

The Sower

Bulletin & Voice of

THE FIRST SPIRITUAL TEMPLE

55 Main St., Route 28

West Harwich MA 02645

E-Mail: fst@fst.org

Founded June 28, 1883



Telephone: 508-292-6609

Web Site: www.fst.org

Vol. 138, No. 1 Sep-Oct 2021

The Wonder and Mystery of Yom Kippur

During the month of September, those of the Jewish faith celebrate their most holy and sacred time of year: *Rosh Hashanah*, the New Year, followed by ten sacred days, all culminating in *Yom Kippur*, the most Holy Day of Atonement.

It marks a period of honest reassessment, of deep prayer, of focused meditation, of promise, of hope, of light, and of covenant with God.

Every religious season should mark the reliving of an ancient covenant between God and His/Her children, as conceived through Abraham, as carried forth into written law by Moses, as nurtured and protected by Buddha and the Prophets, as fulfilled by Jesus Christ, and as rekindled by the prophet Mohammed.

Where have we succeeded? Where have we failed? Where have we shown compassion? Where have we been thoughtless? Where have we demonstrated humility? Where have we been arrogant? Where has love, as so profoundly and beautifully manifested by Jesus, guided our thoughts and our deeds? Where have resentment and anger poisoned that love? Finally, where have we judged? Where have we forgiven? Many fail to recognize that when we fail to forgive, we judge.

The scrolls of life eternally stand before us - in their resplendent light, as well as in their shadowy darkness. It is time to repent. It is time for us to seek forgiveness. It is time for us to forgive. It is time for us to rebuild the shattered temples of our lives. Where there is no Crucifixion, there can be no Resurrection! Where there is no forgiveness and compassion, there is no Love!

“Father, forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” These are words which Christ uttered when he taught people how to pray. Will God forgive us our tres-

passes? Of course! But **forgiveness** begins with **forgiving**.

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” These are the words which the Christ uttered upon the cross at Golgotha. Will God forgive our trespasses, even in our ignorance? Of course! But **forgiveness** begins with **faith** in God’s Grace.

“And it came about on the next day that Moses said to the people, ‘You yourselves have committed a great sin; and now, I am going up to the LORD. Perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.’” And Moses did just that. He went up Mt. Sinai and spent forty days praying and atoning for the sons and daughters of Israel, and God forgave them. Will God forgive us our transgressions? Of course! But **forgiveness** begins with **atonement** which leads to **at-one-ment**.

The *Talmud* states: **“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; therefore, rejoice; forgive, and forgiveness is thine!”**

Every Scripture preaches the wondrous power of forgiveness. Every day that we awake from sweet slumber represents a new beginning; a new year, so to speak. Every day that we awake, God, in gracious mercy, gives us the blessed opportunity to see and to contemplate our errors; to repent for those errors; to pray for forgiveness; to forgive ourselves and those who may have hurt us; and to make atonement. Thus, we can begin each day with the healing power of Love and Forgiveness.

Forgiveness begins with forgiving; and forgiving begins with the realization that life is basically **good** and that we must **cherish** it, despite all that seems evil, despite the immense pain and hurt suffered by so many, despite the injuries inflicted upon us and inflicted upon others **by**

us. Despite all that seems unjust, God created life; therefore, **life is good!**

“And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.” It was not just good; it was **very** good. In the Twenty-Seventh Psalm, one of my favorites, the Psalmist says: ***“I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD, in the land of the living.”***

Life is good! Let us never forget this.

Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Ramadan, the whole of the Lenten Season, Palm Sunday, Easter Sunday, Passover; these are all times of great transformation for the Human Family, where we can become transfigured, as was Christ, from the shadows of Crucifixion to the luminescence of Resurrection. But, Rosh Hashanah doesn't do it; Yom Kippur doesn't do it; Palm Sunday doesn't do it; Easter Sunday doesn't do it; the spilling of the blood of Jesus didn't do it. So, what does?

What makes it all work are **prayer** and **at-one-ment**. That requires transformation. That requires us to live a life of harmlessness and non-judgemental humility, seasoned with kindness.

The Book of Life opens for us all, and we are presented with a choice. Is life good, or is life dreadful? Are we inscribed in the *Book of Life*, or in the *Book of Death*? I believe that no matter what life may present to us, **Life is good!** Therefore, we should treasure it, not despair it. **Life is good!** Therefore, we should affirm it, not deny it. **Life is good!** Therefore, we should have faith in it, not give up on its possibilities. **Life is good!** Therefore, we should live it to the fullest, in all its joy and suffering, not cast it aside. **Life is good!** Therefore, let **your** life, let **our** life, let the life of our Blessed Mother Earth and our Human Family become a testimony to life's **Goodness!**

In Deuteronomy 30:15-16, it is written: ***“See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil, in that I commanded thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His ordinances . . . therefore choose life, that thou mayest live.”***

Through repentance and at-one-ment, through prayer and forgiveness, our faith remains alive, not dead; and we are borne upon the wings of grace and salvation out of death, and we are **re-born** with new hope and new life.

We can then turn our faces from the shadows of death and return to that from which we were all born. Turning and **returning** - **Teshuvah** in Hebrew - are essential to mystical and magical transformation and healing.

Life's journey is all about Teshuvah!

We should endeavor to bring out from within ourselves, from within each other, and from within our society the divine essence which God so lovingly infused within Creation so that we may look upon our lives and marvel, as did Jacob: ***“Surely the Lord is in this place!”***

“Awake, awake, Oh sleepers, from your sleep. Oh slumberers, arouse ye from your slumbers and examine your deeds. Return in repentance and remember your Creator.” Thus, were the words of Maimonides.

“The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” Thus, were the words of Paul to the Corinthians. Do you hear the trumpet? It's calling us all right now. Listen! It's calling you. Listen and be raised! Are you inscribed in the **Book of Life**, or the **Book of Death**?

On the Holy Day of Atonement, Jews throughout the planet listen to these words:

“A horn blast reverberates through the dark reaches of the universe. The angelic hosts, drawn up in array before the throne of God, shudder at the sound. It is the Day of Atonement . . . Lord of the World, I stand before You and before my neighbors, pardoning, forgiving, struggling to be open to all who have hurt and angered me. Be this hurt of body or soul, of honor or property; whether they were forced to hurt me or did so willingly; whether by accident or intent; whether by word or deed, I forgive them because we are all human. May no one feel guilty on my account. I am ready to take upon myself the holy commandment: Love your neighbor as yourself.”

If we all lived by these sacred words, what a difference it would make in our Nation, our Society, our families, and in Humanity. Spirit once said: ***“Every morning that you awaken should be a Rosh Hashanah. Every evening, as you close the day, should be a Yom Kippur.”*** How true!

~Rev. Simeon