained below, but please feel free to relate to the tefillot and images in your own personal way.

The yellow spheres represent the dawn blessings, which are sometimes done individually at home before coming to shul, and so are depicted as separate shapes. These spheres move towards becoming a whole, representing the content of these prayers which prepare us for the morning service as we wake up, and join our community, symbolised here by a cluster of houses. This transition to the psalms and communal prayer is assisted by a *Kaddish*, which can be seen repeated along the painting as blue vertical curves. It becomes clear how the *Kaddish* functions as a repeated coda throughout the entire service, lending structure, punctuation and closure.

We then enter into the start of a crescendo of tefillah. The *Barchu* is our appeal to Hashem, represented by the upwards stream of colour to reflect the direction of this message. The *Barchu* sets up the *Shma* and segues into it, represented here by the smooth gradation of colour across this section. The *Shma* calls upon us to hear Hashem, and the direction of the interaction changes, to one where Hashem is speaking to us.

Here, we can see how the colour plunges downwards during this section, which shows that we are now the receiver of the important information contained in the *Shma*. This energy is channelled into the highest point of the service, the *Amida*. We are empowered to speak directly to Hashem in a very personal way, requesting many things over a series of seven separate prayers on Rosh Hashana, defined along the ascending yellow section. This tefillah has prepared us to begin the pillar of the service, the Torah reading, and so after another *Kaddish* we begin the five aliyot, which concern the story of Ishmael and Hagar. Thrown out of their place in Avraham's home, they are near-death in the desert before being saved miraculously by Hashem and go on to forge their own successful lives with God's help and blessing.

This section is rounded off by *Avinu Malkeinu* which ornaments the Torah reading and is represented here (quite literally) with a crown. This section continues with the Haftarah, illustrated as part of the *Etz Chayim*, Tree of Life, which is a metaphor for the Torah. On the High Holy Days, you may observe how the themes of the Haftarah centre around parents and children, which describe situations requiring deep trust in the grace of Hashem. The power of tefillah is also explored. There is a sense of fragility and hope in these stories, which inspire an enduring faith in Hashem - a relationship approached with both vulnerability and confidence. The *Etz Chayim* echoes this theme by representing sustenance and trust.

Another *Kaddish* signifies the end of *Shacharit*, the morning service, and we begin *Musaf*, the additional service which occurs after the Torah reading. We repeat the *Amida* during *Musaf*, shown here as an echo of the colours and direction of the *Amida* from *Shacharit*. The concluding prayers tie up the service, shown here as a braid image book-ended by a final round of *Kaddish*. And last but not least....*Kiddish*! The apples and honey of course symbolise a healthy and sweet year to come.

Shana Tova!

Toda raba to everyone who helped me with this project and especially the many willing artists who pitched in with a paintbrush!

Lindsay Seftel



deep roots, green shoots

Last year three groups came together to put on independent Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur services under the Grassroots Jews banner for the first time: Wandering Jews, the Carlebach Minyan and Moishe House London.

This year the Grassroots Jews community has taken on a life of its own: over the past months a veritable forest of people has come together to create and plan and envision the journey we're embarking on together. There have been art workshops (some of the artwork you see around you was created at the Art Warriors Day at the beginning of Elul), poetry slams (some of the results of which you see in this booklet), sharing groups, improvisation, learning at the Blank Canvas Sessions, and finally Elul Boot Camp with a plethora of activities to launch us into these Days of Awe.

As for you: if you have stepped into this space on this day, **you are our community**. Do reach out to the people around you. Participate, ask questions, take time out to reflect. Over Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur we hope we'll help each other to grow.

We wish you a year of sweetness and of growth from the roots up, both over the Days of Awe and wherever being together with us inspires you to go.

Shana tova u'metukah,

The Grassroots Jews Team

grassroots independent minyan

Grassroots Jews - High Holiday services from the people who bring you some of London's best loved grassroots groups - The Carlebach Minyan, Wandering Jews and MoHoLo (Moishe House).

Our venue is the Moishe House in Willesden.

We are a group of friends with many different Jewish backgrounds and perspectives. We want to be the kind of place where people say hello to people they don't know. We want to try to create gatherings which are heartfelt, soul centered and intellectually inspiring. And we intend to bring a spirit of joy and Jewish exploration to our services. We want to be participatory and friendly.

So if you want to be part of an avowedly inclusive community. If you ever sat in Shul and thought "there must be more to it than this". If you want to be part of a huge, and potentially risky social experiment. If you know in your heart of hearts and the very depths of your soul that one of the best times you had in a minyan in London was with WJ, Carlebach Minyan or MoHoLo. Even just the once. Then please come and join us.

If you want to get involved - with leyning, just helping out, or offering accomodation and meals - please do let us know.

Our services will be traditional (and perhaps not so traditional in parts) and halachic. There will be some seating separated by a mechitza and there will also be an area of seating where anyone can sit where you like. Women will be called up to the Torah in accordance with halacha. At the same time - free wheeling, open, free to come and go, chill out spaces, cushions, tents, friendly, space for mothers and babies.

We also like to explore, question and challenge. We are looking at parallel sessions with less structure and more spontaneity such as experimental approaches to prayer, meditation and yoga.

the people behind this project

We are a group of friends who live in London and have decided to put on independent Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur services in the Hampstead area this year. Some of us are the people who bring you some of London's best loved grassroots groups - The Carlebach Minyan, Wandering Jews, and MoHoLo. We are a group of social workers, journalists, teachers, barristers, psychiatrists, techy geeks, spare-time minyan makers, activists, parents, artists and others who are doing this in our spare time because we love the idea.

We are lucky to have a wonderful chazzan, teacher and thinker, Yossi Chajes, coming over from Israel to lead our services. He is a founding member of the Leader Minyan in Jerusalem. He toured as a musician and studied with the late Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach for many years. He is professor of Jewish history and thought at the University of Haifa, specializing in Kabbalah.

The team for 2010 has been expertly co-ordinated by **Rachel M**:

Alon F - Welcoming, words and educational stuff

Daniel R - Leyning rota and resources, Sefer Torahs

Debbie D- Elul Boot Camp

Elliott T- Artwork and décor, Art Warrior Day

Flora RH- Gabbai

Gaby P- Financial and bank account, venue logistics, blog-making, blank canvas sessions, fundraising dinner, spreadsheets + bookings

Jeremy B- Alternative sessions

Jo C - Space, Logistics, Marquees, Art Warrior Day

Jude C- Greeters rota

Lindsay TG - Advisor on all things wise

Lindsey S - Artwork for our service space

Michael G- Gabbai

Naomi S- Piyut poetry, drashot, Talents Auction

Norm TG- Fundraising auction

Rachel M - Team co-ordinator, fundraising, blank canvas sessions, leaflets, email and facebook communications

Shana B- Pot luck food

Sam R - Venues

Samuel K - leyning recordings, advisor

Tammi B- Pot luck food

Tarryn K- Pot luck food, accommodation

Tracey S- Bookings and spreadsheets

Yossi C- Chazan

You - If you're not already involved, come along to any of the many exciting independent activities in London (see overleaf).

ABOUT THE CARLEBACH MINYAN

The Carlebach Minyan is a Friday night gathering in the Belsize Park/ West Hampstead (and other) areas of London. We started in 2003 as a place where people could come round to someone's house and sing the melodies written by Shlomo Carlebach for kabbalat shabbat on Friday nights. We started it because we were inspired by Carlebach shuls we visited in Tzfat and Jerusalem. We have Friday nights about once a month, or whenever we feel like it. We recently held a 5 day Shavuot retreat in Tuscany as well as Shabbat retreats in the countryside like the recent Down to Earth Collective in the Brecon Beacons, Wales. We hold teatime salons (days where people come and give talks and workshops about lots of different things, see the most recent line up here) and are starting a new chesed project and a community sukkah.

ABOUT WANDERING JEWS

Wandering Jews is a self organising collective that has been celebrating Jewish stuff in London since 2005. We meet twice a month in East and West London respectively to eat and pray and drink and be. We are hosted by a new person every time and aim to "never go to the same house twice". We also hold firm to the ideal, "your house, your rules". A little bit Fight Club, a little bit minyan, almost 100% good. We look forward to welcoming you soon. You and your veggie food, your vegan liquor and your beautiful neshamas.

www.wanderingjews.co.uk

ABOUT THE MOISHE HOUSE

Moishe House London, in Willesden Green, was founded in October 2007. As a Moishes House it is part of a worldwide network of houses that double up as centres of grassroots Jewish community. From our own home, we bring exciting, creative, non-denominational Jewish community to London. From Friday night dinners to film showings, impromptu concerts to study sessions, meditation to jam sessions to social action events - the possibilities are endless.

your space

IN THE GARDEN...

Marquee: Chazzan-led services will be in the marquee. There is a section for men, for women, and for men and women who would like to sit together.

Castle: for kids - old and young - to play in.

Tipi: An indoor space for parents and children - there are cushions and rugs and it's an enclosed space for those who want to breastfeed in private.

GROUND FLOOR...

Lounge: a break-out space for people wanting to talk, parents with children etc.

Kitchen: There is an urn, and tea, coffee and milk. Please feel free to help yourself. Please wash up any cups as soon as you've finished with them and put them back. This is also where food and drink for lunches and kiddushim is kept: do check the signs for where to put your contribution. And don't forget to separate your waste for recycling!

Toilet: Please keep it tidy!

FIRST FLOOR...

The Headspace: it's a reading room with books, materials and resources provided by all sorts of members of the community. Do feel free to browse, talk, discuss. Please treat the books well and don't take them out of the room. For half an hour each day of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur the Headspace will be manned by someone wise who will be prepared to answer - or help you explore - any questions about the Days of Awe or anything else...

The Space for Everything Else: the front room will be used for parallel sessions throughout the day. Please see the timetable.

SECOND FLOOR...

We hope to provide a room for children to snooze. Parents are welcome to organise a supervision rota.

Absolutely everything you see - from the house to the books to the artwork to the cups and plates - has been lent to us to enhance our experience. Please treat everything respectfully!

TIMINGS

RH 1st night Wednesday 8 September

19.30 Ma'ariv

RH 1st day Thursday 9 September

8.30	Pesukei de Zimra (warm-up psalms)	Warm-up yoga
9.30	Shaharit, followed by a short kiddush	Discussion session on forgiveness
11.00	Torah reading	
12.00	Musaf	Drama improvisation session
13.30	Lunch	
16.45	Tashlich with Brondesbury Park Synagogue in Queen's Park	

RH 2nd eve Thursday 9 September

19.30 Ma'ariv

RH 2nd day Friday 10 September

8.30	Pesukei de Zimra (warm-up psalms)	Warm-up yoga
9.30	Shaharit, followed by a short kiddush	Poetry reading group
11.00	Torah reading	
12.00	Musaf	Drama improvisation session
13.30	Lunch	

Kol Nidrei Friday 17 September

Times to be published on the website

Yom Kippur Saturday 18 September

Times to be published on the website

PARALLEL SESSIONS

Discussion led by Jemma Lerner. Forgiveness: what does it mean for ourselves and others and how easy is it to get there? Using sources for discussion as well as meditation techniques.

Poetry discussion group led by Jemma Lerner using the poems in this year and/or last year's Grassroots booklet.

Improvisation led by Daniel Soibelman, who has a background in Educational Psychology and Psychotherapy: "intimate loving, intimate forgiveness."

The session aims to echo key principles of Rosh Hashanah:- *self awareness, forgiveness and resolve*. We will dig deep into forgiveness of ourselves as a key to self-love and forgiving others by understanding and applying the psychological concept of "projection". The psychoanalytic tenet of "transference" is akin to the Talmudic principle that " we don't see things as *they* are, we see things as *we* are". We will use this as a foundation for a group-sharing to unpack some of the difficulties in actually achieving forgiveness and "letting go". The group will encourage equal participation although each will go according to their ability and there will hopefully be some break-through realisations, some sensitive poignancy and some sweetening humour.

kavanna: thematic guide to rosh hashana

Rosh Hashana Evening

Mincha (p.20 - Artscroll)

It's the last prayer we're going to say before we hit the Yom Tov Prayers. This is the last of the moments before the start of the new year. It is our last action of the year we're saying goodbye to. Mincha is all about the waning day, but this one represents the waning year gone past. We'll say three simple prayers: Ashrei, the Amida and Aleinu.

Ma'ariv (p. 50)

As the Hebrew day starts in the evening, *this is it*. We're now within Rosh Hashana. The service is perhaps surprisingly familiar to a usual evening prayer. To start, we will bless, or *increase*, God with *Barechu*. Then, moving through the Shema and its blessings where we think of Hashem's unity and kingship we reach the *amida*. This central prayer marks the most obvious difference of the day - the normally terse section about God's holiness is elongated into a central part of the prayer. It is a wonderful mix of *ahava* and *yirah*/fervent love and solemn reverence/rejoicing and trembling.

Rosh Hashana Day

Shacharit (before 'Hamelech' (p.262))

On Rosh Hashana the leader of the service begins with the strong declaration of God's kingship. "Hamelech!"/"O King!". This first word encapsulates the spirit of the prayer on this day - we subsume ourselves to the ultimate authority, the ultimate self. For those of you who, like me, have issues with authority - it is a frightening and somewhat disturbing theme. But today we question the foundations of our own thoughts, actions and goals in life. The uncomfortable is to be reconsidered, and perhaps refracted anew in our lives. After the *shema* and its blessings, we reach the *amida*, which follows the same liturgy as last night (see above). It is in the *amida's* repetition that we add our extra supplications, and begin to properly talk/sing/consider about our assessment, our *judgement* on this day. We are properly situated in the day of *din*, the day of judgement.

Shofar (p. 432)

Through its lack of melody the shofar becomes our most primordial expression of the day. A sound, a call to arms, a primordial shout, a heart rending cry. As a community we all bring our own personalities and connection to the day and words spoken in it. The shofar allows us to vicariously express our inner noise - be it an introspective tormented cry, or an outward looking call to action. We will not be silent when confronted by the problems of the world.

Mussaf (p. 440)

The mussaf section literally means 'the additional section'. It is where we put an extra part of the service for that special day where we can focus exclusively on that day's themes. The *amida* has three guiding sections: *Malchuyot/zichronot/shofarot* - Kingship/remembrance/blowing the shofar.

Kingship - refers to re-establishing God's kingdom on earth. How can we fix that which is broken, and represent/fulfil the divine in our actions? Personal reflection, social justice, considered action... can we raise ourselves and fulfil potential for good?

Remembrance - calls for us to learn from our past experiences, and past selves. Can we better previous endeavors, can we move forward from where we came from and not fall into traps already sprung once?

The Shofar - "May we remember that it is OUR role to help to end suffering in the world... May we remember that with all the suffering in the world - we have a promise - that the Tekiahs will be greater than the Teruahs - Peace is greater than war..." (taken from US Guide to Tishrei).

The lengthy repetition of the amida follows this basic structure - expounding on these themes.



TORAH READINGS

There will be many people - in fact, the majority - leyning over Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur who have never done it before. Please show your support and join us in celebrating this milestone!



grassroots words



as you are - here and now

Genesis raba: The ministering Angels said before the Holy One, blessed be he: "Master of the Universe! The one whose children will in the future kill your children is dying of thirst - and you will raise a well for him?!" God responded: "At this moment is he a righteous person, or a bad person?" They said: "Righteous." He said to them: "'As he is - there' - I only judge the world as it is at that moment."

With the birth of Isaac, inheritance worries become firm in Sarah's mind. Abraham's other, older son Ishmael poses a threat, and she convinces Abraham against his instincts to cast the boy and his mother Hagar out of his tent. We read on the first day of Rosh Hashana how on the day of the departure Abraham rises early in the morning (this statement of intent is later repeated in the narrative regarding the sacrifice of Isaac), and after giving Hagar meagre provisions, he shows her the door. Soon finding herself lost in the desert, the water provided by Abraham quickly runs dry and the boy begins to die of dehydration. Overwhelmed, Hagar leaves her son under a tree and walks away so as not to see his death. She sits, lifts her voice up and cries.

It is at this desperate moment that an angel speaks to her: "What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heeded the cry of the youth *b'asher hu sham*": in his present state/as he is - there. A well is miraculously brought to her, and the child prospers under the guidance of God.

It is this phrase, "as he is - there" that is picked up on in Bereishit Raba (the source quoted at the beginning of this piece). Ishmael is assumed to be the progenitor of a race that will be part of a long standing enmity with the Jewish people. An enmity that will result in the deaths of many Jews. As such, there is an incredulity that God will go so far as to perform a miracle in order to save Ishmael's life.

The answer attributed to God is telling of how the midrash understands judgement.

We are only ever judged according to that moment of existence.

Irrespective of where our lives may take us in the future and how we have lived up until this Rosh Hashana, the midrash is telling us that who we are at this moment and in this

place is what defines us. In parallel to the notion that God is continually (re)creating the world at all moments, we have the ability to redefine and recreate ourselves afresh - and at any moment. Whilst a biographer may consider the summation of selves in any one lifespan, the idea of judgement we are presented with is given a continuous immediacy. We are provided with the explosive potential to be (self)defined in absolutely any way at any point.

'Sham' - the Hebrew word that gives our phrase and its explanation such power is primarily a spatial term meaning 'there'. However as noted by the midrash, it is used in this case temporally ("As he is - there' - I only judge the world as it is at that moment."). Space and time are thus the great equalisers with which we are all confronted. We are only defined by reference to how we are situated in relation to them. This is a message which infuses the Grassroots Jews approach.

During the *yamim n'orayim*/days of awe, we are defined by whoever is present in that space and at that time. Whilst phenomenal preparation by a dedicated team has gone into giving us the potential to do something really special together, the Grassroots Jews are those who turn up on the day. How we (and 'we' is all of us who are here!) collectively recreate ourselves and explore new potentials within ourselves for this day and the year ahead will give the true form to Grassroots 2010.

Alon Freiberger



rosh hashanah stories

The story is told of a mother who longs to have a child. She prays. She begs. She bargains. In the end, she promises that if she were to become pregnant, she would raise the child to become a prophet of Israel.

Finally, her wish is granted and Hannah becomes the mother of a little Samuel. Her heart erupts in joy. Hannah keeps her promise and brings up the boy to become a leader of the Jewish People and a caring, dedicated human being.

This is the story of Hannah and Samuel, which we tell on the first day of Rosh Hashana. It follows the story of Hagar and Ishmael, cast out of Abraham's camp. On the second day, we tell the harrowing account of the Binding of Isaac.

Why these stories of fragility and survival? For me, an answer comes from our tradition of treating each person like a world. As the Mishna in Sanhedrin 4:5 famously tells us, to save a person is to save a world.

At Rosh Hashanah we exclaim, "*Hayom harat olam!* - Today the world is born!" To tell of the stories of the survival of a single child thus becomes poignant as we celebrate the birthday of the whole world.

In fact, 'world' in English comes from the mediaeval compound *wer-eld*, meaning 'human-age'. It seems we are not the only ones to make the link between the human being and the world.

Telling these stories at Rosh Hashanah foregrounds the fragility of that new-born world. It conveys how much God wanted to create a world. How longed-for and precious, and at the same time how precarious, was the birth of humanity.

Rosh Hashanah is a celebration of being alive, of rebirth and renewal. But these stories, of barrenness and longing, of survival against the odds, add another aspect to our rejoicing. In the midst of our celebration, they strike a note of caution.

They remind us how crucial it is that we dedicate ourselves, like Samuel, to be part of the world, to contribute to it and work to ensure it survives intact to the next generation.

Upon hearing the shofar blasts this year, imagine them as the cries of a new-born world, announcing its abundant needs as well as its joy at simply being alive, making the milk rise up in God's breast.

The broken *shevarim-teruahs*, inarticulate pleas to be nurtured and held, giving way to the more confident *tekiahs*, only to end in the triumphant note of the *tekiah-gedolah*: "We are here!"

Daniel Reisel

the yom kippur dilemma

Every Yom Kippur, we face the challenge of the text. The Torah reading, the whole of Vayikra (Leviticus 18), at Mincha includes the line that reads: “*And with a male you shall not lie the lyings of a woman, it is an abomination.*”

Most congregations read it and let each person deal with it and interpret it as they want. Some congregations remove it or substitute it. At Grassroots, we have, after a lot of soul searching and consultation, decided to stay within the mainstream of the *halakha*, which says to read it without any alterations. However, we have decided to include in this booklet an excerpt from a prayer written by Rabbi Steve Greenberg.

Master of the Universe

This Yom Kippur,
As the noonday sun descends,
We open up your sacred scroll,
And read with awe its words of wisdom.
Troubled, we share our meditations with You.

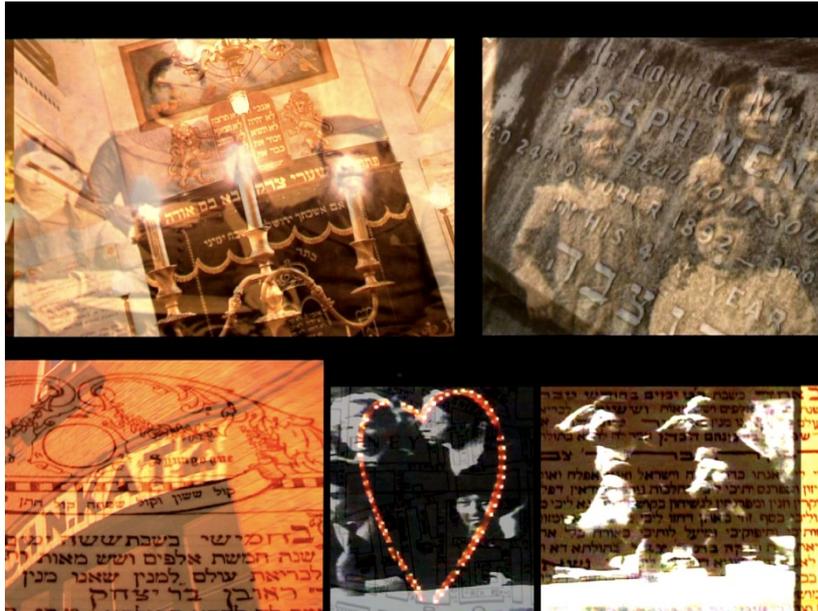
In the beginning You created us in your image.
Breathed into a pure body opposing desires
The human was created, alone and lonely.
When You repaired the flaw, transformed it by love
Your creations rejoiced, their longings fulfilled.
Bone of bone, flesh of flesh,
One made two and two made one...

Master of the Universe,
Are the oppressors of your homosexual children,
The verses themselves or those who interpret them?
What tragedies are inflicted when we drive away
Beloved daughters, beloved sons?

Our scholars once knew how to look in the book
And create new worlds in both awe and in love,
To expand and deepen your holy Torah
and draw down among us your spirit from above.

If there is no comforter, for the maligned and oppressed,
Then be Thou their comfort, their hope and fortress.
Bless us with peace in the midst of our differences.
Grant understanding and courage to our Sages,
Wipe away shame from the hearts of your children
And give hope to all for both wholeness and love.

Steve Greenberg



'The Third Watch' [1]

' 'tis the third watch'
 they said.
 'when lovers whisper and in secret embrace
 detain nights kiss.'

The Watchman passes us by.
 On His way
 to fuse souls,
 in the upper and lower worlds.

We, however, are not noticed.
 Hiding, in the cleft of a rock.
 Our faces not seen,
 our countenances not witnessed.

We are too afraid.

He, whom our souls love, in whom our souls delight,
 has passed over.
 But his Presence fills our Sanctuary.

From within the crevice,
 I turn to you
 and your face is as beaten gold,
 your body that of a young girl.

We are transfixed,
 you and I,
 set, upon the most holy,
 the most awesome.

Panim el Panim.

We are resplendent now,
and the shadows of the rock
give way
to alabaster and ivory,
scarlet and crimson,
sky-blue and royal purple.

Our fear is turned to dancing,
to the play of lyre, harp and timbrel.

And in that dance,
a secret no longer,
our eyes bespeak the wisdom of the world, which in darkest night
communicated knowledge.

Our shining is a sign of favour.
Our 'turning towards' an expression of His Will.

Beneath us we feel the power of what was, is, will be.

The never-ending continuum of Soul-love.

' 'tis the third watch'
they said.

'when all lies still and the only sound is the rustling of the
half-draped sheets, still slick with desire'

'Yes, I know' I said to them. And to Him, the Watchman.

'And I am ready to greet the breaking dawn.'

Sam Klein

[1] Talmud Tractate Brachot



Three proto-poems from members of the community, created during the Piyut slam session held during Ellul. Results of an attempt to weave other's words into a poem about the High Holidays.

Beginning the cycle,
a crescendo of prayer,
renewal of breath
rising from people to God,
concentrating the search, the desire.

Lindsey Taylor-Guthartz

Le Nouvel Elan

Départ, c'est un mouvement sensuel qui te prend le souffle ... de vie ... d'âme; un renouveau, pour la joie.

C'est un appel auquel on se tient, on s'y prépare, on le cherche, on le chante, on le comprend.

C'est un désir, un besoin, une aspiration ... cette élévation va crescendo, c'est une rencontre, rythmé au tempo humain ... Retour

C'est un cycle: c'est le cycle de la vie, de l'Histoire

The New Momentum

Departure....

A sensual movement that takes away your breath, your life, your soul; a renewal, for Joy.

A call to cling to, to prepare for; to seek, to sing, to understand.

A desire, a need, an aspiration; a soaring crescendo, an encounter, beating to a human tempo.

...Return

A cycle: the cycle of life and of History

Michael Amsallem

Poetry submitted by other members of the community, for discussion

Sometimes things don't go, after all,
from bad to worse. Some years, muscadel
faces down frost; green thrives; the crops don't fail.
Sometimes a man aims high, and all goes well.

A people sometimes will step back from war,
elect an honest man, decide they care
enough, that they can't leave some stranger poor.
Some men become what they were born for.

Sometimes our best intentions do not go
amiss; sometimes we do as we meant to.
The sun will sometimes melt a field of sorrow
that seemed hard frozen; may it happen for you.
-- Sheenagh Pugh



I wish I were.
I wish I was.
I wish, I am.
I wish because.

NS

Open closed open. Before we are born, everything is open

in the universe without us. For as long as we live, everything is closed
within us. And when we die, everything is open again.
Open closed open. That's all we are.

Yehuda Amichai (1998)

Story of Isaac

The door it opened slowly,
my father he came in,
I was nine years old.
And he stood so tall above me,
his blue eyes they were shining
and his voice was very cold.
He said, "I've had a vision
and you know I'm strong and holy,
I must do what I've been told."
So he started up the mountain,
I was running, he was walking,
and his axe was made of gold.

Well, the trees they got much smaller,
the lake a lady's mirror,
we stopped to drink some wine.
Then he threw the bottle over.
Broke a minute later
and he put his hand on mine.
Thought I saw an eagle
but it might have been a vulture,
I never could decide.
Then my father built an altar,
he looked once behind his shoulder,
he knew I would not hide.

**You who build these altars now
to sacrifice these children,
you must not do it anymore.**
A scheme is not a vision
and you never have been tempted
by a demon or a god.
You who stand above them now,
your hatchets blunt and bloody,
you were not there before,
when I lay upon a mountain
and my father's hand was trembling
with the beauty of the word..

Leonard Cohen

A Note

Life is the only way
to get covered in leaves,
catch your breath on the sand,
rise on wings;

to be a dog,
or stroke its warm fur;

to tell pain
from everything it's not;

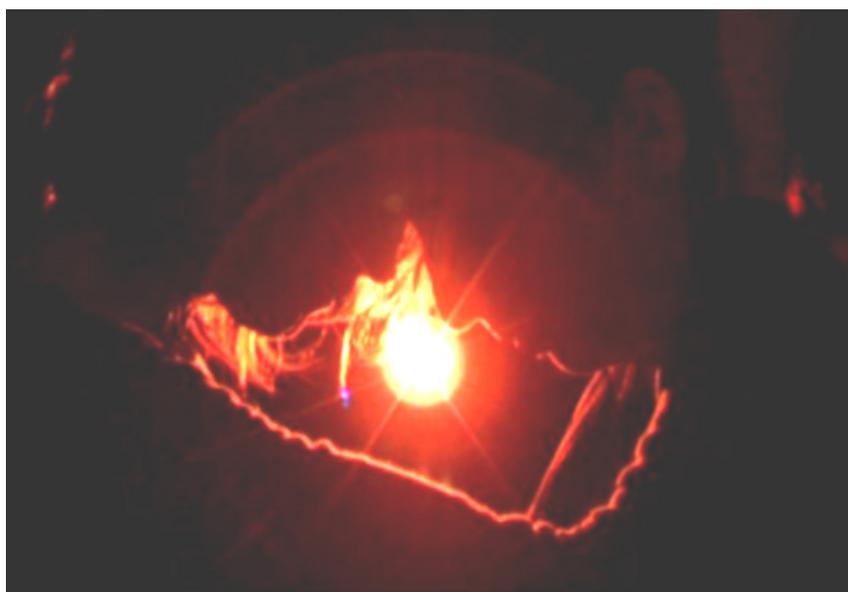
to squeeze inside events,
dawdle in views,
to seek the least of all possible mistakes.

An extraordinary chance
to remember for a moment
a conversation held
with the lamp switched off;

and if only once,
to stumble upon a stone,
end up soaked in one downpour or another,

mislaid your keys in the grass;
and to follow a spark on the wind with your eyes;
and to keep on not knowing
something important.

Wisława Szymborska





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