

A YOM KIPPUR SERVICE FOR THE FAMILY

Adapted from traditional sources
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(Choir)

Reader

We live in two worlds: the world outside and the world within. Outside, the world is made of persons and animals, stars and trees. Within is the world of self, made of thoughts and wishes, feelings and moods. On Yom Kippur we pause from the everyday world of the outside to look into the world within.

Group

The world within is not always seen. Oftentimes we do not want to know of it. Our thoughts and wishes can be frightening, and our feelings make us sad. We may want to flee from them, but there is nowhere to hide. The world within is part of us, and there is no place to escape that it does not follow.

Reader

Yom Kippur is a day of search and discovery in the world within. Thoughts and wishes of fear cast shadows, feelings of sadness bring darkness. Yom Kippur is a day of knowledge and light. In discovery the shadows flee, the valleys of darkness fill with brightness. Blessed is the Yom Kippur, a day of search and knowledge, a day of shadows and light.

(Group Rises)

Reader

Yom Kippur teaches us not to flee, but to become one in peace with the world within. Through knowledge and confession we become whole. To see our wishes and feelings is to make them truly our own. To accept our thoughts is to become all that we are.

Reader and Group, then Choir

On Yom Kippur we celebrate the courage to be one.

On Yom Kippur we celebrate the courage to know.

(Group Is Seated)

Reader

There are many doors to the world within, to meet our thoughts and wishes, to seek our feelings. We can study ourselves, our dreams and our games. We can see ourselves in others, and in wise stories told by the ages. In the ancient writings of Scripture, we find ourselves in the lives told of others.

Group

Let us speak of ancient stories and tell the lessons they teach. Wise stories do not die, they live in the present within us. They are mirrors of the world within.

Reader

It is written that Adam and Eve, when they were very young, were cared for by a kind guardian. He placed them in the beautiful garden of Eden, and provided for all their needs. For his goodness the guardian asked only that Adam and Eve obey the rules he commanded them. Yet Adam and Eve did not obey the guardian's commandments. They acted to please themselves rather than do as the guardian wished. After their disobedience, Adam and Eve were deeply ashamed and frightened. The love of the guardian, they felt, had been lost forever. They could not face him. They tried to hide from themselves, but they could not. There was no place to flee.

Group

When young, we live in our parents home as did Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. Our parents care for us, and we love them. When disobedience and anger come between us, we are sad. Still we need not flee from disobedience nor hide from anger. Stronger than broken commandments are the bonds of love that bring us together.

Reader

It is written that two sons, Cain and Abel, were born to Adam and Eve. Cain farmed the soil; Abel was a shepherd. When Abel received love for good things he had done, Cain believed his brother was more beloved than he, and greatly envied Abel. In deep anger, Cain struck Abel down. Great sadness came over Cain for what he had done. He knew no happiness, and wandered the earth seeking forgiveness and peace.

Group

Envy of others, sisters and brothers, friends and strangers, dwells in every human heart. Still we can conquer envy and rule over it. The world has more love than we need or can use. To receive love, we must first give love, and above all, to our own selves give love. In our own love, we find pleasure in sharing the love of others. In our own love, we forgive ourselves as we would forgive others.

Reader

It is written that Absalom was one of the sons of David, king of Israel. Absalom wished to be king, and rule in place of his father. He gathered many Israelites about him, and led them in rebellion against David. David's army was victorious and Absalom fell in battle. Despite Absalom's rebellion, David loved him as parents alone love children. When he heard of Absalom's downfall, David cried, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Group

The wish to take the place of mother or father lies within every daughter and son. At times our wishes make us angry or even frightened. Slowly, with the years, we learn the wise purpose of our desires. They guide us, as we grow, to become like mother and father, to care for ourselves and for others. Our wishes give us courage and strength. With courage we leave childhood to rule our own lives. With strength we become parents and rule our own homes.

Reader

It is written that the Israelites in ancient times sought to free themselves from the sorrow of wrongdoing by placing their feelings of blame upon others. A goat was chosen upon which the people sought to put the blame they suffered for their actions. This goat, named the scapegoat, was sent to wander in the wilderness as punishment for the Israelites' wrongdoing. In time, the Israelites, through their great teachers, the prophets, learned that others could not take the sorrow of wrongdoing from them. Every person must bear his own blame. Every person must act to receive his own forgiveness.

Group

It is painful to bear the burden of disobedience to the ought within. We all wish at times for scapegoats to carry away the blame that is really our own. Yet we know, as taught by the prophets of ancient Israel, the wound of wrongdoing is healed only when blame is confessed, if just to ourselves. Forgiveness comes when dark places of the world within open to receive love's renewing light.

Reader and Group

Amidst the ageless sounds of sacred confession, the burden of blame is lifted. With courage and trust, in community yet alone, we travel the journey of self-knowledge to enter the gates of peace.

(Ark Is Opened)

(Group May Remain Seated As Reader Directs)

(Ark Is Closed)

Reader

Wisdom and love are mighty streams in the world within. Their waters bring community and peace. From their depths flow commandments just and merciful.

Group

Commandments of love and wisdom live in every age. From ancient days we feel their power.

Reader

Thou shalt not pick the vineyard bare, nor gather the fallen fruit of the vineyard,
Thou shalt leave them for the poor and for the stranger.

Group

Thou shalt not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another.
Thou shalt not oppress thy fellow man.

Reader

Thou shalt not deal unkindly with the one who cannot hear,
Nor place an obstacle in the way of the blind.

Group

Ye shall do no injustice in a case of law,
Neither showing partiality to the poor,
Nor favoring the rich and powerful,
But in righteousness shalt thou judge thy fellow men.

Reader and Group

Thou shalt not keep hate in thy heart against thy fellow man,
Thou shalt not take vengeance, nor bear grudges,
But thou shalt love thy fellow man as one of thine own.

Reader

Commandments of love and wisdom live in every age, yet stay never the same. They are written by our lives. In different ages and places, as life changes, love grows and wisdom deepens. New commandments are born and old commandments die. On Yom Kippur we hear the voice of the past, the thunder of the present, and the whisper of the future. Yet though the words of love's wisdom be new, their purpose remains ever the same: to bring peace to the two worlds of man, the world outside and the world within.

Reader and Group

Let us together strive for peace. Let Israel join with the peoples of the earth to seek peace from the eternal source of peace. Blessed be our country that it may ever be a stronghold of peace, and its advocate in the council of nations. May contentment reign within its borders, health and happiness within its homes. Let the bonds of friendship and fellowship be strengthened among all the inhabitants of all lands. Thus will virtue and love hallow every home and every heart. Praised is the source of all beings by whose power the community of man brings forth peace. Amen.

SILENT MEDITATION

(Group Rises)

(Open Ark)

(Scroll Is Taken From Ark)

Reader

Torah is the ground of our dedication to truth. Its power has infused the search of centuries. From its devotion to wisdom we derive the charge to strive for wisdom; from its commitment to the good, we are impelled to seek the good. The spirit of Torah abides with us as we turn to our lesson on this Day of Atonement.

(Scroll Is Set In Position, Either On Lectern, Or In Ark As Visible Symbol)

Torah Reading

(Genesis 35-45; selected verses and synopsis. May be read or told as story. Hebrew reading: Genesis 37:2-11. Alternative readings, optional with reader.)

The sons of Jacob were twelve in number. Now Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, so he made a coat of many colors for him. When his brothers saw that their father loved Joseph more than any of them, they hated him, and could not say a good word about him. Joseph had a dream, which he told to his brothers, so that they hated him all the more. He said to them, "Listen to this dream that I have had. While we were binding sheaves in a field, my sheaf rose up and remained standing, while your sheaves gathered round it, and bowed down to my sheaf!"

So they hated him all the more for his dreams and for his words. Then he had another dream which he told to his brothers.

"I have just had another dream," he said, "and the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed down to me!"

When he told it to his father and his brothers his father scolded him, saying to him, "What is this dream that you have had? Am I actually to come with your mother and your brothers, and bow down to the earth to you?"

His brothers were jealous of Joseph, while his father kept the matter in mind. After his brothers had gone off to pasture their father's flocks at Shechem, Jacob said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flocks at Shechem? Go and see how your brothers are and the flocks; and bring me back word."

So Joseph followed his brothers, and found them at Dothan. But they saw him in the distance, and before he could reach them, they plotted against him to slay him.

“There comes the dreamer,” they said to one another. “Come now, let us slay him, and throw him into one of the pits. We can say that a wild beast attacked him. Then we shall see what his dreams will come to.”

But when (the oldest brother) Reuben heard this, he tried to save Joseph from their hands; so he said,

“Let us not take his life.”

“Do not shed any blood,” Reuben said to them; “throw him into the pit here in the wilderness, but do not lay hands on him.”

As soon as Joseph reached his brothers, they stripped him of his coat, the coat of many colors he was wearing, and seizing him, they threw him into the pit.

Then they sat down to eat a meal; but raising their eyes they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels carrying spices, balm, and laudanum, which they were bringing down to Egypt. Thereupon Judah said to his brothers,

“What is the good of slaying our brother and covering up his death? Come let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and lay not hands on him; for after all he is our brother, our own flesh.” His brothers agreed. They sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver; and they took Joseph to Egypt.

Joseph prospered in the land of Egypt. He rose to become head of Egypt next to Pharaoh, the king. When drought and famine came to Canaan, where Joseph’s family lived, his brothers came to Egypt to buy food. Joseph saw his brothers, and had them brought before him. They did not recognize Joseph for he had become a man. Joseph’s opportunity to take revenge against his brothers had now come. Yet he could not. When Joseph saw that his brothers did not recognize who he was, he could not help but play pranks on them. However, he loved his brothers, and could not take revenge. Finally, Joseph commanded that his brothers be brought to the palace before him. They still did not know who Joseph was, and they came in fear, knowing his great power. Seeing his brothers before him was too much for Joseph.

Joseph could no longer control himself before all of his servants, so he cried out,

“Have everyone leave me.”

So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers; but he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and Pharaoh's household heard. Joseph said to his brothers,

"I am your brother Joseph whom you sold into Egypt. Now do not be grieved nor angry with yourselves that you sold me here, for it was to save life. Hurry back to my father and say to him, so speaks your son Joseph: You shall live near me, you, your sons, your grandsons, your flocks, your herds, and all that belongs to you; and there I will provide for you, for there are still years of famine to come. You must tell my father all about my glory in Egypt, and all that you have seen; hurry and bring my father here."

Then Joseph fell on the neck of his brother Benjamin and wept, while Benjamin wept on his neck. He kissed his brothers, and wept on their shoulders.

(Appropriate Music. Torah, If Not In Ark As Visible Symbol, Is Returned)

(Ark is Closed)

SERMON

(Choir)

(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 and above and the earth below, the divine glory stands revealed. Yet creation is never ended and the universe is never full. Potentialities remain unrealized and promises unfulfilled. Thus even as we affirm the present, we commit ourselves to the future, to the ideal of ever higher being, and to the richness of the coming life

(Group Is Seated)

Reader

Anger is a gift of life. Wisdom teaches why anger is born. Love teaches the time for anger to die. Wisdom and love make anger good. On this Day of Atonement, we seek not to hide anger, but to make anger good.

Group

Anger is born for many reasons.

When love must be shared, anger comes.

When strength must be shared, anger comes.

When beauty must be shared, anger comes.

When we seek all there is, anger comes.

Reader and Group

Slowly we learn no one can possess all that there is. Love brings pleasure in giving to others, and anger dies. The world within is our own; the world outside is shared with others.

Reader

On Yom Kippur, we seek to turn anger to good and sorrow to joy. No life can be without tears and sadness, for weakness and death belong to everyone.

Reader and Group

We sorrow when those we love die. We think of times of anger, and wish we had been gentler and more kind. Yet death, like anger, is a gift of life. Both come to everyone. Anger does not bring death, gentleness and kindness cannot stop its course. In courageous acceptance of all life's gifts, we call to mind our beloved dead on this Day of Atonement.

(Final Meditation)

(Shofar Is Sounded)