

Explanatory Notes:

The following text was lifted from the Community Service Book. I separated this material out from Part 1: Mediant Sections of the Coummunity Service Book, for the following reasons:

- This material constituted the core of a service on its own. See “Service of Freedom and Personhood: In Celebration of National Gathering II.”
- As it stands, I thought that using all the material in the Mediant Sections made for a very long Shabbat Service
- I don’t see this material as being part of a regular Shabbat observance, but only used for a special occasion.

Thus, the “Common Service” I have prepared is the Mediant Section minus this material.

Of course, the formatting is standardized, so that these materials can be combined in any way that is desirable. I.e., these materials can be incorporated back into the “Common Service,” or other elements of the Common Service (such as *Kiddush*, Torah service, *Kaddish*, etc.) can be added to these materials to make them a stand-alone service.

- **Reader**

The genius of Genesis enralls the mind and delights the imagination. Existence triumphant over nothingness, cosmos victorious over chaos, silence the understanding and still the emotions. The richness of the universe heightens our awe of creation and deepens its mystery. Difference, not sameness, diversity, not uniformity, stamp all that is. Individuals are the mark of reality, uniqueness the mark of individuals.

Congregation

Uniqueness may bring dismay yet we cannot escape its challenge. Out of the primordial depths from which we derive, uniqueness is laid down as our destiny. Others may teach, others may guide, but I cannot be they and they cannot be I. We exist apart, distinct within the portions of personal existence given us to sculpt and shape.

Reader

Though we may at times seek to escape the challenge of uniqueness in the anonymous mass, we cannot, for how are we to be other than who we are? Yet the agony of existence is that although we cannot be other than ourselves, we are able so to pretend. Thus do we exile ourselves to unauthenticity, our lives become anguished, and we wander the face of the earth like Cain, fugitives from our own truth.

Music

This is my heart's desire:

תָּדוּ - נִסּוּ כִּהִי:

Eileh chamdah libi:

Have pity,

צוּ וּוּת־

Chusah na,

do not hide from
yourself.

וְעַל נֶאֱמַר וּוּת־

v'al na titaleim.

Reader

At life's origin, the vision of authentic uniqueness is an innocent dream whose realization lies in the power of others. Born in need, we seek the nurturing community that affirms in love the uniqueness of our being, that grants in grace the freedom to establish it, and bestows with care the teaching that leads to our cherished goals.

(Congregation rises)

Reader and Congregation

Let us covenant to be the nurturing community of Israel and give our pledge to bring to fruition the holiest visions of our people. So shall the blessings promised of old come to us.

Blessed shalt thou be in the city,

בָּרַךְ אַתָּה בְּיָרֵךְ

Baruch atah ba-ir,

and blessed shalt thou be in the field.

וּבְרֻךְ אַתָּה בְּשָׂדֶה

uvaruch atah basadeh.

Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body,

בָּרַךְ פְּרִי חַיִּי

Baruch p'ri vitn'cha

and the fruit of thy land.

פְּרִי אֲדָמָתְךָ

u-fri admat'cha.

Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in,

בָּרַךְ אַתָּה בְּבֹאֲךָ

Baruch atah b'vo-echa

and blessed shalt thou be

וּבְרֻךְ אַתָּה בְּצֵאתְךָ

uvaruch atah b'tzeitecha.

when thou goest out.

(Deuteronomy 28:3,4,6)

Reader

Bless the community of Israel

בְּרַחֵם טוֹב הָאָרֶץ

Bar'chu et k'hal Yisrael

that serves as a blessing.

וְזָכַר

ham'vareich.

Blessed is the community

בְּרַחֵם

Baruch hakahal

that serves as a blessing

וְזָכַר

ham'vareich

forever and ever.

כְּגֹמֵל עֲדָת

l'olam va-ed.

(Congregation is seated)

Reader

In every life there is a journey to freedom. When very young, we know little of freedom. Freedom comes slowly, as our thoughts and actions become truly our own. At the beginning of life's way, we depend upon others, parents and families, to perform our tasks. As the years pass, we grow older and travel further along the path to freedom. Grateful though we are to those who have taught and loved us, still we must see the world in new ways, our own ways. We take responsibility for our actions, and come to live in and through ourselves.

Congregation

The journey to freedom enriches our lives, yet its challenge is often hard. Freedom must be worked for, it does not come as a gift. Life lived through others may seem secure and safe. When we choose ourselves, at times we are lonely, frightened by all there is to do.

At journey's end, freedom brings its rich reward. Like earth unchained by Spring to bear its sweetest fruit, humans in freedom bring forth their true selves, their greatest creations. How real the acts we do in truth. How honest the thoughts we think in truth. How full the love we feel in truth.

Music

Only be strong and of good courage!

רַט -זַט יִתְנַנְּ.

Rak chazak ve-ematz.

(Joshua 1:7)

Reader

In seeking freedom's power to rule ourselves, we climb a difficult path to lofty heights. Thus it is written that the prophet Moses ascended to Sinai's lonely summit to reach the truths by which he and Israel would command their lives. As it is for every pilgrim who begins the journey, the way to ruling oneself was covered with deep mist. Thick darkness shrouded Sinai's peak, and clouds hid the prophet's path. Still, in the solitude of his soul's journey, Moses came to the power for which he sought.

Congregation

Moses descended from Sinai's peak to share with the community of Israel the power of freedom he had found. Israel was then young, and of itself could not climb to Sinai's heights. With the years, the community has grown in strength and will. Today all Israel ascends to Sinai's summit. In our age, we can each reach the inner voice to establish for ourselves the truths that rule our lives. The Sinai within now calls to all Israel as once Moses alone was called. May we respond in our age with the vision and courage that Moses responded with in his.

Music

Sinai, mountain within that always is,
From whose pinnacle we see above life's mist.
We seek strength through your vision,
To rise to heights of self-decision,
Overcoming fear and life's aloneness,
By touching the healing power of oneness.
Sinai, mountain within that always is.
Sinai, mountain within that always is.

Reader

The ascent to the freedom of Sinai's summit is not made by a partial people. The freedom of a community is indivisible. All its members are persons and free, or none are; men cannot be persons and free if women are not; women cannot be free if men are not.

In the long and often tragic quest of the Jews for the life of the spirit, there has been no greater sorrow than the incompleteness of the search. The personhood and freedom of the women of Israel in all their fullness have been denied, and our lives are all the poorer for it.

The women of Israel have been beloved, yet love is not enough. The women of Israel have been cared for, but care is not enough. It is justice that is required. As the prophet proclaims,

Let justice roll down like waters,

יִישׁוּב כַּמַּיִם יְהוָה נִשְׁפָּט

V'yigal kamayim mishpat,

and righteousness as a mighty stream!"

מִסְטֵר יְבֹכָה תְהִי עֵינֶיךָ

u-tz'dakah k'nachal eitan!"

(Amos 5:24)

Let the waters and stream of justice wash away the stain of inequality on the glory of Israel. Let the partial and incomplete people be healed and become whole.

Congregation

Denied the fullness of their being, yet did the women of Israel, in the generosity of their souls, give beyond measure. In myth and legend, in history and fact, their exploits are celebrated in song and story.

Reader

Miriam, sister of the Israelite patriarch and prophet supreme, saved Moses at her peril when in the rushes he lay helpless, and defied him at her peril when his rule was all-powerful. Defending with her life a prophecy of democracy against Mosaic autocracy, Miriam was punished and banished. Yet the ages have established Miriam's faith, and her truth today thunders triumphantly in our hearts.

Congregation

The daughters of Zelophehad bear witness that the commandment "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" cannot be truly obeyed save that persons first love themselves. Neither can the admonition be fulfilled, "Do not do unto others that which thou wouldst not have others do unto you" unless first we reverence ourselves. Thus did the daughters of Zelophehad strive for their just rights against the established custom of Israel. Full love and true reverence demand that we defend our own righteous cause as we would defend the cause of others.

Reader

So came the daughters of Zelophehad to protest against the law of inheritance in ancient Israel: The inheritance of a father who had daughters but no sons, did not pass to the daughters; it descended to others. "Then drew near Zelophehad's daughters, Mirlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. And they stood before Moses, and before Eleazar the priest, and before the princes at the door of the tent of meeting, saying: 'Our father died in the wilderness, and had no sons. Why should the name of our father be done away from

among his family because he had no son? Give unto us a possession among the brethren of our father.” Moses heard their plea, saying, “The daughters of Zelophehad speak right; thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father’s brethren; and thou shalt make the inheritance of their father to pass unto them.” In this way did the daughters of Zelophehad advance the cause of righteousness in the law of ancient Israel.

Congregation

Deborah, the prophet, reveals the courage in the heart of women to withstand the oppressor. When Jabin, king of Canaan, conquered Israel, Deborah was judge in the land. No Israelite rose against Jabin; Deborah alone sent forth the call. Then she commanded Barak, the son of Abinoam, “Take with thee ten thousand men. And I will draw unto thee Sisera, the captain of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thy hand. And Barak said unto her: ‘If thou wilt go with me, then I will go; but if thou wilt not go with me, I will not go.’ And the hand of the children of Israel prevailed more and more against Jabin, the king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin, king of Canaan.”

Reader

Thus can we recount at length the just and valorous deeds of women throughout Israel’s journey in time. Yet, too often has the spirit of women been burdened by Eden’s vengeful curse placed upon Eve in a demonic vision: “Thy desire shall be to man, he shall rule over thee.” Let us then rise, and in perpetual covenant forswear this tragic myth that has too long darkened the sight of humankind.

(Congregation rises)

Hear, O Israel:

אֲנִי הָאֵלֶּיכֶם:

Sh'ma, Yisrael:

Adam and Eve, man and woman,

תְּסוּ יְיָ-יְהוָה יִשְׁחָו

Adam v'Chavah, ish v'ishah,

are equally created in the divine image.

מִכּוֹ תוֹה אֵיִהוּ בְחַרְתָּ /

b'tzelem elohi shavim nivra-u.

Male and female were they

created, זָר בְּטַחוּ רְתוּ /

Zachar u-n'keivah b'ra-am,

they were blessed

יִהְיֶה רְתוּ /

vay'varech otam

and the name given them

יִהְיֶה שְׁמָם תְּאָמַר /

vayikra et sh'mam

was Person.

תְּסוּ הוּא יוֹמֵר /

adam b'yom hibar'am.

(Genesis 5:2)

Music

Hear, O Israel:

אֲנִי הָאֵלֵּיכֶם:

Sh'ma, Yisrael:

Male and female were they

created, זָר בְּטַחוּ רְתוּ /

Zachar u-n'keivah b'ra-am,

and the name given them was Person.

יִהְיֶה שְׁמָם תְּסוּ /

vayikra et sh'mam adam.

(Congregation is seated)

Reader

The pursuit of freedom and personhood for all the community of Israel is unfinished but will never be forsaken. From past and present we hear voices of conscience summoning us to realize the dream of equality.

Congregation

Let there be from now on no distinction between duties for men and women, unless flowing from the natural laws governing the sexes; no assumption of the spiritual minority of woman, as though she were incapable of grasping the deep things in religion; no institution of public service, either in form or content, which shuts the doors of the Temple in the face of women; and no application of fetters which may destroy woman's happiness.

The participation of women in religious and communal life is indispensable. They should receive their equal share in religious duties as well as rights.

(A. Geiger, 1846)

Reader

For our religious consciousness, which grants all humans an equal degree of natural holiness, it is a sacred duty to express most emphatically the complete religious equality of the female sex. It is our task to pronounce the equality of religious privileges and obligations of women...

(Breslau Rabbinical Conference, 1846)

Congregation

Every person born into this world represents something new, something that never existed before, something original and unique. It is the duty of every person in Israel to know and consider this, namely, that I am unique in the world in my particular character and that there has never been anyone like me in the world. Thus all persons are new in the world, and are therefore called upon to fulfill their individuality.

(Adapted, Martin Buber, [The Way of Man](#))

Music