

## **Psalm 95: A Millennial's Poetic Interpretation (for Erev Rosh Hashanah)**

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Baruch HaShem, we made it to Shabbat!

Come, let us sing our Happy Heart Songs to the One  
Let us lift up our Source of Stability and Salvation  
Let us come before the Divine  
And call to Her by the melody of our Gratitude Song

Because, ours is a G-d of Greatness  
Past, present, future,  
Our Great Guardian of G-dliness Guides on

She holds it all  
The deepest depths and highest heights  
She sings the sea into Being  
And fastens the foundations of firmament

Come, my friends  
Let us humble ourselves before the One  
Let us kneel to our knees  
Blessing the Source of Blessing

Source of kneeling and knees  
And feelings which free  
Us to be  
Children of the Divine  
Fulfilling our Destiny  
If only we  
Would Listen

We might as well give it a try  
Or else risk losing our choice  
Of choosing the voice  
Of G-d  
Calling from within

She cries:

*Do not harden your hearts, dear ones  
Do not let this moment take you back  
To the desert days*

*Your ancestors, who couldn't know better  
Manipulating My Miracles  
Twisting My Grace  
Not able to integrate what they had seen  
With their own eyes*

*I gave them as much time as I could  
But their hearts were too far gone  
Too unwilling to know any other way*

*And so I did what no Parent wants ever to do  
I kept my Promise  
To protect my Menuchah from such hard-heartedness  
That it may remain ready  
For YOU, dear one*

*Baruch HaShem  
You made it  
Welcome to Shabbat  
Welcome to Rosh Hashanah  
Welcome back, to the home of your Soul*

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Blessing for Yotzer Or- the Light of Creation  
Making Pies, by Elissa Goldberg

I have been a baker for most of my life. My mother taught me to make challah as soon as I was tall enough to knead dough. In college, I paid for my groceries by selling hot chocolate chip cookies room to room in the dorms. My first professional job after college was as a baker and cook.

I didn't start attempting pies, though, until much later. They scared me. You have to get the dough just right. You can't touch it too much. And then there's the ratio of fruit to sugar. Too much of one makes eaters' mouths pucker. I can't say I ever threw out a pie. But the finished product isn't what I'm talking about. It took me 30 years - until this past year - to find my confidence in the whole process, to know that I could shape a taste from my imagination, that I could handle problems that would arise.

That confidence wasn't a flash awareness. I was measuring flour, adding butter, and I suddenly realized that I wasn't feeling nervous. I didn't tear the dough lifting it into the pie plate. I piled in blueberries and didn't need to check and double check how much sugar to add.

I don't know how many times you need to do something before your hands know the way. I don't know what happens biochemically inside of us while we are learning a skill.

I do know that I can continue to get better at something. And that's what I want to take with me into this new year. My footing. My confidence. The knowledge that I get to learn how to do something for the rest of my life.

Blessing before Sh'ma, 5781 Rosh Hashanah Anndee Hochman

a little more than a year ago, we brought our daughter up to New York for her first year of college. Barnard leaders, who've been at their jobs long enough to know that parents are even more anxious than their kids at orientation, offered plenty of activities to keep us busy and reassured

one of those was a panel of five upper-classwomen talking about their first year of college. I asked them if there was anything their families did—or anything they wished their families had done—to make the transition to college easier. I could feel parents in the room lean forward: Yes, please, tell us the secret sauce!

one young woman, who had come to Barnard from Romania, said the best thing her parents did was actually something they didn't do—that is, when she called home with a problem, they didn't try to solve it; instead, they told her they trusted her and knew she would find the resources and creativity to figure it out

what I learned this year—both from parenting a college-aged daughter and being an ally to a friend who was struggling deeply—is that sometimes love means not taking action, not trying to fix a problem, not even offering a menu of possible solutions

yes, there is a kind of love—love of our own people, love of the stranger, love for this ailing planet—that does and should spur us into action, love that drives us to pack meals at MANNA or take to the streets in protest or fill out our mail-in ballots (the sooner, the better)

but there are also times when love calls for quiet, compassionate witnessing, when it requires us to say only, “I see you. I hear you. I know you are hurting. I'm here for you, when you are ready. I trust you will make it through this hard time.”

the love I want to carry into 5781 is love fierce enough to help me act with courage, and love patient enough to listen, to witness, to walk beside someone as they find their way toward wholeness and peace

#### A Blessing for 5781- Homer Robinson- Shofarot- Calling the Future Towards Us RH Day One

Incredibly, inexplicably, this morning I laughed myself awake. That hasn't happened to me more than a handful of times in my fifty-plus years, never predictably. It is the most joyous way of entering consciousness that I know. I want to call forth that joy for each and all of us in the coming year.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg, of blessed memory, was awarded the Liberty Medal by the National Constitution Center earlier this week. In the video tribute, her granddaughter spoke of her sense of humor and there was a clip of her, tiny on a big stage, decked in a yellow taffeta gown, performing a cameo in an opera; she was clearly glowing.

My mother, of blessed memory, remains to me most vividly in both her deeply knowing smile and her unpredictably explosive laughter. Gifts I keep close.

I moved to Philly nearly a decade ago, to answer a call from the business my grandfather, of blessed memory, whose shirt I am wearing today, founded nearly a hundred years ago. The work was more intense than I'd ever encountered or anticipated, gifting me a heart disease among other stress-induced conditions, but the greatest cost it inflicted on me and those I love was the dulling of my sense of humor, my daily dollop of joy. As much as I reveled in the laughter of my family, my contributions were too often muted.

Sapphires are formed over millions of years, under extreme heat and pressure. They are stunning, and rare, and found deep in the darkness of cold hard rock. I've never found one; I've never even looked for one. But mica – fool's gold – is everywhere around here. It glints from homes in our neighborhoods, sparkles from outcroppings in the Wissahickon, winks a reflection of the sun's brilliance every day. A daily gift, unbidden, free to all. So who is the fool?

In these times and the days to come, may we notice and delight in the daily joy that life affords us – laughter in our dreams, the surprising pleasure of a stranger's happy folly, the remembered smile of a loved one gone and the unselfconscious giggle of those we still hold close, the twinkle of an everyday gem, beckoning us towards the light.

Ken yehi ratzon (may it be so).

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My Rising- Yom Kippur morning- [Susan Windle](#)

Every morning I rise to meet you.  
Every day is a decision  
to join or not to join  
in the turning of the earth.  
It is a matter of choice, this dance:  
to stand again and step away  
from the familiar worries of a private bed  
into the waking world.  
Some days it's all I have to offer:  
the bare minimum: a basic willingness  
to turn, face the morning sky and  
let myself be—whirled  
one more time.

You say it's no small thing,  
my rising. You whisper, hum,  
begin even to sing  
of gratefulness: how my clouded face  
shows up for centuries

in your window every day.  
The lids of my eyes, half-shut,  
half-open, are a field,  
a place on which to drop  
seeds that fall like kisses or  
kisses that fall like seeds.

You say my offering is savory to you, and sweet.  
The sacrifice you want is a simple one.

I say: but this living is  
more terrible than I want to know.  
I offer you this day an unbearable heaviness:  
weight of the curtain  
dropped on my sister's eyes.  
I say: I am counting corpses of children  
and bullets that tear my city's streets, confess  
I have not done enough to stop them.  
Nor have I done enough, I fear,  
to protect and prepare my own sons.

You say: *enough, enough.*  
You are fed, satisfied, pleased even  
by my daily risings.  
The bread I give you is my breath  
wandering out to find you  
as I am, as you are, as we  
have always been.

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### **Jessie Diamond- YK pre-Amidah**

I take the prayers of this particular Amidah very seriously  
– especially phrases like  
“Write us in the book of Life  
. . . . Remember us for life.  
“ . . .the almighty who heals the sick, upholds those who fall,  
nurtures the life of every living thing  
“ . . .Frees the captive

When we gather at Haverford, I like to sit toward the middle  
or even the back of the auditorium  
so that I can see people in our Mishkan community

whom I know and love.

Every year I silently send thoughts of love, healing, support to friends whom I know are facing challenges and losses and to the community as a whole.

I'm sure many of you do something like this, as well. I've been sending love and support silently during Yom Kippur for two decades. There is a cumulative power to this ritual.

So how do we experience something like this as we witness each other and gather virtually? Yom Kippur reminds me that life challenges us always with new, often unexpected sorrows  
    Devastating losses – of spouses, children, friends  
    Unanticipated ill health – body and soul  
A new set of hearts that are breaking, broken, mending, or mended

This year we cope with these challenges  
In our homes under the weight a global pandemic  
Facing an election that will either end in tragedy  
or repair our nation.

I hope you will join me in these intentions for the coming year:

- That we radiate love and support to each other
- That our love and mutual support protects us
- That we do not succumb to the poison of panic or paralysis
- That we focus on what we are for – not for what we are against
- That we claim our power each day
  - email me and I will tell you how
- That we focus on what we can do every day
- not the unchangeable past or the future we cannot know.

May you feel wrapped in community, support, and love as together we use our power, our time, and our whole selves to work toward the world as it should be.

### **“Tshuvah 5781” Stacey Meadows**

I am greatly encouraged by the rabbinic and Kabbalistic teaching that T'shuvah is a foundational principle of the Cosmos—that it existed even before Creation and that it is, in fact,

the actual path of creation and renewal, not only during these Days of Awe, but every day. My Tshuvah is my re-turn to alignment with the flow of divine love and compassion—Rachamim.

Caring for myself, my companions on this journey and the world at large are only possible when I am aligned with loving compassion: My yearning for wholeness impels me to realign and Rachamim—deep, loving compassion—is the medicine that I need. There are so many moments these days when I recognize that loving compassion is simply not flowing. There is so much congealed pain in my heart that stands in the way of its flow.

Several weeks ago, my husband Christoph and I were in a car accident that left our car totaled. Fortunately, the accident did not result in serious physical injury. However, the emotional shock set off reverberations of an embodied trauma that harken back to the car accident 7 years ago that injured my son Gabe and led to my son Jonah's eventual death. This recent accident has been a wake-up call, propelling me to the next phase of my own physical, emotional, and spiritual healing. Perhaps 7 years is the end of one cycle. Perhaps I am entering the beginning of another.

If T'shuvah is all pervasive and available at every moment, how do I step in? Conscious connection with the Breath of All Life sustains my turning toward alignment. Practices of deep breathwork, meditation and prayer are my daily tools of realignment and renewal. I cannot function effectively without them. My prayer is to be a clear channel for Rachamim, so that I may be guided, moment to moment and throughout my life, to act for the sake of love and healing.

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**Not a Dream- Mindy Maslin and Sid Ozer, in Memory of their son Sam  
Yizkor Yom Kippur 5781 2020**

He was a gift many years in the dreaming  
By would be parents, desiring little else  
A happy kind boy, maybe a little awkward,  
Maybe following a drum beat all his own

At 6 he came out as an atheist  
At 9 he learned how to overcome self imposed obstacles  
At 12 he found his voice  
At 15 his cadence  
He flew, he soared he developed grit  
He existed  
He left us, but he existed  
How and Why should we go on?  
We can be and be better for he existed  
    Supported by a community we were not sure cared.  
We accepted love, embraces (some virtual), meals, gifts and cards from here to the  
moon and back  
They, YOU , told us to go on,  
You helped us create meaningful ways to honor and keep alive our Dream.  
Samuel continues to teach us...  
    To say the kind words,  
    To take the promised walks,  
    To Believe the best intent,  
    To Treasure each other outwardly, verbally, loudly.  
    To Be Kind, Be Bold, Embrace Adventure  
Sam continues to be with us and continues to inspire us  
We can be, be and be better for he existed.

Written for Samuel Forest Ozer  
For Yizkor 5781  
Mishkan Shalom  
Inspired by a favorite poem by Maya Angelou "When Great Trees Fall"

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— Andrew Stone 1 October 2019 - 8 September 2020 2 Tishrei - 19 Elul 5780

Of Course, the Akeda "...God tested Avraham And said to him: Avraham! He said: Here I am He said: "Pray take your son, Your only-one, Whom you love, Yitzhak And go forth to the land of Moriyya-Seeing And offer him up there as an offering-up Upon one of the mountains That I will tell you of." —Genesis xxii:1-2 "Your only-one, Whom you love" Love is making its first appearance in this old book, the rabbi tells us, And look what is happening to it. Why do we read this awful story? The living flame of Torah casts new light at each turning. Avraham has walked this trail before us, for us. We do not need the mountain, We do not need the donkey, the wood, the fire, the knife. We are all on this journey all the time. The ram in the thicket Does not usually appear. Over and over, the end is the same. What we love is not ours to keep. Commanded to go forth in love, knowing and not knowing: That which you love the most in this

world will be consumed completely. Therefore, Offer it up freely. And if we did not love, What kind of offering would that be? Whatever you love, in this created world, does not last. Whoever you love, in this created world, is not yours. Only That which has no beginning has no end. None of us is here to stay. Be ready, to make the offering or to be the offering. This is the Festival of Mortality.