



THE PARCHMENTS ARE
BURNING...

A program by Hillel's Joseph Meyerhoff
Center for Jewish Learning

"For the Parchments May Burn, but the Letters Are Flying Free." was written by Hillel's Joseph Meyerhoff Center for Jewish Learning in the wake of terrorist attacks in the United States and Israel in 2001-2002. It is dedicated to all victims of ideological hatred. We gratefully acknowledge the support of the David and Ruth Musher Philanthropic Fund which made this booklet possible.

This book contains God's name and should be treated with the same care as a prayerbook.

Additional copies may be obtained from Hillel's Joseph Meyerhoff Center for Jewish Learning, 202-449-6591, by e-mail, info@hillel.org, or as an Adobe Acrobat file at www.hillel.org. Please specify the publication "For the Parchment May Burn, but the Letters Are Flying Free."

The largest Jewish campus organization in the world, Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, is committed to creatively empowering and engaging Jewish students through its network of over 500 regional centers, campus Foundations, program centers and affiliates. Its long-standing dedication to building Jewish identity, while nurturing intellectual and spiritual growth in a pluralistic community, positions Hillel as a leader in building a stronger Jewish people and stronger Jewish future.



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FOR THE PARCHMENTS MAY BURN,
BUT THE LETTERS ARE FLYING FREE...

THE PARCHMENTS ARE BURNING

Narrator: In the year 70 CE, the Romans destroyed the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem and took control of the region. This story takes place during the reign of the Emperor Hadrian who squashed the Bar Kochba rebellion of 135 CE and sought to rebuild Jerusalem as a pagan city in his honor. During the infamous Hadrianic persecutions Jews were forbidden to live in Jerusalem, study Torah and observe the commandments. It was during this time that the most prominent Talmudic scholars were publicly executed. Rabbi Hanina Ben Tradyon was one of ten who have been memorialized in High Holiday liturgy.

This is his story:

Narrator: Our Rabbis taught: When Rabbi Yossi ben Kisma fell ill, Rabbi Hanina ben Tradyon went to visit him. Rabbi Yossi said to him:

Rabbi Yossi: Hanina, my brother, don't you know that Heaven has ordained this Roman nation to reign? Even though she has laid waste to God's House, burnt His Temple, killed His pious ones and caused His best ones to perish, she continues to stand! Yet, what is this I hear about you? That even though you know it is forbidden, you are gathering large crowds in public to teach them with a Torah scroll in your lap.

Hanina: Let the heavens have mercy.

Rabbi Yossi: I speak to you words that make sense and you say, let the heavens have mercy? I wouldn't be surprised if they burn both you and your Torah at the stake...

Narrator: It wasn't long before Rabbi Yossi Ben Kisma died and the Romans eulogized him with great fanfare. When they returned from the funeral they found Rabbi Hanina teaching Torah to the multitudes with a Torah scroll in his lap. They tied him together with his Torah and surrounded him with kindling wood. The executioner took sponges of wool and soaked them in water, and placed them on Hanina's heart so he would not die quickly. The executioner lit the fire and Hanina's daughter cried,

Beruriah, Rabbi Hanina's Daughter: Father, is this what you deserve?

Hanina: This might be difficult if I was being burned alone, but the one who would disgrace the Torah may as well disgrace me.

Narrator: His students asked,

Students: Rebbe what do you see?

Hanina: The parchments are burning, but the letters are flying free.

A NEW PSALM FROM OLD WORDS

- 1) Why, O Lord, do You stand aloof, heedless in times of trouble?
(Ps. 10:1)
- 2) The wicked in his arrogance hounds the lowly -- may they be caught in the schemes they devise! The wicked crows about his unbridled lusts.
(Ps. 10:2)
- 3) He thinks, "I shall not be shaken, through all time never be in trouble."
(Ps. 10:6)
- 4) His mouth is full of oaths, deceit, and fraud; mischief and evil are under his tongue.
(Ps. 10:7)
- 5) He lurks in outlying places; in ambush he slays the innocent; his eyes spy out the hapless.
(Ps. 10:8)
- 6) He waits in ambush like a lion in his lair; waits to seize the lowly; he seizes the lowly as he pulls his net shut;
(Ps. 10:9)
- 7) He stoops, he crouches, and the hapless fall prey to his might
(Ps. 10:10)
- 8) Blessings cover the mouth of the righteous but lawlessness
(Chamas) covers the mouth of the wicked
(Prov. 10:6)
- 9) They will falter and stumble, but we rally and gather strength
(Ps. 20:9)

“ FOR THE PARCHMENTS MAY BURN,



- (1) למה יהנה תעמוד בקחוק תעלים לעתות בערה:
- (2) בגאנת רשע ידלק עני ותפשו במזמות זו השבו:
- (3) אמר בלבו כל אמוט לדור נדור אשר ל' א ברע:
- (4) אלה פיהו מלא ומרמות נתוך תחת לשונו עמל נאנו:
- (5) ישב במארב הצרים במסתרים יקרוג נקי עיניו לחלכה יצפוני:
- (6) ארוב במסתר כאריה בסכיה ארוב לחטוף עני יחטוף עני במשכו ברשתו:
- (7) יכה ישח ונפל בעצומיו חלכאים
- (8) ברכות לר' אש צדיק ופי רשעים יכסה המס:
- (9) המה ברעו נפלו ואנתנו קמנו ונתעודד:

ALONA ABRAHAM

A GREAT TIME IN THE STATES

The first 10 days of September were giddy ones for Alona Abraham, who was in Boston on her first trip to the United States. She went whale-watching, shopping and walking in Cambridge, said Dror Veisman, a college friend with whom she stayed. “She said, ‘Oh, Mommy, I’m having a great time,’ said Miriam Abraham, her mother who lives in Ashdod, Israel. “She was laughing and talking about going on picnics and sightseeing with her friends.”

Ms. Abraham, 30 – the oldest of three children and daughter of Israeli immigrants from Bombay – worked long hours at Applied Materials, where she was an industrial engineer. So she took her vacations seriously, spending weeks in Paris and Amsterdam and going on African safaris. Independent and religious, she often traveled alone and kept kosher wherever she happened to be.

Seeing America was one of her dreams. She liked the cool weather, the low prices, the cosmopolitan cities. And for a few weeks she could escape the bombings and shootings at home in Israel. She planned to return again and again. She was on United Airlines Flight 175, which struck the south tower on Sept. 11.

*Profiles are based on Portraits 9/11/01 from The New York Times
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ZHANETTA TSOY

HER FIRST DAY AT WORK

On Sept. 11 at 9 A.M., Zhanetta Tsoy's life was to begin anew. It was Day 1 of a new job in a new country, a place where she and her husband believed their future were as big and bright as the New York Skyline.

Fresh from Kazakhstan, Ms. Tsoy, 32, could hardly believe she was about to go to work in one of the world's tallest buildings, as an accountant for Marsh & McLennan. She was so excited that shortly after arriving in America, on Aug. 23, Ms. Tsoy dragged her husband and 4-year-old daughter on a sightseeing trip to the World Trade Center. Her husband, Vyacheslav Ligay, said she was "very hurried" when she left for her first morning of work.

"She was afraid that she can't be late," he said. "Zhanetta wanted very much to make a good start."

In the days since the towers collapsed, Mr. Ligay has looked for the words to explain the disaster to their daughter, Alexandra. He has searched for the photos of their trip to the trade center, but they have also disappeared.

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TIMOTHY HASKELL

PREPARED FOR EMERGENCIES

Timothy Haskell trained his Dalmatian, Blaze, to “stop, drop and roll.” He took the dog to the school where his sister, Dawn Haskell-Carbone, teaches. “Timmy would say to the dog, ‘Your clothes are on fire! What do you do?’” she recalled. “She would stop, throw herself on the ground and roll. He would ask the kids, ‘What if you smell smoke?’ The dog would crawl on her belly over to a door. Timmy would say, ‘Feel the door first to see if it’s hot.’ And the dog would put her paws on the door.” Timothy, 34, and two of his brothers, Thomas and Kenneth, followed their father into firefighting. His brother Thomas also died in the World Trade Center attack.

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ALLAN FEINBERG

Outside Engine Co. 54 on Eighth Avenue, where flowers, candles and posters form a makeshift memorial for missing men, Alan Feinberg's name stands out among those belonging to Irish- and Italian-Americans, the mainstay of the Fire Department.

Posted on one exterior wall was an essay by Feinberg's daughter Tara, 18, a freshman at the University of Florida in Gainesville. Written two weeks before the Sept. 11 terror attack, the words describe Tara's pride that her father regularly saved lives for a living, and his role as an active parent. "When my father wasn't out fighting fires or saving the world, he was busy running the household and taking care of my younger brother and me," she wrote, recalling that he coached sports teams and was the "class dad," taking charge of the search for missing students on field trips. The dark side of the job, however, was that Tara would "cry hysterically when my dad had to leave for work, wondering if this would be the last time I ever saw him."

Feinberg also left a son, Michael, 15, and his wife, Wendy. He was one of a handful of firemen known to be Jewish who were lost in the Trade Center disaster. According to the Ner Tamid Society, the fraternal organization for Jewish fire personnel, there are some 400 Jewish firefighters among New York's bravest. Paul Tauber, president of the Ner Tamid Society and chief of Battalion 50 in Jamaica, Queens, said while the organization was looking into whether some of the other missing firemen were Jewish, "We really don't delineate. Firefighters are firefighters. We go by decency and dedication first, denomination second."

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ABE ZELMANOWITZ

A FRIEND TO THE END

A year before the World Trade Center tragedy, Abe ("Avremel") Zelmanowitz visited Israel and decided to buy himself a plot near the burial place of his parents. On August 5, 2002 he was buried there, after his remains had been positively identified a week earlier.

Zelmanowitz, an Orthodox Jew who resided in Brooklyn, has been celebrated as a hero by President Bush and dubbed "the saint of the burning towers" by the American media.

A few minutes after the first plane hit the World Trade Center where Zelmanowitz was working as a computer programmer, he rushed to see how his friend and colleague, Ed Beyea, a paraplegic, was managing. Beyea was left completely paralyzed by a diving accident 20 years earlier and was always accompanied by a nurse. Zelmanowitz urged her to leave the burning building immediately, promising to remain with his friend. Zelmanowitz then called Beyea's mother and held his cellular telephone up to Beyea's mouth. Beyea assured his mother everything would be okay and said his friend, Abe, was taking care of him.

Zelmanowitz's sister-in-law, Havah Zelmanowitz said that she and her husband had managed to speak to Avremel a short time before the end. "He told Yankel and I that everything was alright. He said he had enough air. We urged him to leave the building as soon as possible, but he said he had to remain behind to help some people. A few minutes later, the building collapsed."

"A few days before the terrorist attack," his brother Yankel related, "Avremel attended a Sabbath shiur [lesson]. The rabbi spoke about sacrificing oneself for the love of God. Avremel told the rabbi: 'You speak of the great historical heroes, like Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yochai, but how can a simple Jew like myself show his love of God?' The rabbi made some suggestions, but Avremel was not satisfied, so he asked the same question once again. The second reply didn't satisfy him either, nor did the third. But a few days later, he got the reply."

FOR THE PARCHMENTS MAY BURN,
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TWO LETTERS FROM STUDENTS KILLED IN THE BOMBING OF THE FRANK SINATRA CAFETERIA AT HEBREW UNIVERSITY IN JERUSALEM

...This may sound a little strange but, lately I have found myself thinking occasionally about my mother's father, Thomas, who I never had the privilege to know. I can't help but wonder that he would think of what I'm doing. How interesting it would be to discuss with him our (most likely different) interpretations of the Bible. I don't know what he would say of my being in Israel and studying at a Yeshiva - I'm not even sure what most of the people at your Thanksgiving dinner think of it. Perhaps they think I'm kind of crazy for being in a "dangerous" part of the world. Perhaps they are right. But, I feel that I'm doing something very important. I am growing and changing. I don't know where this learning is taking me, but I think it's where I should be going.

Gran, you always asked me to make a blessing at Thanksgiving dinner, so, let me make this blessing: I want to bless all of us, myself, Gran, my Mom, my Dad, Rivkah, my entire family, and everyone at Thanksgiving dinner that we should have strength to continue doing the things we know are right even when others might think we're crazy or be concerned for us. And that all of us should continue to strive and grow. May it be God's will that we all ultimately reach wherever it is that we are going. May it be His will.

With much love,
Shalom,
Ben

Ben Blutstein was enrolled at Machon Pardes to train to be a teacher of Jewish Studies. Before that he had been president of Hillel at Dickinson College. He was one of the seven victims claimed by the July 31, 2002 terrorist attack at the Frank Sinatra Cafeteria at Hebrew University.

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JERUSALEM: THERE'S NOWHERE ELSE I'D RATHER BE by Marla Bennett

I've been living in Israel for over a year and a half now, and my favorite thing to do here is go to the grocery store. I know, not the most exciting response from someone living in Jerusalem these days. But going grocery shopping here—deciphering the Hebrew labels and delighting in all of the kosher products—as well as picking up my dry cleaning, standing in long lines at the bank, and waiting in the hungry mob at the bakery—means that I live here. I am not a tourist; I deal with Israel and all of its complexities, confusion, joy and pain every single day. And I love it.

I came back to Israel a year and a half ago... and what a year and a half it has been. In September 2000, I began studying at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies, where I have been learning traditional Jewish texts from master teachers, with other students who represent a broad range of Jewish backgrounds and perspectives.

But my learning is a result not only of the hours I spend pouring over material in the Beit Midrash (Jewish house of study), but also of my life in Jerusalem... Here in Jerusalem I've found a community of seekers: people who like me who want to try living in another country, who want to know more about Judaism; people who are trying to figure out exactly what they want their lives to look like. The air is charged with our debates and discussions as we try to assimilate into our lives all that we've learned. Life here is magical.

I have learned more in my year and a half of study at Pardes than I learned during my entire undergraduate career.

It's also been difficult. Just a month after I arrived the current "Intifada" began. My time here has been dramatically affected by both the security situation and by the events happening around me. I am extremely cautious about where I go and when; I avoid crowded areas and alter my routine when I feel at all threatened. But I also feel energized by the opportunity to support Israel during a difficult period.

This is undoubtedly an important historic moment for both Israel and for the Jewish people—I have the privilege of reporting to my friends and family in the U.S. about the realities of living in Israel at this time and I also have the honor of being an American choosing to remain in Israel, and assist, however minimally, in Israel's triumph.

As I look ahead to the next year and a half that I will spend in Israel, I feel excited, worried, but more than anything else, lucky. I am excited that I can spend another year and a half in a place that truly feels like home, a home in which I am surrounded by an amazing community of bright and interesting friends who constantly help me to question and define myself. I am worried for Israel—a historic moment this is, but also difficult and unpredictable. I feel lucky because the excitement always wins out over the worry. The exhilaration of Torah and Talmud study, close friendships and a lively community far outweigh the fears. Stimulation abounds in Jerusalem—and I need only go to the supermarket to be struck once again by how lucky I am to live here. There is no other place in the world where I would rather be right now.

Marla Bennett had been studying to be a Jewish teacher in Israel at Machon Pardes before her life was cut short at the Frank Sinatra Cafeteria at Hebrew University. Before coming to Israel she had been a profound asset to her campus community at U.C. Berkeley.

FOR THE PARCHMENTS MAY BURN,
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A HOPEFUL LAMENT

- 1) A Song of Ascents. Out of the depths I call You, O Lord
(Ps. 130:1)
- 2) Why, O Lord, do You stand aloof, heedless in times of trouble?
(Ps. 10:1)
- 3) How long shall the wicked, O Lord, how long shall the wicked exult,
shall they utter insolent speech, shall all evildoers vaunt themselves?
(Ps. 94:3)
- 4) How long, O Lord; will You ignore me forever? How long will You hide
Your face from me?
- 5) How long will I have cares on my mind, grief in my heart all day?
How long will my enemy have the upper hand? (Ps. 13:2-3)
- 6) See how numerous my enemies are, and how unjustly they hate me!
(Ps. 25:19)
- 7) Listen to my cry, for I have been brought very low; save me from my
pursuers, for they are too strong for me. (Ps. 142:7)
- 8) For You are not a God who desires wickedness; evil cannot abide with You.
(Ps. 5:5)
- 9) Too long have I dwelt with those who hate peace.
- 10) I am all peace; but when I speak they are for war. (Ps. 120:6-7)
- 11) They collapse and lie fallen but we rally and gather strength.
- 12) O Lord, grant victory! May the King answer us when we call.
(Ps. 20:9-10)
- 13) May the Lord grant strength to His people; may the Lord bestow on
His people wellbeing. (Ps. 29:11)
- 14) Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; those who love you shall prosper.
- 15) Peace be within your walls, and prosperity within your palaces.
- 16) For my brothers and companions sakes, I will now say, Peace be within you.
- 17) Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek your good
(Ps. 122:6-9)

FOR THE PARCHMENTS MAY BURN,



- 1) שיר המעלות מפעמקים קראתיך יהוה:
- 2) למה יהוה תעמד ברחוק תעלים לעתות בצרה:
- 3) עד מתי רשעים יהוה עד מתי רשעים יעלזו:
- 4) עד אנה יהוה תשכחני נצח עד אנה תסתיר את פניך ממני:
- 5) עד אנה אשית עצות בנפשי יגון בלבבי יוקם עד אנה ירום איבי עלי:
- 6) ראה איבי כי רבו ושנאת חמס שנאוני:
- 7) הקשיבה אל רנתי כי דלותי מאד הצילני מרדפי כי אמצו ממני:
- 8) כי לא אל חפץ רשע אתה לא יגרך רע:
- 9) רבת שכנה לה נפשי עם שונא שלום:
- 10) אני שלום וכי אדבר המה למלחמה:
- 11) המה כרעו ונפלו ואנחנו קמנו ונתעודד:
- 12) יהוה הושיעה המלך יעננו ביום קראנו:
- 13) יהוה עז לעמו יתן יהוה יברך את עמו בשלום:
- 14) שאלו שלום ירושלם ישליו אהביך:
- 15) יהי שלום בחילך שלוה בארמנותיך:
- 16) למען אחי ורעי אדברה נא שלום בך:
- 17) למען בית יהוה אלהינו אבקשה טוב לך:

EL MALEI RACHAMIM

אל מלא רחמים

El malei rachamim shochen ba-
m'romim, ham'tzeh menucha
nechona al kanfei hashechina be-
ma'alot kedoshim u-tehorim ke-zohar
ha-rakiah mazhirim et
nishmot harugey ha-teror she-
halchu le-olamam ba'avur she-
anachnu mitpalelim ba-ad hazkarat
nishmatam, lachen ba'al ha-
rachamim yastirem be-seter
kenafav le-olamim ve-yitzror bi-
tzror ha-chayim et nishmatam,
Adonay hu nachalatam ve-yanuchu
be-shalom al mishkavam ve-nomar
amen.

אל מלא רחמים שוכן במרומים, המצא
מנוחה נכונה על פני השכינה במעלות
קדושים וטהורים כזוהר הרקיע
מזהירים את נשמות הרוגי הטורח
שהלכו לעולמם, בעבור שאנחנו
מתפללים בעד הזכרת נשמתם, לכן בעל
הרחמים יסתירם בסתר בגפו לעולמים,
ויצור בצרור החיים את נשמתם,
ויהיה הוא נחלתם, וינחה בשלום על
משכבם, ונאמר אמן:

O God, full of mercy, Who dwells on high, grant proper rest on the wings of the Divine Presence – in the lofty levels of the holy and the pure ones, who shine like the glow of the firmament for the souls the victims of terror who have gone on to their world because we are praying for in remembrance of their souls. May their resting place be in the Garden of Eden – therefore may the Master of mercy shelter them in the shelter of His wings for eternity; and may He bind their souls in the Bond of Life. God is their heritage, and may they repose in peace on their resting place. Now let us respond: Amen.

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מתִּי
רחל (המשוררת)
הם בלבד נותרו לי
ל'א ינאץ המנת סבינו ההד.

במסנה הקרך, בער ב היום
יקיפוני חקש יליוני ד'ם

ברית אמת היא לנו, קשר לא נקרד
רק אשר אבד לי – קנני לעד.

MY DEAD

The Poet Rahel

They alone are left to me, Only they
will not be pierced by death's sharp knife.

At the crossroads on the way
At the eventime of day

Silence surrounds me
Stillness is my companion

It is the true covenant for us a knot never severed
Only that I lost what I had possessed forever.

--Rahel

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MOURNERS KADDISH

קדיש יתום

יתגדל ויתקדש שמה רבא. אמן:
בעלמא די ברא כרעותה וימליך
מלכותה בחייכון וביומיכון ובחיי דכל
בית ישראל בעגלא ובזמן קריב.

ואמרו אמן:

יהא שמה רבא מברך לעלם ולעלמי
עלמאי:

יתברך וישתבח ויתפאר ויתרום
ויתנשא ויתהדר ויתעלה ויתהלל
שמה דקדשא בריך הוא. לעלא מן כל
ברכתא ושירתא תשבחתא ונחמתא
דאמירן בעלמא. ואמרו אמן:

יהא שלמא רבא מן שמאי וחיים
עלינו ועל כל ישראל. ואמרו אמן:
עושה שלום במרומינו הוא יעשה
שלום עלינו ועל כל ישראל ואמרו

אמן:

Yitgadal ve-yitkadash Shemeih Raba.

Amen.

Be-alma de-v'rah chi-re'uteih ve-yamlich
malchuteih. Be-chayeichon
uve-yomeichon uve-chayei de-chol Beit
Yisrael, Ba-agala uvi-z'man kariv ve-imru

Amen.

Yehay Shemeih Raba mevorach le-olam
ule-olmay olmayah.

Yitbarach ve-yishtabach ve-yitpa'ar ve-
yitnaseh, ve-yithadar ve-yitaleh ve-
yithallal Shemeih de-Kud'sha B'rich Hu.

Le-eylah min kol birchata ve-shirata
tushbechata ve-nechamata da-amiran be-
alma ve-imru *Amen.*

Yehay shlama raba min shemaya ve-
chayim aleinu ve-al kol Yisrael
ve-imru *Amen.*

Oseh shalom bi-m'romav hu ya'aseh
shalom aleinu ve-al kol Yisrael ve-imru
Amen.

May His great Name grow exalted and sanctified. (*Amen*)

In the world that He created according to His will.

May He establish His kingdom in your lifetime and in during your days and in the lifetime of the entire House of Israel, speedily and soon and say *Amen*.

May His great Name be blessed forever and ever.

Blessed, praised, glorified, exalted, extolled, mighty, upraised and lauded be the Name of the Holy One, Blessed is He. Beyond all blessing and song, praise and consolation that are uttered in the world; and say *Amen*.

May there be abundant peace from Heaven, and life upon us and upon all Israel; and say *Amen*.

He Who makes peace in His heights, may He make peace upon us, and upon all Israel;

AMERICA, THE BEAUTIFUL

O beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!
America! America!
God shed his grace on thee
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea!

FOR THE PARCHMENTS MAY BURN,
BUT THE LETTERS ARE FLYING FREE...

HATIKVAH



Kol od balevav penima
nefesh yehudi homia,
oulfa'atey mizrakh kadima
ayn leTzion tzofia.
Od lo avda tikvatenou,
hatikva bat shnot alpayim,
lihiot am khofshi
be'artzenu
eretz Tzion viy'rushalayim

כָּל עוֹד בְּלֵבָב פְּנִימָה,
נֶפֶשׁ יְהוּדֵי הוֹמִיָּה.
וּלְפָאֵתַי מִזְרַח קְדִימָה
עֵין לְצִיּוֹן צוֹפִיָּה.
עוֹד לֹא אָבְדָה תִּקְוַתֵּנוּ,
הַתִּקְוָה בַּת שְׁנוֹת אֲלָפִים,
לְהִיּוֹת עַם חֲפָשִׁי בְּאַרְצֵנוּ,
אֶרֶץ צִיּוֹן וִירוּשָׁלַיִם.

So long as still within our breasts the Jewish heart
beats true,
So long as still towards the East
To Zion, looks the Jew,
So long our hopes are not yet lost—
Two thousand years we cherished them—
To live in freedom in the land
Of Zion and Jerusalem.

FOR THE PARCHMENTS MAY BURN,
BUT THE LETTERS ARE FLYING FREE...

AFTERWORD

This ceremony is the first in a series of contemporary ceremonies that already have, or are about to enter the Jewish calendar.

Tragedies of profound magnitude are liturgical opportunities that require aesthetic and conceptual deliberation. How does one create a liturgy that evokes traditional nuance, and at the same time addresses the immediate needs of a diverse community?

We have mined the Hebrew Bible and Talmudic tradition for words and images that resonate with the horrors of September 11th and with the ongoing terrorism that continues to assault our brothers and sisters in Israel.

Toward this end we created new liturgy through the words of Tehillim (Psalms) and Mishle (Proverbs). This is an ancient technique that we have appropriated from the great medieval Hebrew liturgists—the many authors of Kinot (Lamentations) and Selichot (Penitential prayers for the High Holiday season). We were struck by how there is truly “nothing new under the sun”—how twenty-first century evils could be described so accurately in writings that date back millennia.

We also included small, but poignant verbal snapshots of individuals who by chance, or by heroic choice, or sometimes both, were lost to acts of malice that were not directed at them personally, but certainly victimized their very personhood.

Just as Israel is central to all Jewish events, even when they happen in exile, here too, along with the Psalms and Talmudic stories, we have included a classic Modern Hebrew Poem from the Poet Laureate of the New Yishuv, Rahel.

Many poems, many Psalms and many stories could have been used here and should be used in the ceremonies that others might have. We have attempted to address the core tradition while attending to the needs of the present audience. This balance, we believe, that is essential for making a contemporary ceremony, an authentically Jewish one.

We dedicate this booklet to all victims of ideological hatred.

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