

Creative Avodah Service

She'ma

I am here, I am now, asking when, asking how—only I, only Thou, only One
Fill my heart, still my soul, I am part of this whole—I will sing out my soul to the One.

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֶחָד.

Sh'ma Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad.

Breathing in, breathing out, I am with and without -- hear my voice singing out to the One

בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

Baruch shem k'vod malchuto l'olam va-ed.

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֶחָד.

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Music by Josh Nelson

Part 1: What we have lost?

- Death and loss around the world
- Loneliness and isolation
- Loss of hope and optimism
- Personal and family hardships

For Discussion:

What have you lost in the past year?

Part 2: What we have gained?

- Reconnections with others
- Inner growth
- Creativity and problem solving
- Learning

For Discussion:

What have you gained in the past year?

Part 3: How is it with your soul?

- P'shat—surface, literal, direct
I'm barely getting by
- Remez—hints, meaning beyond the literal
I'm ready to look deeper into myself
- D'rash—seek, comparative
I understand where I am and seek to understand others
- Sod—secret, esoteric or mystical
I'm thinking about how to make sense of where we are in a larger context.

For Reflection:

Which of these are you connecting to most right now?

How in tune are you with yourself?

What do you need to live more fully?

Part 4: Connecting to the Divine

י ה ו ה

Yod—Praise

Yah is the shortened form of the Tetragramaton.
That name was recited only by the High Priest
only in the Temple in Jerusalem
only on Yom Kippur.
Neither Temple nor High Priest exist today.
But the sound *Yah*
could be an onomatopoeia
for breathing in and breathing out.
We pronounce the Name with every breath. *Yah*.
Kol haneshama t' halel yah (Psalm 150:6)
Every breath will praise God's Name.
Every place is a Temple.
Every person is a High Priest.
Every day is Yom Kippur.
Every breath is God's Name.

Hay—Be Present

When God called to Abraham,
Abraham answered
Hineni, Here I Am.
When God called to Moses, Moses answered
Hineni, Here I Am.
We sit in the sanctuary, but our mind wanders.
God calls to us, but we do not answer.
The *hay* reminds us.
Be present.
Give your whole self over to God.
Not just today,
Every Day.
Hineni—Here I Am.

Vav—Argue

Vav is the letter of joining.
Vav means “and.” One and another.
We would think that the joining would be
H O R I Z O N T A L
But the *vav* is vertical.
Joining with another, with God,
Does not imply agreement.
This *and* that.
Judgment *and* compassion
Justice *and* mercy
Our tradition of argument is contained
in the letter *vav*.
God speaks.
We reply, *and*...
The argument continues.

Hay—See the Divine in Others

Written vertically
the Name is a stick figure
of the human form.
The *Yod*'s uplifted head,
the *Hay*'s shoulders and arms,
the *Vav*'s connecting spine,
and the hips and legs of the final *Hay*,
stepping lightly.
We are embodiments of the Divine.
Imagine the letters on your neighbor
near you, across from you.
Each is made in God's image.
Treat them as such.

Adapted from Rabbi Joseph B. Meszler

For Reflection:

Which of these letters best represents your connection to the Divine?
Which of these do you connect to the least?
How do you want to relate to God in the year to come?