

POEM AND REFLECTION

Ten Words

What ten words rule you?
Which move you?
Bring you forward
and return you?
What ten words
bow you
and bend you
and fill you full?
Which serve you,
or demand that
you serve?
Which call you
to your journey,
to dive inward,
move outward,
and carry you to distant
trackless shores -
a barren wilderness
that is more vast

than sky,
more filled
than stars
and time!

And yet those words,
those ten,
they carry you -
From all that
you know;

Ten words lift you
into a boundless unknown.
bring you to self;
bring you to God.

For Shavuot
based, in part, on Exodus 34:27,
in honor of "Aseret ha'd'brot" -
the Ten Words

This poem was written by Stacey Zisook Robinson for Shavuot but its words have much to inspire us during these Yamim Nora'im where we reflect upon the year that has passed. As we think about what motivates, lifts and drives us, what excites us, what brings us joy and what deflates and suppresses us, the poem challenges us to reflect upon our own personal ten words. If we chose ten words by which we would like to live our lives, ten words which would be central to who we want to be and the life we want to live, what would those words be? What are the ten words that rule and move us? Perhaps spend some moments with Stacey's poem and then take a journey to find your ten words.

CREATIVE CONFESSION

Rabbi Avi Weiss, the founding rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale New York, suggested a new practice for Yom Kippur. He was inspired by the teaching of Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook, the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel who wrote: “just as there is a confession for the bad, there should be a confession for the good.”

Rabbi Weiss's writes: “a person should also be joyous concerning the good he or she has done. It follows just as there is great benefit to self-improvement through confessing one's sins, so is there great benefit to confessing one's good deeds.”

Here is Rabbi Weiss confessional of good deeds. Maybe spend some time with its words this Yom Kippur along with our confession of sins.

אָהַבְנוּ, בְּרַכְנוּ, גָּדַלְנוּ, דִּבְרַנּוּ יָמֵי

We have loved, we have blessed, we have grown, we have spoken positively.

הָעֲלִינוּ, וְחִסְנוּ, זָרְזָנוּ

We have raised up, we have shown compassion, we have acted enthusiastically,

חֲמַלְנוּ, טַפַּחְנוּ אֱמֶת

We have been empathetic, we have cultivated truth,

נְעָצְנוּ טוֹב, כִּבְדָנוּ, לְמַדְנוּ, מְחַלְנוּ

We have given good advice, we have respected, we have learned, we have forgiven,

נִחַמְנוּ, סָלַלְנוּ, עוֹרְרָנוּ

We have comforted, we have been creative, we have stirred,

פָּעַלְנוּ, צְדָקְנוּ, קוִינּוּ לְאֶרֶץ

We have been spiritual activists, we have been just, we have longed for Israel,

רַחֲמֵנוּ, שָׂדָנוּ

We have been merciful, we have given full effort,

תָּמַכְנוּ, תָּרַמְנוּ, תָּקַנּוּ

We have supported, we have contributed, we have repaired.

(from Andrew Silow-Carroll's article, “This Yom Kippur, try confessing the good things you've done” October 11th, 2016)