

A ROSH HASHANAH SERVICE

For the Family

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(Music)

Reader

This morning, every morning, you and I perform a very important act. Yet we seldom stop to give it thought. We pass by without noticing. When we think about it together, we see what that act was. This morning we enjoyed a "beginning." All our mornings start new days. This morning, every morning, we began a new day.

Reader and Group

There are many beginnings: To stories and journeys, to play and work, - to life itself. If we look carefully, we can see beginnings all about us. These beginnings can be very important, and many are exciting.

(Music - Song)

Reader

We are talking about beginnings because today is a very special time. It is Rosh Hashanah, the first day of a new year for the Jews. As the first day of the year, the Rosh Hashanah is a festival of new beginnings.

Reader and Group

There are many beginnings. The Rosh Hashanah celebrates more than the newness of the new year. It teaches us to think about the many special beginnings that take place in our lives and the world about us. On the Rosh Hashanah, we are filled with wonder at the many beginnings.

Reader

Of all beginnings, the greatest is the birth of the universe, the creation of our world. The power of creation, of birth and growth, is marvelous and mighty. People have wondered about the beginning of the world since the earliest times. Still, the creation of the universe is a great mystery.

Reader and Group

The Jews have wondered about the beginning of the world for a very long time. The first ideas of the Jews about how the world began are written in the Torah, in which we find the great thoughts of Jews who lived long ago.

Reader

Let us read the story of Creation that is written in the Torah, as Jews have done through the ages. We rise as the Torah is taken from the ark.

(Scroll is taken from ark; appropriate music and song as desired. Group is then seated. The reader reads, in Hebrew, Genesis 1:1-5. When the reading from the Torah is completed, the scroll is given to someone to hold, or placed in the ark or some other appropriate setting, to serve as a visible symbol.)

The words of the Torah are signs that point to the deep places of the universe. They teach us to search out the mystery of life, and how the world began.

Reader and Group

In different times and different places, the Jews have understood the beginning of the world in many different ways. Each of us, everyone in his own time, must seek to discover the meaning of creation himself. Let us, then, tell the story of the beginning of the world as you and I might understand it today.

Reader

In the beginning, -- before there were heaven and earth, the oceans or mountains, -- the universe, our world, was a great fiery ball. With a huge flow of existence, the fireball burst. It grew greater, ever greater. Our world was born. How beautiful the world was.

Reader and Group

Great is the power of creation. Once no star shone and no moon glowed. Neither were there sun and planets. Now the great fiery ball had become heaven and earth, the oceans and mountains. How beautiful our world is.

(Torah is returned to ark. If Torah has been left in open ark as a visible symbol, ark is now closed, and all remain standing.)

Reader

We look upon the birth of the world and see that it is good. On Rosh Hashanah we rejoice in the beauty and goodness of creation.

(Group is seated)

Reader

Creation did not stop with earth and its oceans. They were empty of life; living things were yet to be born. There were no people and animals, no trees or grass. Yet life was a promise deep within the creative power.

Reader and Group

Creation continued. The air we breathe that surrounds our earth, rose. Pierced by light and lightening, shocked by bolts and heated by volcanos, the air formed tiny blocks of life. Falling to the ocean, the blocks joined together to become living things. From the ocean, life came forth. First the smallest creatures arose, then plants and animals, and finally people, you and I, came to be.

(Group rises)

Reader

Great is the power of creation. We look upon the birth of life and see that it is good. On Rosh Hashanah we celebrate the power of creation and rejoice in the unity of all life.

(Group is seated)

Reader

Rosh Hashanah teaches that creation does not end; new happenings are everywhere. In nature, the season of Rosh Hashanah shows a wondrous change. The center of our sun, -- source of light and day, summer and warmth, -- crosses the great equator that divides the earth in two.

Group

Night and day then are equal, and autumn arrives. Leaves turn to many colors, and fall from the trees. The harvest nears, and the reapers soon end earth's sweet growth. The time is coming for earth to rest.

(Song)

Reader

Rosh Hashanah is a holiday of time. On the New Year we think of time that has passed and time still to come. Rosh Hashanah celebrates the passage of time as a gift that brings new beginnings.

Group

In days of childhood and youth, the gifts of time are wondrous. Our bodies become stronger and our minds older. With new strength and wisdom, comes the power of change. We need act no longer in the ways of the past. We can make new beginnings, find new pleasures, enjoy new happiness.

Reader

When our bodies are stronger and our minds older, we have more to give to others.

Reader Group

We can better love and care;
We can better help and share.

Reader

When our bodies are stronger and our minds older, we have more to give to ourselves.

Reader and Group

We can better learn and do;
We can better work and play;
How great our pleasure in the passage of time.

(Musical interlude as desired)

SERMON

(Musical interlude as desired)

SHOFAR SERVICE

Reader

This is the shofar, a trumpet made of the horn of a ram. From earliest times, in their most ancient communities, the Jews have used the shofar to announce the New Year.

Group

She-va-rim, Te-ki-ah, Te-ki-ah Ge-do-lah, Te-ruah are the sounds of the shofar. Let us stand together as we listen to these sounds, quietly reflecting on the many thoughts they bring us.

Reader and Group

Te-ki-ah (*shofar is sounded*): We remember the good and beautiful moments in the past year.

She-va-rim (*shofar is sounded*): We remember the moments of sadness and tears in the past year.

Te-ruah (*shofar is sounded*): We turn now to the year to come, to the new beginnings we will make, and the new pleasures we will enjoy.

Te-ki-ah Ge-do-lah (*shofar is sounded*): The great long blast has announced the Rosh Hashanah. May we enter the new year with courage and strength, with wisdom and love.

(Song)

Reader and Group

The moments we have shared together on the Rosh Hashanah are now coming to an end. The shofar has announced the New Year. It says many things to the heart of the Jew. The Shofar speaks of life and death, of happiness and sorrow, of tomorrow's hopes and promises.

Group

To you, who are our children, the Shofar also speaks words often left unspoken, that we, your parents, (teachers and rabbis,) have in our hearts. We want you to know of our confidence in you, our love for you, and of our desire that each of you shall continue to grow, and make new and better beginnings every year. You are all very important to us. Rosh Hashanah teaches how very precious beginnings are, and you, our children, are the most precious beginnings of all.

(Music or song)

(Group rises)

Reader and Group

Let us rejoice in the everliving creation, and give praise to the greatness that is manifest throughout the world. In the heavens above and the earth below, the divine glory stands revealed. Yet creation is never ended and the universe never full. Potentialities remain unrealized and promises unfulfilled. Thus even as we affirm the present, we commit ourselves to the future, to the idea of ever higher being, and to the richness of the coming life.

Va-a-nach-nu ko-re-im u-mish-ta-cha-vim u-mo-dim lif-ne me-lech
mal-che ha-me-la-chim ha-ka-dosh ba-ruch hu.

(Closing meditation)