SELECTIONS FROM:

The Machzor In Poetry

A COMPANION TO THE ROSH HASHANAH

AND YOM KIPPUR SERVICES

by

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OHR ZARU'A LATZADDIK

אור זרוע לצדיק

Like seeds sown in fertile soil,

Light is the harvest

Of those who toil

For righteousness

With the upright of heart—

Abundant joy

To the world

They impart.

* * *

KOL NIDREI

כל נדרי

Any vow I might take,

Thoughtless promise

I might make,

Untrue word or gentle fib,

Undertaking I might give,

Affirmation or evasion,

Declaration, formulation,

Unsupported allegation,

Resolution, circumlocution—

For all,

I now beg

Absolution.

מיום כפורים זה

From this Day of Atonement

And until the next—

May it bring only goodness—

O, Lord,

Be not vexed;

For You know the rashness

That flows from a man's lip,

And, with it, in an instant,

How truth can readily slip.

So, cancel all those vows

I should not have made,

To family or to friends,

Or those with whom I trade.

Efface them, I beg You,

That they may leave no trace,

So fellow man, as well as God,

I may confidently face.

* * *

V'NISLACH

ונסלח

Grant forgiveness

To our nation

And to those

Joining the fold;

Consider their sins

As errors,

As the pure life

Replaces the old.

Chazzan:

Forgive, we beg You,

In Your great loving-kindness,

The sins of our people this day;

As You've done

From when they left Egypt,

When You were heard to say:

'In My mercy

I'll forgive them all

For embracing

The sinful way.'

* * *

Shehecheyyanu

שהחיינו

We bless You, Lord,

And appreciate,

What You've done for us

Until this date:

Keeping us alive,

Letting us thrive,

With so many blessings

To narrate.

* * *

L'EL ORECH DIN

לאל עורך דין

He is crowned as king,

And takes His seat

As supreme judge –

Of man's conceit.

לבוחן לבבות

He probes our heart

To its core,

With testimony

And utterance pure.

לוותיק ועושה חסד

Many kindnesses

He has displayed –

His covenant,

With pride, arrayed.

לחומל מעשיו

To all His creatures,

Compassion He's shown;

He purifies those

Acclaimed as His own.

ליודע מחשבות

He knows their thoughts

On judgment day;

Suppressing His anger

Along the way.

ללובש צדקות

Righteousness

Is His attire;

He raises us

From the sinful mire.

לנורא תהלות

Before Him, awe

Is displayed each day;

He removes penitents

From harm's way.

לעונה לקוראיו

He answers those

Who cry out for aid;

His mercy He places

On parade.

לצופה נסתרות

He probes motives

On judgment day;

Reclaiming the lapsed

For the right way.

לשומר אוהביו...

לתומך תמימיו

Those that love Him,

He protects from the fray;

Supporting the pious

On judgment day,

That, by His side,

They might ever stay.

* * *

UV'NUCHO YO'MAR

ובנוחה יאמר

When the desert Ark

Came to rest,

By the Israelites,

God was addressed:

‘Arise, Lord,

Take Your residence,

In the house reserved

For Your Presence;

Let Your priests

Be clothed

In righteousness;

Let Your pious praise

Your timelessness;

For the sake of David,

Whom You appointed,

Delay not to send us

Your anointed.’

תורתי אל תעזובו

The Lord’s response was

Firm and clear:

‘To My Torah

You must adhere;

It’s a tree of life

Whose roots

Spread wide;

Those savouring it

Are well-satisfied;

Its ways are pleasant

In every way;

Peace and truth

Ever on display.’

השיבנו יי' אליך

Show us the path

That leads to You,

And our waywardness

We’ll review;

Restore the age

When virtue thrived,

And to do Your will,

All men contrived.

_____

THE CHAZZAN’S PERSONAL MEDITATION

הנני

Here am I,

Devoid of standing;

Trembling before

The all-demanding

God enthroned on Israel’s praise,

To present her petitions

In prayerful ways.

היה נא מצליח
דרכי

God of our
fathers—

the first to
pray—

In their merit

Let me not
display

Anxiety or
fear

At my
unenviable
role,

To petition

And extol;

To enable
those

I represent

To secure
promptly

Their
prayers'
ascent.

ואף על פי שאיני כדאי

Lord, who am I

To plead for mercy

That You treat not Israel

Adversely;

To stand before You,

What am I?

Just an abject sinner

In Your eye!

ונא אל תפשיעם בחטאתי

So, do not put these folk

To shame,

Nor me who ministers

In their name,

But accept my plea

As if I were

A veteran sage, a regular,

Whose life was spent

In contemplation,

Whose voice inspired them

To elation,

Whose face is kind,

Whose beard is grown,

Who treats all strangers

As if well-known.

ותגער בשטן

Remove any impediment

To my presentation,

And accept indulgently

Any innovation

Or omission that I might make—

View my prayers with favour

For my sake.

וכל צרותינו...הפך לנו

All our anguish

And affliction

Convert to joy

Without restriction,

For life and peace—

No further friction.

שכל המלאכים

May the ministering angels,

Who carry prayer

Before Your throne

And into the glare

Of the heavenly court,

Sustain our pleas;

Securing mercy

For those on their knees;

And with compassion,

Lord, please hear

The prayers of Israel

That they bring near.

_____

KIY K'SHIMCHA

כי כשמך

Your Name denotes

A mercy unbounded;

You never pursue

A charge unfounded.

You're ever ready

To be appeased,

For You take no pleasure

In the deceased,

But only in

Repentance sincere,

When man chooses life,

To have You near.

You, as man's creator,

Know his inclination;

For he is but

Flesh and blood,

Most lowly of station.

אדם יסודו מעפר

Man's origin

Is the dust;

Full of envy

And of lust;

His destiny

Is to return

To the abyss

And the worm;

With stress

He earns

His livelihood—

The legacy

Of flesh and blood.

משול כחרס הנשבר

Man is like

A broken shard;

A withered grass,

From joy debarred;

A faded flower,

A passing shade;

A cloud disgorging—

Age-decayed.

וכחלום יעוף

Man blows

Hot and cold;

He staggers

Through life

With a blindfold;

His dreams elusive,

When he's old.

* * *

ELOHEINU...HEYEIH IM PIYFIYYOT

היה עם פיפות

God, and God of our fathers,

Indulge our leaders of prayer,

Who stand in supplication

For Your people everywhere.

הבינם מה שידברו

Teach them the prayers

They might recite;

Inspire them with hymns

To delight;

Respond to all that they implore,

Petition, praise,

And adore.

באור פניך יהלכון

In the light of Your Presence

Let them proceed,

Bowing before You,

Let them intercede;

May they bless Your people

With lips open wide;

May Your blessings to them

Never be denied.

עמך בפיהם יברכון

Guide the mouths

Of Your synagogue leaders

Who fervently seek Your grace;

May their remorseful prayers,

On this holy day,

Remove sin

Without trace.

והם בתוך יעבורון

The prayers

From the dais

They articulate,

Direct, we beg You,

To heaven's gate.

ועיניהם לך מיחלות

Your people's eyes,

From them,

Don't waver;

And theirs search out

Your heavenly favour.

גשים מול ארון הקדש

When they approach the Ark,

They plead, in awe,

That the heat of Your anger

May speedily thaw.

ועמך מסביבים

Your people surround them

As a wall;

And from heaven You issue

A merciful call.

עין נושאים לך

To heaven they look

In expectation,

Pouring out their hearts

As a libation;

And from heaven You'll hear,

Granting expiation.

שלא יכשלו בלשונם

May our synagogue spokesmen

Never blunder;

May their concentration

Never wander;

May all the words

That they express

Never require

Any redress.

May the petitions they offer

For their congregation,

Be fully endorsed,

Without

Protestation.

* * *

OCHILAH LA'EL

אוחילה לאל

My hope is in God,

That He will bestow,

An eloquence

That will outflow,

To touch the souls

Of our congregation,

That it might sing
With true elation.

לאדם מערכי לב

A man may know

What he wants to say,

But words of prayer

Are no word-play;

So, open my lips

To declare Your praise,

And may Your Spirit invest

My every phrase.