



Torah Reflections on *Selihot* and Forgiveness

The last holiday of the Jewish calendar year 5779 is observed this Saturday night, September 21st. *Selihot* is a poignant synagogue service that is seen as a preparation for Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. The liturgy helps put us in a reflective, penitential mood as we humbly review our misdeeds throughout the year that is just ending. We seek forgiveness; we seek the generosity of spirit to offer forgiveness when asked by those who have harmed us; and we yearn to wholeheartedly (or brokenheartedly) enter the High Holy Day season, open to the spiritual momentum of these Days of Awe.

What from this past year do we need to let go and release? What do we want to change? What kinds of strength and support do we seek for these sacred tasks?

The following prayers and readings, excerpted from a variety of *Selihot* prayerbooks, are dedicated to the many people who may be unable to join a synagogue community for *Selihot* services at this time. Some of the readings may be inspiring, or challenging, or invite discussion and response. Whether you are alone or with company, may these words bring comfort and support to all who yearn for reconciliation, renewal, and healing.



Master of the Universe,
I hereby forgive anyone who has angered or antagonized me
or who sinned against me—
whether against my body, my property, my honor,
or against anything of mine—
whether by accident or with intent, carelessly or purposely—
whether through speech, deed, thought, or notion—
whether in this stage of life or another—
I hereby forgive every one.
May no one be punished on my account.
May it be your will, Adonai, God of all generations, that I err no more.
Whatever misdeeds I have committed against you—
May you blot out in your abundant love—
but not through suffering or illness.
May the expressions of my mouth and the meditations of my heart
find favor before you, Adonai, my stronghold and my redeemer.



Out of the depths I call to You;
Source of Life, hear my cry, heed my pleas....
Who could endure, God, if You kept count of every misdeed?
But forgiveness is with You....



The soul is Yours, the body is Your creation.
Have compassion upon Your handiwork....



Adonai, Holy One, my God—gracious and compassionate, patient and abounding in kindness and faithfulness, assuring love for a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and granting pardon.



Avinu Malkaynu—Our Parent, our Sovereign, be gracious and answer us,
for we are of little merit; be caring and loving toward us; and restore us.



Return us, Adonai, to You
(and to Your life-giving ways)
Let us return
Renew our days as before.



May the source of peace grant peace and wholeness to us, to all Israel, and to all who are in need of *shalom*—and let us say: *Amen!*



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This Torah Reflection was compiled by Rabbi Natan Fenner, BCC of the Bay Area Jewish Healing Center. Bay Area Jewish Healing Center is a beneficiary of the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties. More healing-oriented resources can be found at www.jewishhealingcenter.org.