

**A SERVICE FOR HEALING
CONGREGATION SHIR HADASH
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Milwaukee, WI

Some words of introduction :

"Illness is the night side of life," writes literary critic Susan Sontag, "a more onerous citizenship. Everyone who is born holds dual citizenship, in the kingdom of the well and in the kingdom of the sick."

We generally think of ourselves as people endowed with health who become ill. We hesitate to acknowledge that both illness and health are part of our nature. This attitude is changing, fortunately.

As a result, we are reclaiming the vocabulary of healing, which is not solely about our physical state but about our relationships to loved ones, to community, and to the culture that shapes us and provides us with the ability to respond to conditions of health and illness. That is in part why the tragedy of September 11th left us numb, emotionally crippled and frightened about resuming our everyday lives. There was no precedent in our experience to help us understand and deal with what happened that day. This, perhaps, is the sickness of our society, our age -- an intuition that something has gone terribly wrong in our world leaving us physically and emotionally ill. In times like these, the new emphasis in liberal religious circles on our "spiritual" lives and on "healing the soul" is critical and reassuring. It can help to reestablish healing not as the cure of disease but as the restoration of the soul within its broadest context: a loving, supportive community that treasures and respects the individual during times of health and times of illness.

The Psalmist lifted her eyes toward the mountains asking "From where does my help come?" and answered with a simple statement: "My help comes from Adonai, Creator of Heaven and Earth."

Help, in other words, surrounds us constantly, but we don't always see it or acknowledge its healing power. When we lift up our eyes, we may not see God directly (nor did the Psalmist), but if we look closely we can see the godliness, the divine blessings of help, support and assistance, and the simple presence of the compassion of others all around us and in many forms. If we look carefully, we can see that we are not alone.

From where does our help come? Help may come from family, friends, neighbors, lovers, our Shir Hadash community. Support may come from doctors and nurses, therapists and clergy, social workers and teachers, co-workers and strangers whose hearts are moved to respond to our needs. Help may not come exactly as we wish or in the way we expect -- but help does come.

Help also comes from memory and experience -- the divine power embedded

within our souls, where we are reminded that our lives have affected and healed others and where we learn that we have the ability to begin our own healing. We have only to find the courage to hope in the face of adversity, the strength to act with wisdom in the midst of struggle, the power to love and be loved when surrounded by loss.

We come together on this holy Shabbat to summon our inner strength to accept the healing blessings available to us from our tradition and from those in our community who care about us, those who know our pain and would do anything in their power to diminish it.

The process of healing begins when we realize that the circumstances in which we find ourselves, or our loved ones find themselves -- adrift in pain, wounded by life, uncertain about the direction in which to go -- includes elements over which we may exercise some control. We are here because we want to dream together about tomorrow being a better day, despite the fear, loneliness, uncertainty, and the sense that we and those we love are hurting.

Together we will sing and we will pray that help will come, that some aspect of ourselves will be renewed and restored, and that we will find a way to embrace love, however it may reach us.

THE HEALING TIME by Peshah Gertler

Finally on my way to yes
I bump into
all the places
where I said no
to my life
all the untended wounds
the red and purple scars
those hieroglyphs of pain
carved into my skin, my bones,
those coded messages
that send me down
the wrong street
again and again
where I find them
the old wounds
the old misdirections
and I lift them
one by one
close to my heart
and I say holy,
holy.

INTOXICATED BY MY ILLNESS by Anatole Broyard

The sick person's best medicine is desire --
the desire to live, to be with other people,
to do things, to get back to his life.
When I was in the hospital,
I was always gazing out of the window at the real world,
which had never looked more desirable.
I'd like to suggest, to invent or imagine or recall,
ways of keeping one's desire alive as a way of keeping oneself alive.

THE ANGELS' BLESSING by Debbie Friedman

Miy'mini Michael, umismoli Gavriell,
Umil'fanai Uriel, umei-achorai R'fael,
V'al roshi Sh'china. (4x)

מימיני מיכאל, ומשמאלי גבריאל
ומלפני אוריאל, ומאחורי רפאל
ועל ראשי שכינה

May our right hand bring us closer to our Godliness.
May our left hand give us strength to face each day.
And before us may our visions light our paths ahead.
And behind us may well-being heal our way.

All around us is Shechinalh. (4x)

*May Michael be at my right hand, Gabriel at my left,
Before me Uriel, behind me Raphael,
And above my head, the Divine Presence.*

THE LONG LINE by Morton Marcus

Each morning I slap my chest,
stretch my arms,
and say,
"So this is life,
this is my body:
Well, what do you know!
This is grand!"
and try to forget
all the dead bodies
from which my body has emerged,
that infinity of deaths
leaning against me,
as if I walked at the head of a long line
made of bones.
Sometimes I lean back,
trying to shove the line into a closet
with my shoulder;
but the weight behind it
is immense,
and so
it follows me all day,
footstep to footstep,
leg to leg,
its chest against my back,
pushing me forward.
I slam my elbows into it,
try to kick it with my heels,
then flick the sweat
from my forehead,
saying aloud,
"So this is life,
this
is my body:
Well,
what do you know,
This is grand."

It's like being
the head of a battering ram
hurtled toward a concrete wall.
And it picks up speed,
I swear it.
Each day it picks up speed,
hustling me forward,
and I must jog
to keep up,
saying,
"Sothisislife,
thisismybody,
etc."
until I'm sprinting through the streets
as if running from my shadow,
shuffling errands like a cardsharp,
while barbers and old ladies
shake their heads.

It will end someday,
as I know it must
I know I'm being aimed at life,
but I don't know at what,
maybe at the person in front of me
whom I bump with my presence
and steer by the elbows
and who endlessly recites,
"Sothisislife,
thisismybody:
Well, what do you know!
This is grand!"

WINGS OF PEACE by Aryeh Hirschfield

UFROS ALAYNU SUKAT SHALOM
Spread over us wings of peace -- shalom
Draw water in joy from the living well --
MAYIM CHAYIM -- Waters of Life -- Shalom

MA'ARIV / THE EVENING SERVICE
AHISHER BIDVAHRO / BY WHOSE WORD
ALTERNATIVE VERSION / CHANT

Chorus: Evening, the evenings;
evening the frayed edges of our lives;

מְעַרֵיב עֶרְבִים אָמֵן Mah'ahreev ahrahveem; ahmayn(2x)

Sacred words even the evenings;
Wisdom opens gates locked around our hearts.

אֲשֶׁר בְּדַבְרוֹ מְעַרֵיב עֶרְבִים Ahsher bid-vahro mah'ahreev ahrahveem;
בְּחִכְמָהּ פּוֹתֵחַ שְׁעָרִים B-chochmah potay'ahch sh'ahreem.

Understanding alters with the times;
Changing seasons, cycles divine

וּבְתִכּוֹנָהּ מְשַׁנֶּה עֵתִים Oo-vi-t'voonah m'shahneh eeteem;
וּמְחַלֵּיף אֶת-הַזְּמַנִּים oo-mahchahleef et hah-z'mahneem.

Paint diamonds on the canvas called sky;
Soothe our souls with a lulling lullaby.

וּמְסַדֵּר אֶת-הַפּוֹכְכִים Oo-m'sahdayr et hah-kochahveem;
בְּמִשְׁמְרוֹתֵיהֶם בְּרָקִיעַ כְּרִצּוֹנוֹ B-mishm'rotayhem bah-rahkee'ah kir'tsono.

Rolling, rolling, into the night;
Rolling rolling away the light .

גּוֹלָל אֹר מִפְּנֵי חֹשֶׁךְ Golayl or mi-p'nay choshech;
גּוֹלָל חֹשֶׁךְ מִפְּנֵי אֹר gotayl choshech mipnay or.

Spirit of the Night we bless Your Name,
Eternal Light, Eternal flame.

אֵל חַי וְקַיִם Ayl chai v'kahyahm
תְּמִיד יִמְלֹךְ עָלֵינוּ tahmeed yimloch ah-laynoo;
לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד L'olahm vah-ed.

YOUR AUTOBIOGRAPHY by Portia Nelson

CHAPTER ONE

I walk down the street.
There's a hole in the sidewalk.
It is a very deep hole.
I fall in . . . I am helpless.
It isn't my fault.
It takes forever to find a way out.

CHAPTER TWO

I walk down the same street.
There's a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall in . . . again.
I can't believe I'm in the same place, but it isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.

CHAPTER THREE

I walk down the same street.
There's a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it is there.
I still fall in . . . it's a habit, but my eyes are open.
I know where I am.
It is my fault.

I get out immediately.

CHAPTER FOUR

I walk down the same street.
There's a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.

CHAPTER FIVE

I walk down another street.

PARACHUTE by Danny Siegel

Imagine a parachute.
Imagine the floating,
how loud a siren would have to be
from earth
to hear it
in all that divine silence.
Imagine no fear of the height, of falling.

So it is with pain and sorrow.
*Beyond is quiet, pure and soothing,
a view quiet above words of poetry.*

So God comforts us
--(O comfort us!)--
from the heights of Heaven
and with a voice still as still waters,
white sound, profoundly silent.

*Down, down, a gentle tumble to land,
a sommersault, and rest.*

Picture the hawk at play on high,
riding the silent breeze.

Imagine the eagle.

THE HUMAN TOUCH by Danny Siegel
adapted from *Berachot* 5b

Rabbi Elazar became ill.
Rabbi Yochanan went to visit him.
When Rabbi Yochanan saw that he was lying in a dark room,
he rolled up his sleeve, and light filled the room.
Rabbi Yochanan saw that Rabbi Elazar was weeping.
Rabbi Yochanan said to him,
"Why are you weeping?
If it is because of all the Torah
you have not yet had the opportunity to study --
we have learned,
'Whether one learns much or little --
what is most important is
that one's heart is turned towards Heaven.' [*Berachot* 17a]
And if it is because you have not managed to make a good living --
not everyone is privileged to enjoy two tables:
[prosperity in This World and in the freedom of the Next World].
And if it is because of children --
see, I have lost ten children of my own."
Rabbi Elazar replied,
"I weep for all this beauty of yours that will wither in the dust."
Rabbi Yochanan said,
"That is something most appropriate for which you should weep."
Then they both wept.
Shortly thereafter, Rabbi Yochanan asked,
"Do you appreciate your suffering?"
Rabbi Elazar replied,
"Neither my suffering nor any reward I might receive for suffering."
"Give me your hand."
He gave him his hand
and Rabbi Yochanan raised him from his sick bed.

The Healing Song by Aryeh Hirschfield

From deep within the home of my soul,
Now let the healing, let the healing begin.
ANA AYL NA RE'FANA LA
Heal our bodies, open our hearts.
Awaken our minds -- (1) E'he'ye, (2) Shechinah

MI SHEBAIRACH by Lisa Levine

Mi shebeirach avoteinu Avraham, Yitzchak, v'Ya'akov
Mi shebeirach imoteinu Sara, Rivkah, Leah, v'Rachel,

May the One who blessed our mothers
May the One who blessed our fathers

hear our prayer (4X),
and bless us as well.

Bless us with the power of Your healing
Bless us with the power of Your hope

May the pain and loneliness we're feeling
be diminished by the power of Your love.

Bless us with the vision for tomorrow.
Help us to reach out to those in pain.

May the warmth of friendship ease our sorrow.
Give us courage, give us faith, show us the way.

Mi shebeirach avoteinu ,
Mi shebeirach imoteinu,

Hear our prayer (4X),
and bless us as well,

Hear our prayer (4X),
and bless us as well.

MI SHEBEIRACH by Danny Siegel (adapted)

May the One who blessed Abraham and Sara,
Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob, Rachel and Leah,
bless and heal all those we have spoken of and all those
who are in our thoughts.

May the Holy One be filled with compassion
to revitalize and to heal these precious ones
with divine, complete healing --
even if they have lost all hope --
soon, now,
true healing of the soul
as much as healing of the body,
among all those who have illness, disease,
infirmity, disorder, or breakdown,
even though it is Shabbat, this is our prayer.
And let us say,
Amen.

JOY by Noah Steinberg

Translated from the Yiddish by David Berger

Joy of eternal birth
Joy of healed wounds
Joy of listening to the music
of trees and waterfalls.
Joy of smelling
the sharp odor of ripe fields
Joy of seeing a woman
for the first time, a sacred event.
Joy of viewing mountains with
crowns of snow when clouds
snuggle up to them.
Joy in fields of corn
like seas of god when the sun

drenches their ears.
Joy in forgetting the sorrow
that withers the imagination.
Joy in fresh cold water on a hot day
when the sun is aroused.
Joy in suffering,
feeding the soul.
Joy in becoming one with all things
through a grand, sacred thought.
Joy in remaining calm at the thought,
wonderful and great:
of nonbeing.

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