

LAB/SHUL

SHUVU שׁוּבוּ

RISE. RECKON. RESET.

DAYS OF AWE 2020 > ימים נוראים תשפ"א 5781

VISIONARY
ART MAGAZINE
FALL 2020 EDITION

SHUVU: WELCOME BACK

AMICHAEL LAU-LAVIE

The green leaves on the weeping cherry outside my window have begun to turn yellow. Soon they'll fall. I remember how in early April I watched each green leaf emerge from winter. That spring emergence, leaf by leaf, was a healing gift for me, a grounding meditation, as Quarantine was taking a toll on my isolation, grief, and fear.

Now, another season turns, and with it yet another round of nature's gifts for noticing the subtle and the larger changes of what's transforming within and beyond.

On the Jewish calendar, the sacred season of introspection and courageous commitment to change is back again, stranger and more needed than any many of us had known.

Each new year, like the cherry tree, offers us a path of renewal and transformation, shedding what's no longer serving us and preparing for the seasons ahead, to do and be our best. This year, more than ever.

Unlike trees, however, the inner change in how we think, feel, behave and act is on us. And it takes work, and that's why we come together on these Days of Awe: Privately and publicly rising to the challenge of reckoning with what's not working so that we can do our best to restart and reset. However we're able. It's on us.

Prophets have been standing on street corners and stages for centuries, calling on us to return to our senses, our best behaviour, more justice, truth and love.

SHUVU is the phrase most often used by our biblical prophetic voices, urging us towards moral repair, less distraction and more responsibility. We rarely listen. Until it's often too late.

So here we are again. Called to take care of ourselves and of each other, to heal our planet, reckon with the racist reality that we are part and are responsible for, take civic action to repair democracy and our country, hold each other up as we struggle with this Pandemic, along with its economic and psychological aftermath.

The only way to do it is by paying attention to each moment, to being more present, breath by breath, leaf by leaf, less fear, more trust, here for each other.

The only game is the long game. The real work is what's here and now.

And it's on us.

I've been reading Octavia Butler's books this whole time. She was a Sci-Fi prophet predicting our reality with horrifying accuracy but also with profound gifts to the soul and how to survive. I'd like to welcome us into the new year with her words, and with deep gratitude for all of you who've helped make this SHUVU season come alive so beautifully, including this stunning collection of wise words and wishes, art from our hearts.

"Kindness eases change.
Love quiets fear.
And a sweet and powerful
Positive obsession
Blunts pain,
Diverts rage,
And engages each of us
In the greatest,
The most intense
Of our chosen struggles."
(Octavia E. Butler, Parable of the Talents)

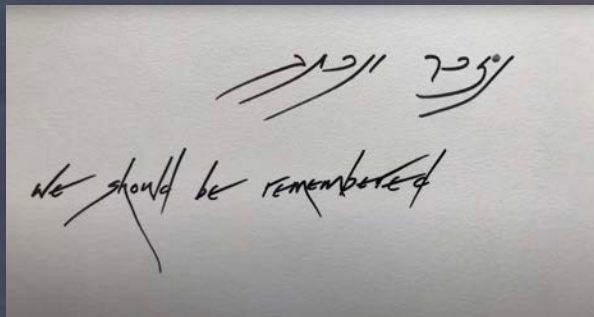
Shuvu. We've got this. Welcome to a brave new year.
SHANA TOVA



FROM THE FOUNDING SPIRITUAL LEADER

AMICHAU LAU-LAVIE

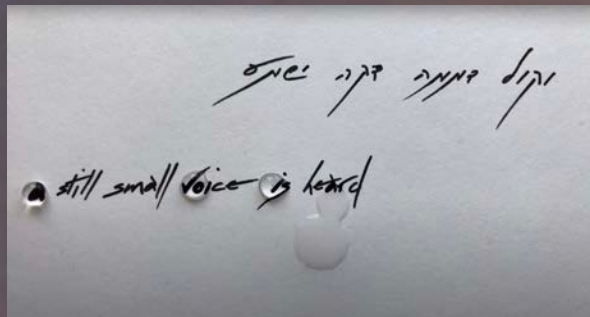
ARTWORK BY JACQUELINE NICHOLLS



How should we be remembered? What could we write in our book of life?

This is that time of year we get to be our own bookkeepers - opening the files on what and who in our life may need a closer look, perhaps a fix. It's up to us to take the time and ask the question: Are we living up to how we want to live our lives? Is this the story that defines who I am?

The Book of Life, an ancient (Pre-Judaic) symbol, is about the power of the word to manifest reality, but it is not about a book, or scroll, or screen, not about sentences or syntax. Each second of our life spells out the plot that furthers our becoming, and though we may not have control about so much - the weather or somebody's mood or history - we are the authors of the ways we act, react, and manifest the meaning of what's happening. And that's a lot. This is the time to focus on intentions for the year ahead, to maybe take a pen and paper, type on your phone or dictate a memo - what are 3-10 intentions, willful acts and ways to live better, that you want to take responsibility for this coming year?

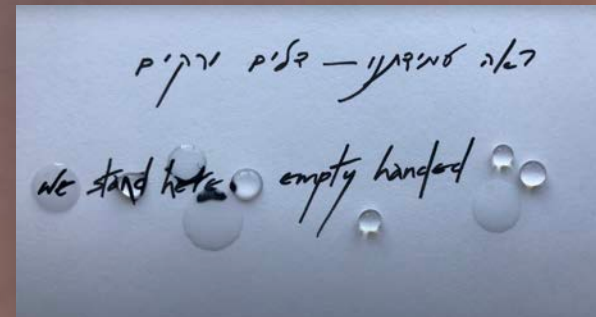


Can you be quiet enough to hear the still, small voice within?

We leave Jonah behind on the boat mid-storm and join Elijah in a solitary cave, as he hides from the authorities. Prophets, then and now, have a way of tuning in to what the truth demands even if and especially when it's not so popular. Elijah, isolated and scared, lives through thunderstorms and earthquakes only to discover that the still small voice within him is the sound of silence, it's whatever God may be, or soul, and it's speaking, words or feelings, deeply from and to himself.

With all the clutter of our lives, so many words and prompts, the news and memes, the helpful and the hazardous invitations to join this or become that, can we still be still enough to listen to the voice within each every one of us, unique, specific, soothing, lulling, shaking, guiding, moulding who are and how we can become better at being who we are?

Take time today or tomorrow to turn off noise and find a quiet spot, if not a cave, a bench or bed, to close the eyes, and pause to be, to breath, to listen to the voice inside that speaks inside the silence of the heart. With time and practice, work in progress, we can learn, like prophets, to hear beyond the many voices to the one that truly matters to who and how we are. Start small, and still, and quiet.



How Can We Stand?

"You can rake the muck this way, rake the muck that way-- it will always be muck. Have I sinned or have I not sinned? In the time I am brooding over it, I could be stringing pearls for the delight of Heaven" — Martin Buber

How can I claim to stand here, mid self-repair, as if on trial, pleading for another chance at being better? How can I stand it, knowing that so much of what causes me to be and do in ways that get me in trouble and don't serve me well is my own doing?

Look, this prayer says, spoken as I look into the mirror, or maybe as I figure out what's it like to talk with the animating spirit of it all. Look, here I am, and there's so much muck, and I'm really sorry, and I really want and need to learn how to improve, bit by bit, get back to what I know inside is helping me to be and to do better.

Can we stand to stand here honestly, empty-handed, confessing our shortcomings? Not with harsh and angry blame but with humility and kindness?

Pearl by pearl, tear drop by tear drop, smudging some of our familiar patterns as we rake the muck and string together the new poem of our oyster turned to pearl.



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SARAH SOKOLIC

In her 2015 book, *Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear*, author Elizabeth Gilbert writes, “I’ve never seen any life transformation that didn’t begin with the person in question finally getting tired of their own BS.” She’s spot on, right?

In Jewish tradition The Days of Awe are the official days of personal reflection. Historically, my personal reflection has centered around being a more patient and compassionate life partner and parent, taking better care of my physical well-being, and mastering the art of saying “no”. This year feels different, though. My practice of introspection about my own humanity has grown into a deep reckoning about my role in the universe: How can I use my voice to rise for economic and social justice? What will it take to truly become an

anti-racist and break the structures of racism? What more can I do to effect change in our government and protect our precious democracy? Without a doubt, there is more at stake this year than ever before and I’m barely grappling with all of it. What are you reflecting on this year? What helps you to get into the proper head and heartspace to do the work?

Art is what I turn to when I’m struggling with the challenges and uncertainties that life presents, and what I immerse in when I need to do some serious introspection. Music, literature and the beauty of nature ground me, open my mind, and inspire me to be a better version of myself. With this intention, I am thrilled to present to you Lab/Shul’s second edition of our Visionary Art Magazine as a supplement and guide

for your SHUVU practice this year. This edition’s contributions of poetry, photography, visual art are personal gifts of inspiration from a beautiful cross-section of artists from within the Lab/Shul community. Their offerings span the themes of love, mythology, theology, death, nature, mindfulness and more - all through the lens of SHUVU.

I am deeply grateful to all of the contributors, and offer special thanks to Lab/Shul Partner, Amy Handelsman, for her fantastic curation of the magazine, as well as to Lab/Shul’s talented graphic designer, Gabriel Drozdov, for his vision and execution of this very special project.

May these Days of Awe enable each of us to rise and reset with strength and grace.



FROM OUR GUEST SPIRITUAL LEADER

REV. DR. DERRICK MCQUEEN

Dearest Lab/Shul Community,

I am with you this season as a ritual artist and faith leader, yes, but first and foremost, I am with you because we are a people who refuse hopelessness.

I am with you to gather the seeds of hope for us to incubate during this season of chaos and disease. **I believe we are the stewards of this crop of new hope, new rightness, and new justice.** How I yearn to see how the cosmos will bend in appreciation as we come to a reckoning of our call to use love's gifts as the very stones for building, love stones as the very stones that the builders are rejecting.

This season, I find it essential to go on this journey of community and personal introspection to discern, "for what do I need to atone?" Only through atonement will we be able to identify the strengths we need to plant those seeds and see them through to harvest. My friends, it is a great privilege to share this time with you. It is my profound hope that we will find the vulnerability we need to break away from our fears and realize that the embrace we seek is the most palpable form of justice and union we can give to the world. I open my arms, exposing my core...so core to core, let us sojourn in this season for just a little while longer.

Humbly Along for the Ride,
Reverend Derrick McQueen

CONTRIBUTORS



LIZ ALPERN

Liz Alpern is the creator of Queer Soup Night, co-owner of The Gefilteria, and co-author of *The Gefilte Manifesto: New Recipes for Old World Jewish Foods*. She is a faculty member at the International Culinary Center's Culinary Entrepreneurship program in New York and consults for the national food justice organization Fair Food Network. Liz earned her MBA from Baruch College and has been featured on Forbes' 30 Under 30 list.



LUIS BURGOS

Born in the Lower East Side of Manhattan and raised throughout the boroughs of New York City, Luis moved to Los Angeles in 2013. He returned to NY in 2018. He learned how to question at Phillips Exeter Academy and how not to question at Bard College. His photographic work is often based in literature while his writing is visual and sensory.



RENÉE CHEROW-O'LEARY, PHD

Founder and President of Education for the 21st Century, a media consulting group in New York City which develops educational materials primarily for children, parents and teachers in multiple platforms: print, television, online, blogs. Currently, Dr. Cherow is developing materials in gaming and virtual worlds working with such companies as Disney Channel and other Disney initiatives, PBS Kids Sprout (Comcast), Word World, Word Box, and other market research firms.



DVIR ERAKI COHEN

Yemenite-Israeli prodigy from a long line of cantors whose contributions to the world of liturgical music earned him an Honorary Degree from Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Together with Sheva's Gil Ron Shama, Dvir started the supergroup The Diwan Project, and is the lead singer of Meitarei David.

CONTRIBUTORS



JESSICA TAMAR DEUTSCH

Jessica Tamar Deutsch is a New York based artist. Her work explores the intersection of ancient Jewish practice and contemporary culture. She earned her BFA in illustration at Parsons School of Design. Deutsch has completed residencies with Art Kibbutz, Brandeis Collegiate Institute, and was included in The Jewish Week's 36 under 36 in 2018. *The Illustrated Pirkei Avot, A Graphic Novel of Jewish Ethics*, is her first published book.



RAMI AVRAHAM EFAL

Rami Avraham Efal weaves contemplation & communication, creativity & strategy. A student of Zen Buddhism, he has co-led multi-day workshops in Nonviolent Communication, and studied peace-building and illustration. He's currently in Rabbinical studies with Aleph Ordination Program.



REBEKKA GOLDSMITH

Rebekka has been channeling her passion for voice, justice, and community as a facilitator, song leader, vocal coach, and ritualist for over a decade. She believes in the sacredness and liberatory power of the collective voice and regularly bears witness to the transformation that happens when people sing together. She recently completed her first album, *Seeding the Tree*, which explores ancestry and the feminine in Judaism.



JANEE GRAVER

Janee Graver, an original Lab/Shul partner, loves our community. Janee has been the Program Manager for Lab/Shul's inaugural GENerate cohort, has helped spearhead the Refugee Task Force - organizing the trip to ISOP in Lesbos, Greece, and supporting the Riverside Language Program. Janee sits on the board of Aleph, and is an alternate delegate in the Hatikvah Slate for the World Zionist Congress. Janee runs a business consulting practice helping businesses grow. She is the mother of 2 amazing adult sons, and is an avid international rower.

CONTRIBUTORS



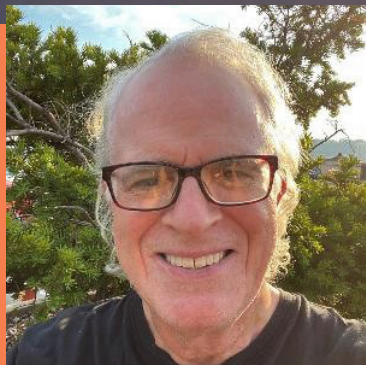
GLENN GROSSMAN

Glenn Grossman is a life-long professional session/touring drummer, producer and programmer in New York City. For the past 10 years he has successfully produced music for various artists as well as writing and producing music for T.V. and scoring and producing music for film and documentary projects. Glenn's drumming roster includes: Tall Stories (EPIC), Gordon Gaines, Dave Kikowski of Steps Ahead, Bo Diddley, Bob Dylan, Chuck Berry, The Drifters, hip hop artist Blacksheep, Jaime Benjamin (Pussycat Dolls), Sony recording artist Dave Aaron, Israeli pop star Shiri Maimon, rock band Mahavatar and Victoria Secret supermodel Jessica White, as well as playing on tracks and demos for various record companies.



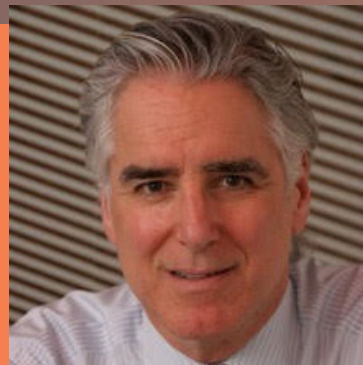
STEPHANIE GUEDALIA

Stephanie Guedalia "Stevphe" is a graduate of Tisch School and spent her first two years of University studying Intellectual History. She was born in Jerusalem and was raised with a deep love of Jewish texts. She has studied at Yeshiva in Jerusalem and at Yeshivat Hadar in NYC. She is a storyteller through a wide variety of platforms including performance, music and the written word.



IVAN HELFAND

Long-time Manhattanite with many past careers, recently retired from nonprofit world. Drawn to volunteer work in support of new immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. Make time for close friends, travel, the arts, reading, dancing, golf, and Roxy The Cat.



STUART HIMMELFARB

Stuart Himmelfarb is CEO of B3/The Jewish Boomer Platform, a non-profit initiative dedicated to engaging—or re-engaging—Baby Boomers in Jewish life. He founded B3 in 2011 with Dr. David Elcott, Taub Professor of Public Service at NYU's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service where Himmelfarb is a Senior Fellow, Faith-Based Civic Engagement. B3 is committed to changing the conversation about aging in the Jewish community and works with communities to better understand—and respond to—the unprecedented challenges and opportunities facing Boomers today.

CONTRIBUTORS



MARINA PINTO KAUFMAN

Marina Pinto Kaufman was born in Morocco and studied at the University of Geneva in Switzerland. She worked in Switzerland and then in the U.S. as a freelance interpreter for over 25 years, mainly for the United Nations. Marina was the founding Board Chair of Storahtelling and is currently a board member of Lab/Shul. She is an emerita board member of Human Rights Watch and was one of the co-founders of the Human Rights Watch Film Festival.



REBECCA KELLY

Rebecca Kelly is a storyteller, curator, visual and teaching artist in NYC. She believes passionately in the healing power of art. inliquid.org/artist/kelly-rebecca/



NAOMI LESS

Naomi Less is a Brooklyn-based, internationally celebrated singer, composer, musician, ritual leader and educator. Her diverse original music is sung in worship communities worldwide, including Lab/Shul. In 2000, Naomi met Rabbi Amichai Lau-Lavie and became a founding company member of Storahtelling, serving as Director of Education and Training, Director of Storahtelling and ultimately as a founding Lab/Shul ritual leader and Associate Director. Her signature music initiatives include: Jewish Chicks Rock band programs, creator/host of Jewish Women Rock show on Jewish Rock Radio, and co-creator/music director/performer for TRYmester, a touring performance piece that brings to light the oft hidden stories of fertility challenges through narrative, song and dance.



AMANDA LINDNER

Amanda Lindner is the Director of Communications at Avodah. Before entering the Jewish nonprofit field, Amanda worked as a journalist and government press secretary. She was named the “Rookie Reporter of Year” by the New York Press Association and is a recipient of the “30 Under 30 Long Island Young Professionals” award. Amanda lives a zero-waste lifestyle in Brooklyn, NY, and has been featured in the New York Times, on NBC New York, and most recently, on the Rachael Ray Show. She runs the vegan and zero-waste social media blog, Enviromensch. Amanda is a proud graduate of the George Washington University and holds a B.A. in Journalism and Mass Communication.

CONTRIBUTORS



YAVILAH MCCOY

Yavilah McCoy is the CEO and Executive Director of DIMENSIONS Inc. in Boston. She has spent the past 20 years working extensively in multi-faith communities and partnering specifically with the Jewish community to engage issues of diversity, equity and inclusion. Yavilah is an educator, activist and spiritual teacher a Jewish woman and a person of color. She has designed numerous tools and methods that enable students and educators to be better citizens of the world through exploring differences and reaching for tangible solutions in allied engagement.



CAROLINE ROTHSTEIN

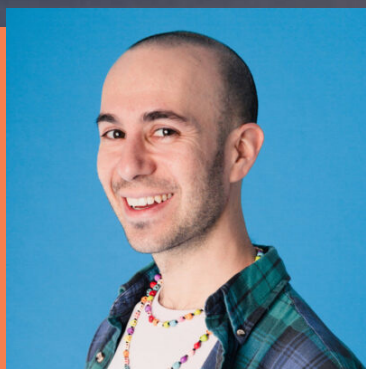
Caroline Rothstein is an internationally touring and acclaimed writer, poet, and performer. She has been performing spoken word poetry, public speaking, facilitating workshops and teaching at colleges, schools, performance venues, summer camps, and community organizations for over a decade. Her work has appeared in *Cosmopolitan*, *Marie Claire*, *The Guardian*, *BuzzFeed*, *NYLON*, *Narratively*, *The ABA Journal*, *Williams Magazine*, *The Forward*, *Hey Alma*, *Radius Lit*, *Our Town*, and elsewhere. Caroline and her work have been featured widely including in *The New Yorker*, *MTV News*, *Chicago Tribune*, *CBS Evening News*, *BuzzFeed News*, *HuffPost*, *Mic*, *Newsweek*, *KUSI News*, and *LMCTV*.



JACQUELINE NICHOLLS

Jacqueline Nicholls is a London-based visual artist, educator, and cultural events producer. She uses a variety of craft based techniques in her work including embroidery, paper-cutting, and book-binding. Jacqueline has exhibited her artwork in everywhere from London to Jerusalem to San Francisco.

CONTRIBUTORS



SHAWN SHAFNER

Shawn Shafner is a theatre-maker, educator, and creator of The People's Own Organic Power Project (www.thePOOPproject.org), an arts and education organization that promotes critical conversations about sustainable sanitation for the person, planet and world community. He is a long-standing Storhteller with Lab/Shul and has served as Lead Educator for the Lab/Jr. Days of Awe for the past eight years.



MELISSA SHAW

Melissa Shaw is a facilitator, educator and theater artist who offers a unique consultancy based in the arts, social justice, diversity and inclusion, and social emotional learning. She is a Lab/Shul Partner and works as the lead educator for Lab/Shul's Raising the Bar Teen Justice Club. She is also our Tween Lead Educator for Lab/Shul's Days of Awe 5781 season. Melissa holds an M.F.A. from Sarah Lawrence College.

HOME ALTAR MAKING GUIDE

JESSICA TAMAR DEUTSCH
IN COLLABORATION WITH HAGGADOT.COM

Making Space -

Instructions for Making a Home Altar

Altars have been part of Jewish life since Noah arrived on dry land. And at times when our home spaces must adapt to accommodate a range of uses, we can also transform them into spiritual sanctuaries. Altars are a physical space for us to focus our prayers and can be made of any materials. Improvise. It's what your ancestors would have done.



Step 1: Find a flat surface in your home. Bookshelves, tables, tv trays work great. If you have pets, make sure to work around them. If you have family members who will use the altar with you, make sure there's enough space for everyone to gather. Use multiple surfaces if different family members need the altar at a different height.

Step 2: Place a cloth on the altar, like setting a table. White is a color often used during the High Holidays, and blue appears throughout Jewish tradition. Prefer patterns? Afraid of getting white dirty? Get creative, it's your altar.

Step 3: Make the space sacred. During Havdalah, we say a prayer separating the holiness of Shabbat from the ordinariness of the rest of the week. You can say this prayer standing in front of the altar as a way of making it special and distinct from the rest of your house.

Baruch atah Adonai, hamavdil bayn kodesh lechol.

Blessed are You God, who separates between the holy and the ordinary.

Step 4: Add objects to your altar. Include objects tied to your past, like photos of your grandparents. Objects representing your intentions for the coming year. Objects inspired by the four elements (earth, fire, water and air) or by the five senses (sight, sound, taste, smell and touch). Beloved trinkets, family heirlooms, items from nature, favorite books or religious texts. Slips of paper in a jar with your intentions written on them. If you're creating your altar right before a Rosh Hashanah meal, you can include a plate of symbolic foods like apples, honey, beets, pomegranates, dates and carrots.

Step 5: Visit your altar. Throughout Elul, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and beyond, come to this space in your home to bless your family, pray, meditate, mourn, dance, reflect, forgive, celebrate, heal and listen.

Art by Jessica Tamar Deutsch, <http://www.jessicatdeutsch.com/>



EXCERPT FROM OUR 60-DAY SHUVU CHALLENGE:

FROM SEPARATION TO REPARATION

YAVILAH MCCOY

Thank-you for joining this powerful journey of anti-racism reflection, discovery, action, and transformation, led powerfully by Yavilah McCoy, Dimensions, the Jewish Emergent Network, Rabbi Amichai Lau-Lavie, and our Guest Ritual Leader Rev. Derrick McQueen, pastor of the St. James Presbyterian Church in Harlem.

Im Ain Ani Limi Li? If I am not for myself, who will be for me? *Ukisheani Liatzmi Ma Ani?* And if I am only for myself, who am I? *Vi im lo achshav, aimatai?* And if not now, when? Pirkei Avot 1:14:2

As a child I used to travel down from Brooklyn to North Carolina to stay with my grandmother for the Summer. In NC, when storms came in, the thunder would roll and the floors beneath us would shake. During storms, my grandmother would turn out all

the lights in the house and tell me and my cousins, “Y’all be quiet now and listen... Hashem is speaking to you.” Now as I share this with you today, I hope you realize that it doesn’t really matter whether you believe that NC thunder is the voice of God, just because my Nana said so. What matters is how my Nana helped us to internalize what it means to be still and listen closely when the world is telling you loudly that there is something bigger than yourself moving through the world... -Yavilah McCoy

What is “something bigger than yourself” that is currently connecting you to the work of racial equity and inspiring you to either sit with or move beyond silence? What’s one action that you will take in the coming week to use your voice differently in service of deeper racial equity?

**RETURN.
LISTEN.
YEARN.**
RAMI AVRAHAM EFAL

What if
when I am outraged, or
when you are playful,
I return
my attention
to this breath,
asking,
“What is this yearning to mourn?”, or
“What is this yearning to appreciate?”

Like its beating,
this heart
never stops
yearning
to live.

Return. Listen. Yearn.

THE CALL

REBEKKA GOLDSMITH

There is an awakening that will not let me go back to sleep.
The voice of my Bauby beckoning me
to sit with her at the crossroads,
to see the view, not just with my eyes,
but with my heart.

In this place,
a melody that I do not recognize flows through me,
connecting me to what has come before
and what will come after.

My Bauby pulls me to her and together, we close our eyes, listening.
The last notes linger in the air for a moment
then float away in the wind.

Ancestor blessings, she says. Now, get to it.
And then she is gone.



In the empty quiet that follows,
I hear questions whispered through time,
rising up my spine, weaving together
with answers that have been waiting patiently to be found.

I listen... and sing... listen... and sing...
and as I do,
I plant seeds in the ground
feeling for the first signs of new life
to emerge.

MY LITTLE SISTER: A HYMN FOR ROSH HASHANA

DVIR ERAKI COHEN

אָחות קטנה תפלוֹתֶיהָ
עוֹרֶכָה וְעוֹנָה תְּהִלּוֹתֶיהָ
אֵל נָא רַפָּא נָא לְמַחֲלּוֹתֶיהָ
תְּכַלֶּה שָׁנָה וְקִלְלֹתֶיהָ

Little Sister, Your Prayers are Prepared,
Your praises presented,
Divine Source Let there be Healing for Her, for Us;
Let this year end with all its troubles.

Original Lyrics by Avraham Hazan, 16th Century
Translations: Amichai Lau-Lavie, 2020

I grew up in a Yemenite family in Israel. On the night of Rosh Hashanah, we would all gather in the synagogue.

At first there was quiet, stillness. Like time itself is frozen.

And then, the eldest man among us would slowly rise from his seat and stand in front of the community.

Every year someone else would rise to lead, whoever was the oldest now had the responsibility of leading the opening hymn: "Achat Ketana" - "Little Sister".

Fathers would cover their children's heads with the Talit. Everybody would take this moment with awe, in silence.

This hymn would pierce every single heart in the synagogue. The tearful voice of the eldest man among us, starting the year with this enchanting tune.

I could hear the purest form of essence in that old broken voice.

We never knew if the elder standing here today would be here next year. We never knew which of us would still be alive.

Last year I joined Lab/Shul in person in New York City and I led this hymn as we gathered on the first night of the year. This year, unable to travel, I was invited by Lab/Shul to record it, and I'm so glad that we get to share this beautiful tradition with you.

I want to dedicate this hymn to all the ancestors who came before us.

And I want to ask for forgiveness, for allowing myself and my generation to worship slightly differently from our ancestors. It is time for us to evolve, to thrive. We are becoming the elders now.

We are not just surviving anymore, and we can feel the return of this "Little Sister", the Shekinah, Divine Feminine, into our lives.

May this be a year of life and health and love.

Dvir

Be strong, rejoice, the violent attack is over,
With faith we keep all promises,
We pave the paths that lead us home
Let the year start with all its blessings

חֲזָקוּ וְגִילוּ כִּי שׁוֹד גָּמַר
לְצוּר הוֹחִילוּ בְּרִיתוֹ שֶׁמֶר
לָכֶם וְתַעֲלוּ לְצִיּוֹן וְאָמַר
סְלוּ סְלוּ מִסְּלוֹתֶיהָ
תַּחֲלֵה שָׁנָה וּבִרְכוּתֶיהָ

"ALL THE FEARS"

NAOMI LESS AND GLENN GROSSMAN

"All the Fears" written by Naomi Less and Glenn Grossman for TRYmester:
Jewish Fertility Journeys Out Loud 2018
youtu.be/yPWlx1EZcO4

Voice 1
Here we go another night
Sleeplessness descending on my pillow
Tuck me in so tight - in fright

I know this line every time
Running through the endless stream of worries
Of what might not go right - my fight

What if I drank - what if I smoked
What if all these meds they fail
What if it just doesn't work this time - again
What if i never get what it is I cry for

Voice 2
I wish i could take away - all your fears away
In its place you'd find some faith in something
(ohh)
The emptiness calling - your tears are now
falling
Try not to get the fear get in your way - 'cause
I'm with you

Voice 1
Each time I walk through the doors
No one sees the battle scars I've worn
- collected deep inside - I've lied

With every stage another fear
Protects me from the fall of failure
Giving me a kind of peace of mind - I find
Will I make it through another time - I try for

Voice 2
I wish i could take - all your fears away
In its place you'd find some faith in something
(ohh)
The emptiness calling - your tears are now
falling
Try not to let the fear get in your way - I'm with
you

Voice 1
Rememberin' life in the sun
When things were easier but now - oh oh (2
voice harmony)
Why I feel so paralyzed
Push me through and
What am I doing - ohhhhhh

Voice 1
I wish i could take - all your fears away
In its place you'd find some faith in something
The emptiness calling - your tears are now
falling
Cause I'll be right behind you each day - I see
you
So don't give in to what they might say - I hear
you
Try not to let the fear get in your way -

Voice 2
I'm with

Voice 1
I need

Both
You

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

MELISSA SHAW

This is a time of great reckoning in the Jewish calendar and in the world. We are being asked to pay attention to what serves humanity. We are being asked to wake up and make the changes we collectively need to move forward into a new era. This piece of graffiti struck my eye one day on a solitary walk, so common to us now, through Brooklyn. Having bore witness to long overdue uprisings, policies that have let us down, loss of life, and yes, new hope, I am also asking myself this question during this time of social change that holds so much potential for us.



A PROPHET IN PASSING

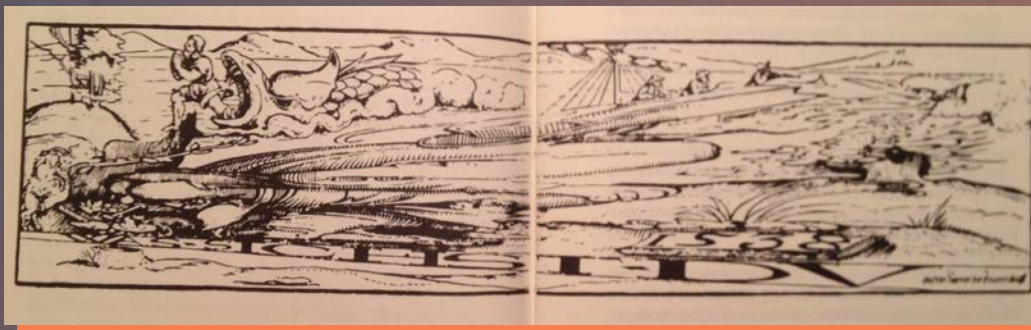
SHAWN SHAFNER

Was Sichst Du? is a game of perception. Erhard Schön's etching from 1537 depicts Jonah in a state of prayer, emerging from the fish's mouth. When you approach the work from the left side, however, a squatting man is revealed engaged in the act of elimination. What are we to make of this juxtaposition between the highest of the high—a repentant religious prophet—and the lowest of the low—the grotesque, animal body? Why Jonah?

Jonah is a prophet in digestion. At the story's climax, he is swallowed by the sea and pushed down to the deep in rhythmic waves. Jonah lands inside the belly—the churning core of Leviathan's chaos.

The Hebrew is rather blasé about this traumatic event. It's akin to Exit, swallowed by a fish. Yet the imagery is undeniably visceral, and Rabbis have long enjoyed contemplating Jonah's reality. Explaining why the fish's gender changes between the first and second verses of Chapter 2, Rashi imagines that Jonah was first swallowed by a male fish. God, finding the prophet unmoved inside the cavernous belly, facilitates a mouth-to-mouth transfer towards more crowded conditions: a pregnant female.

Jonah is inside the bowels of creation, where matter is broken down before being transformed and reassembled. He compares his state to that of one inside the grave, and the mystics of the Zohar interpret Jonah's journey as a metaphor for death and entrance to the afterlife. In great detail, they describe how the soul separates from the dead, the corpse rots into the ground, and the spirit is tested and judged.



We may think that, in death, all motion has stopped. But in fact we are in digestion, transforming inside the earth's belly.

Jonah, meanwhile, is indigested. After three days sitting inside a giant stomach, he closes his guttural appeal with an offering of sacrifices and payment—the physical byproduct of his spiritual meal. But Jonah's transformation is interrupted. Rather than passing through the system, he is regurgitated onto shore.

He arrives in Nineveh and is an instant success.

As the story winds down to anticlimax, Jonah is sitting, suicidal, by the side of a worm, its belly full of beloved gourd. The most basic of crawling things, a worm is, in evolutionary terms, little more than a digestive tract that wriggles through the ground. They reflect our most basic selves back to us, and remind us that our place at the top of the food chain will one day be subverted. The low will bring down the high.

Yet what if we could escape from the binary of status, and hold both ideas in our mind at once. Our communal story is one of adventure on the seas, and also of sitting calmly under a shady tree. Our prayers and souls fly up to heaven, while our bodies and possessions return to the earth. It's a long journey; we're only passing through.

Photo Credit: Erhard Schön (1491-1542)

VOICE IN THE GARDEN

STEPHANIE
GUEDALIA

Voice In The Garden/מתלכת בגן
by Stephanie "Steve" Guedalia

Illustration
by Rome "Raphael" Davis

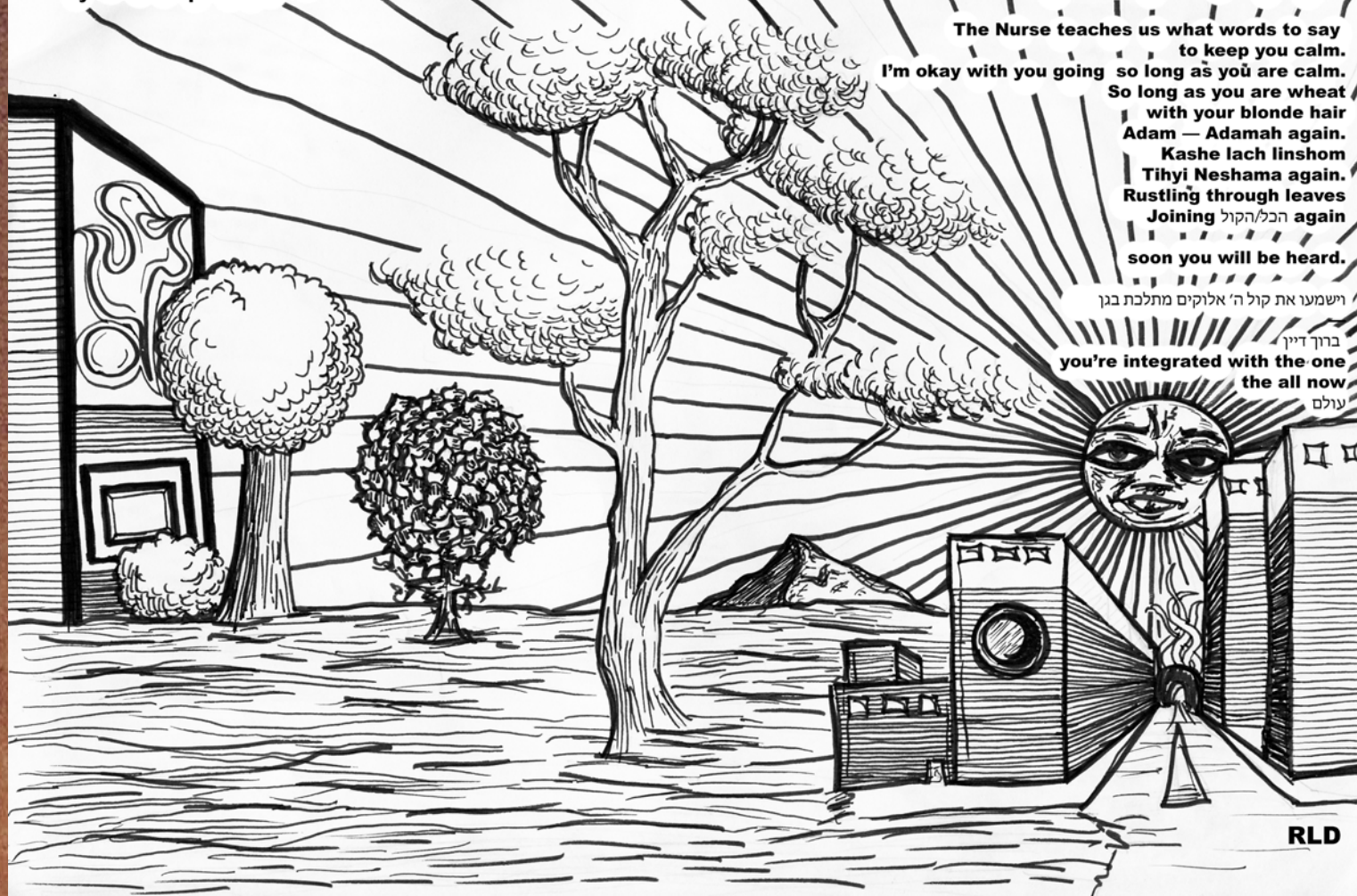
I'm okay with you going you sleep like wheat with your blonde hair I'm okay with you going
you sleep so sound
only hear sound
And wiggle your toes to tell of those echoey thoughts in that bell of your skull
that rests on your pillow so well

The Nurse teaches us what words to say
to keep you calm.
I'm okay with you going so long as you are calm.
So long as you are wheat
with your blonde hair
Adam — Adamah again.
Kashe lach linshom
Tihyi Neshama again.
Rustling through leaves
Joining הכל/הקול again
soon you will be heard.

וישמעו את קול ה' אלוהים מתלכת בגן

ברוך דיין

you're integrated with the one
the all now
עולם



JACOB'S LADDER: DEDICATED TO JACOB BLAKE

REBECCA KELLY

Jacob's Ladder is a ladder leading to heaven that was featured in a dream the biblical Patriarch Jacob had during his flight from his brother Esau in the Book of Genesis. Jacob's Ladder is also an African-American spiritual based in part on the Biblical story of Jacob's Ladder. This piece evokes both traditions. This photograph is my first iteration of this toy/book. In the video version, I have added Hebrew prayers, more images and a pink ribbon. The video was filmed by photographer Nina Rich in Central Park this summer.



LUIS BURGOS

For Shuvu, I thought of what it meant to return as a child, the memory of running back to mother. For this season, I love the idea of us returning to Shekinah, returning to our Divine Feminine. These two images capture that for me, in this case I am returning to my Family and Friends with distance after so many months of isolation. One image is of my friend Miriam, entitled *Miriam's Ladder*. I love imagining what Miriam's spiritual encounters looked like, did she have a ladder too? Did she wrestle and sing with her angels? One image is of my aunt, Naty. She's an amazing woman and mother and I look up to her as who I learn strength and endurance from.



Miriam's Ladder, 2020 x louiefromtheblock



My Auntie, 2020 x louiefromtheblock

ORANGE- SPICED RYE HONEY CAKE

LIZ ALPERN

Jeffrey: Honey cake emerges from its hibernation around the High Holidays in the fall, when honey and other sweet foods are eaten to usher in a sweet new year. But as much as this is an early fall cake for the holidays, its warming spices make it a perfect winter cake that works both for dessert and in the morning with a cup of coffee.

The rye adds a rustic feel, a feature of older Jewish and rural French honey cake recipes. Try cutting out the sugar altogether if you prefer a more subtle sweetness. We often bake our honey cake in a loaf pan, but for special occasions, a Bundt pan looks beautiful. If using a standard 10- or 12-cup Bundt pan, you'll need to double this recipe, and let it cool for an hour before removing it from the pan.

MAKES 1 9 X5-INCH LOAF:
SERVES 10 TO 12

11/2 cups vegetable oil,
plus more for greasing the pan
3 large eggs
1 cup sugar
1 cup pure honey
3/4 cup lukewarm coffee
(brewed and cooled slightly)
1 teaspoon packed orange zest
1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 cup rye flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Generously grease a 9 x 5-inch loaf pan with oil.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together the 11/2 cups of oil, the eggs, sugar, honey, coffee, and orange zest. In a separate large bowl, whisk together the flours, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, ginger, and cloves.
3. Make a well in the center of the flour mixture and pour in the egg mixture, then stir with a fork or a whisk until the batter is smooth and free of lumps.
4. Pour the batter into the prepared pan and bake for 50 to 55 minutes, until set in the middle—the cake should hold firm when lightly pressed on top. Be careful not to leave it in the oven for too long or it will dry out.
5. Let the cake cool in the pan for at least 30 minutes (1 hour for a Bundt cake) before very carefully inverting it and removing the pan. Slice and serve with fresh fruit and tea.



*Excerpted from the book THE GEFILTE MANIFESTO by Jeffrey Yoskowitz & Liz Alpern.
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All rights reserved. Photography by Lauren Volo.*

Photo Credit: Lauren Volo



AMANDA LINDNER

Everything we need in life is provided by our Earth. What will happen when she is not provided for by us? Every summer her flowers fight drought, heat, and hurricanes to reach the sun and give us the chance to enjoy their beauty. I wonder if we will fight so fiercely for them too.



**ON BEING A WHITE OR
WHITE PASSING JEW
IN 2020,
OR,
(WHITE) JEWISH
ASSIMILATION IN THE
UNITED STATES IS
INHERENTLY ANTI-BLACK**
CAROLINE ROTHSTEIN

The question is not: Have I been racist?

The question is: What am I going to do about it?

The question is not: What about anti-Semitism?

The question is: *L'Dor V'Dor*, and when will I cease to inherit white supremacy?

The question is not: What about the looting?

The question is: Do I support bodies, or do I support buildings?

Do I support Black lives, or do I support assimilation?

Do I support abolition, or do I support criminal punishment?

Do I support reparations, or white fragility?

Decolonization, or imperialism?

Transformation, or restoration?

Liberation, or oppression?

The question is not: If not now, when?

It is already too late.

The question has always been:

What am I doing?

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PACKING OUR BAGS

JANEE GRAVER

Refugees in American detention centers are allowed two mid-sized suitcases. As I worked with new immigrants and refugees at three places: the New Sanctuary Coalition, Riverside Language Program, and the International School of Peace in Greece, I listened to their stories carefully. I wondered what they were thinking and feeling as they packed for their dangerous and uncertain journeys. I asked when it felt safe and nurturing to ask. Now I'm asking myself this same question.

What did YOU bring?

What did you bring with you when you came to your new country?

What did you leave behind yet wish you had brought?

What did you bring that made you question why you packed it originally?

One young bride told me:

"My father in law asked me to bring some carpets from Afghanistan in my two suitcases so I had no room for clothes. It was cold when I arrived. I wrapped myself in one of the area rugs as I sat in the taxi on the way to live with my new family in Queens."

A nurse and young mother from S Korea shared her regret:

"I wish I had brought my mother's locket but I was afraid to lose it"

An American, who migrated many years ago to America said:

"I really wanted my piano. Wish I could have brought it. Not that I am musical, I just loved my piano."

A West African man said:

"There was no time to plan, I brought a backpack with one change of clothes, and images in my memories."

What would YOU bring?

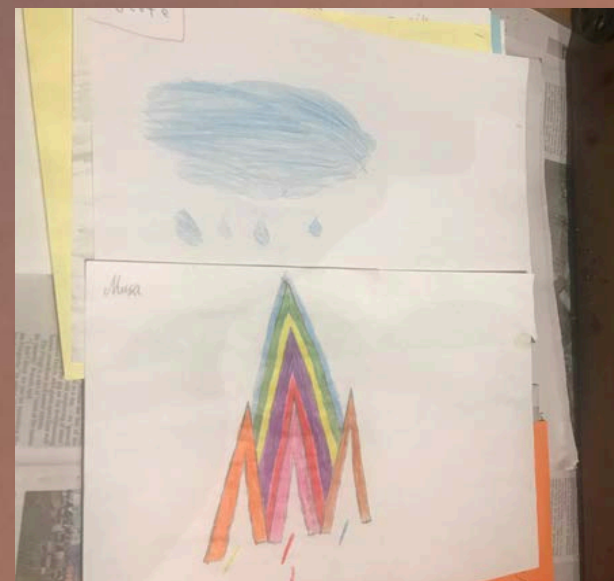
What might I bring to feel at home?

My inspirations, and my smile.

Sweet recollections of life's honey to share and spread.

Wishes for freedom?

Perhaps I will just bring my dreams and love...



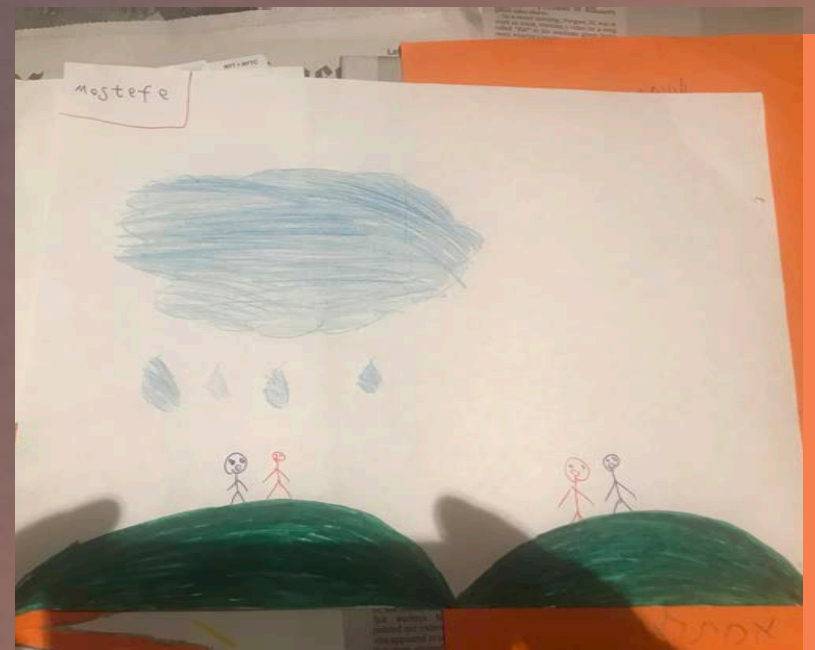
Original drawing by a child at the Moria refugee camp

REFUGEE JOURNAL

IVAN HELFAND

Excitement, anxiety, anticipation, uncertainty as we bus to the Moira Refugee Camp, where very crowded and terrible living conditions (no running water and electricity, limited sanitation, long lines for food and medical care), and random violence make it the worst camp in all of Europe. We're told what we can do - smile, engage - and what we can't - take pictures. We walk through in small groups, observe families crammed together in tents and trailers with nothing to do but wait for up to three years for the Greek government to rule on their application for asylum. And these are the lucky ones I think to myself, who've survived a perilous and traumatic journey from their home countries, through Turkey, and to this hell on earth on a beautiful, picture postcard Greek isle. But what can we do? Amichai urges, "give the gift of your humanity." So I wave, I smile with a hand on my heart, and my simple gestures are reciprocated in-kind, in kindness. As we head back to our bus, I share my feelings with Janee. I tear up. The images in my head will last a lifetime...

Ivan Helfand
7/29/2019
Lesbos, Greece



Original drawing by a child at the Moria refugee camp

THE END THE BEGINNING II

STUART HIMMELFARB

Blare

scare

dare

The most

the worst

the best

in a generation...

The blares, the scares, the dares abound

A year unlike any other

Doors closed, stores boarded up

Shops, restaurants, blocks

quiet—empty,

forlorn

Masks, short breath

A sigh

a gasp

a breath

a pause

A pause...

In-hale

the world comes into us

Nourishing us

Embracing us,

Each of us

Lungs fill; more important: *heart fills*

Deep red

Health-filled

Our thoughts track

with our breath

The world comes into us

then a part leaves, a part stays

Breathe in

then out

Refreshed

then spent

A challenge:

How do I

in-hale deeper

nourish more

fill more?

A day goes by

Countless breaths

Countless in-hales

Countless ex-hales

One day becomes the

next

One becomes the

Next

One

And: a year

comes and a year

goes

But first: Elul

The month *before*

Still *in-hale, ex-hale*

but now breath changes

Appreciated anew

not taken for granted

Now counted and, yet,

different

THE END THE BEGINNING II (CONTINUED)

STUART HIMMELFARB

Longer, not shorter
Deeper
Taking in nourishment
but also *thoughts*:

How did I get here?
Where can I go?
Where should I go?

But first: Elul
Recall the oops
The come-up-shorts

but also:

the wows, the thank-you's

My cheshbon
is now...

My total?

Not yet!

A sub-total

along the way

between in-hale
and
ex-hale

Stop.
Pause and pause.
Reflect:
Dive down, rise up

Down to more insights
up to more breath
more nourishment
and, we hope,
more *heart-fills*
along the way

SISYPHUS AND SHUVU

RENÉE CHEROW-O'LEARY, PH.D.

In these days preceding the Jewish New Year, I have been thinking of the Greek myth of Sisyphus. Sisyphus was an avaricious, deceitful, wily and defiant king who was determined to outwit Death. Pitting himself against the gods, for a brief while, he was able to trap Thanatos, the god of Death, in chains so that no one would die. To punish his overreaching of human limitations, the gods decided to make his life so miserable that he would wish he were dead. As punishment for his hubris, arrogance and pride, Zeus made King Sisyphus push a huge boulder endlessly up a steep mountain. As soon as he reached the top, the giant boulder rolled down again and Sisyphus was doomed to trudge back down and laboriously push it up. He was doomed to repeat this action for all eternity.

There are innumerable interpretations of this iconic myth but the modern French writer, Albert Camus, who began work on his "Le Mythe De Sisyphe" in 1940 speaks to our times and our condition, I believe, with profound power. He wrote during the fall of France during World War II when millions of refugees fled from advancing German armies. He begins by describing the "absurd" condition of life when the human need to understand meets the unreasonableness of the world and "the impossibility of reducing this world to a rational principle." Camus says this contradiction of the desire for order and the world's inevitable unpredictability must be faced and lived "without false hope." By fully acknowledging the absurd, a person can choose to live a life without expectations. Revolt, freedom, passion--each of these intense, rebellious choices can give a full life

without illusions or attention to moral virtues. He urged this approach as the way to deny hope, an emotion he saw as empty.

Yet, Camus raises a fascinating question: After the boulder falls down the mountain and Sisyphus goes back down with a "heavy, measured step" but before beginning again to push it upward, there is a PAUSE, the moment when Sisyphus becomes conscious of his condition. Camus wonders at the tragic moment of this recognition of his doom, his wretched repetitive destiny. And it is here that I feel we can consider the process of Shuvu. The Jewish High Holy Days are called "The Days of Awe" and perhaps the awe comes from the realization that at the liminal moments of transition into a new year, there is opportunity for return, for reckoning and repair, for realization that life and death are in the balance. We are enjoined in our tradition to awaken and to turn, to make tshuvah.

The rituals of the Yamim Noraim differentiate us from Sisyphus' futility. We can repent and renew. Sisyphus is condemned but we can CHANGE. How great is the liberation in taking that moment of consciousness

before going back to hauling the rock to recognize that while we never do know the outcome ahead for our lives, at this moment we can transform our intentions into actions. We know we cannot elude death but we can pray to forestall it while we begin anew to find ways forward toward the moral repair that will sustain us and sustain the world. Penitence, prayer and charity can avert the severe decree, our liturgy says. We have the choice, the imperative, to live our lives in the here and now.

Though the future will unfold as it will, we are always forewarned at the end of our season of reflection and our days of prayer and fasting and beseeching that "Adonai, hu ha elohim, adonai hu ha elohim, adonai hu ha elohim!" It takes three times to emphasize that God will do what God will do. But we can do what we can do to be sure that we are not doomed to push that boulder up the mountain eternally--that we can refresh, restore, and reaffirm our kavannah, our intention to

make a place for ourselves through redemption and reckoning with all there is and with all that still needs to be done. We can leave our despair on the mountain, and in that pause walk toward the world that will be rebuilt and reborn.



Artist Credit: Titan



CLOUDS

MARINA PINTO KAUFMAN

Clouds. Lab/Shul's Daily SoulSpa grounded me in these strange times. Clouds helped to escape...and dream. However it wouldn't have been the same without the extraordinary impact of the daily SoulSpa.





LAB / SHUL

SHUVU