

*I shared various versions of this guided meditation for the Yom Kippur Avoda Service during the years I served Chochmat HaLev, in Berkeley, CA as rabbi. Our community, grounded in a deep meditation practice, remained prostrate for 20-30 minutes as their souls journeyed with the High Priest into the Holy of Holies. I have done my best to footnote the places that are based in text and tradition – holy imagination and integration of fragments of many profound teachings fill in much of the rest.*

*Prior to the grand Aleynu in Musaf, each participant would find the place they would use for their prostration. The Hazzan would begin: “Aleynu l’shabeiah la-Adon ha kol.....v’anahnu korim u’mishtahavim u’modim...” At this point, the voice of the Hazzan trails off and the congregation would prostrate or otherwise meditate and the guided imagery would begin.*

The soul has 3 garments – action, speech and thought.<sup>1</sup> We prostrate outside the Tent of Encounter only in the World of Action. In the Worlds of Speech and Thought, our conscious selves accompany the Kohein Gadol – the High Priest – into the Holy of Holies.<sup>2</sup> We, too, slip between the worlds, in the no-space between the One Who Surrounds All Worlds – *Soveiv Al Kol Olmin* and the One Who Fills All Worlds – *Memale Kol Olmin*.<sup>3</sup> The Holy of Holies is a place of potential where the Infinite – the *Ein Sof* – meets the physical finite world.

The *Kodesh Kodashim* – the Holy of Holies is...

A place beyond time, beyond space  
Higher than the highest mountain top  
Deeper than the deepest place inside  
Beyond even your highest and deepest self  
*L’elyla, u’leyla*<sup>4</sup> higher and higher into our deepest inner recesses  
The place of infinite potential  
Place of soul essence  
The place of complete *teshuvah* – returning – and *taharah* – cleansing and transformation  
The place of Mysterious Unity and rebirth

In the *Olam ha-Asiyah*, the World of Doing, we are ourselves, waiting outside, prostrating when we hear the Holy Name pronounced. In the higher worlds, we are one with the *Kohein Gadol*.

Your preparation has continued for 7 days<sup>5</sup>. You have reviewed and memorized the instructions. All last night you remained awake learning and fasting. So many rituals, you have confessed on the bull, and on the goat, and sent the second goat out to the wilderness, but finally the moment for the incense offering is here....  
Once more you immerse.

You can sense the tent of meeting – the *Ohel Moed* – the place of Encounter – palpably filled with *Sh’khinah* שכינה, the Divine Presence. You look up and see the partitioned space – the Holy. The other *Kohanim* and the Levites and the people bless you and tie a golden cord around your foot.

<sup>1</sup> Tanya, Likutei Amorim, R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi, Chapter 4.

<sup>2</sup> From internet teaching by R. Sholom Brodt of Jerusalem, 5769, “Entering the Holy of Holies”.

<sup>3</sup> Zohar 3:225a brings these ways of describing the Divine. Using this as a description for the liminal space the High Priest entered is taken from an online teaching but the attribution is unknown. Please let me know if you recognize the author.

<sup>4</sup> The double use of *l’elyla* from the kaddish for the Yamim Noraim.

<sup>5</sup> See details in Mishna Yoma

As you take three steps, you feel your lower body bonded with *Netzah, Hod* and *Yesod*; three more steps and your arms and chest unite with *Hesed, Gevura* and *Tiferet*; the final three steps with your eyes closed and you are bound to the upper realms of *Keter, Hokhma* and *Binah*<sup>6</sup>.

And, you enter behind the first veil into the *Kodesh*, the Holy space, and see

The menorah illumined with the light from the first day of creation, the light that lets you see from one end of the world to the other<sup>7</sup>;

The 12 showbreads; and,

The golden incense altar.

Then, with the golden incense pan used only on this day of Yom Kippur and two handfuls of incense, you enter behind the inner veil, to the place of the holy *aron*, the ark with the tablets, graced by the *k'ruvim*, the holy cherubs. You hear the wings of the *k'ruvim* as they sing and stretch their wings toward Heaven.

And, as the incense is burned, you see the letters of the holy name *Yod-Hey-Vav-Hey* rising in the smoke, filling the inner sanctum, the Holy of Holies<sup>8</sup>

This is the place where the testimony of the Ineffable happens – right in the space between their wings – this is the place where the Infinite speaks to **you**<sup>9</sup>... as you listen for the words of **your truth** for this year.

What is the message you receive?

To what soul-work are you called?

What is your healing purpose this year?

What is *tikkun*, the fixing that only you can make? .... Listen.....

[at this point allow for a period of silent meditation so each congregant can hear their own Testimony]

As you Call out the Name, the *k'ruvim* cleave together in silence. There is such joy in the upper worlds where the cleaving also happens... So, a ray of light descends into our world, a ray of light perfumed with the scent of pure balsam mountain air<sup>10</sup>.

And so you offer the prayer of the Kohen Gadol and of us all<sup>11</sup>

אָנָּא הַשֵּׁם, הַטְּאָתִי, עֲוִיִּיתִי, פִּשְׁעֵתִי לִפְנֵי אֱלֹהֵי וּבֵיתִי וְעַמִּי בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל אָנָּא בְּשֵׁם, כִּפּוּר נָּא לְחַטָּאִים, וְלַעֲוֹנוֹת וְלִפְשָׁעִים, שְׁחַטְּאֵתִי וְשַׁעֲוִיתִי, וְשִׁפְשַׁעֲתִי לִפְנֵי אֱלֹהֵי וּבֵיתִי וְעַמִּי בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, כִּפְתּוּב בְּתוֹרַת מִשְׁחָה עֲבָדְךָ מִפִּי כְּבוֹדְךָ: כִּי בַיּוֹם הַזֶּה יִכַּפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם לְטַהַר אֶתְכֶם, מִכָּל חַטָּאתֵיכֶם לִפְנֵי יְיָ-<sup>12</sup>

Holy One, we have done less than what was required, we have veered from the way that ensures life, we have created situations of abuse. By the power of the Holy Name, scour clean the omissions, wrong patterns and illusions that we have caused, myself and my household and all the people. As our Tradition has promised: on this day may you be brought back into right alignment and scoured clean of the residue of all wrongful actions by immersing in the Mystery.

And outside, all the people fall on their faces and say *Barukh Shem Kavod Malkhuto L'olam Va-ed.....*

Ever blessed is the Name we call forth to proclaim the honor of *Shekninah!*

The world is back in its proper configuration.

<sup>6</sup> Based on Zohar 3:67a.

<sup>7</sup> Numbers Rabbah 8:5; Ruth Rabbah Prologue 7; Zohar 1:31b

<sup>8</sup> Zohar 2:218b-219a

<sup>9</sup> Exodus 25:22; Numbers 7:89

<sup>10</sup> Zohar 3:67a

<sup>11</sup> Traditional Yom Kippur Mahzor

<sup>12</sup> Leviticus 16:30

And your mouth is infused with all the Divine attributes. The *sefirot*, the Divine Emanations, are in alignment as a voice descends and speaks through your mouth<sup>13</sup> and the word **TITHARU** תִּטְהָרוּ<sup>14</sup> is illumined there so that all hear ... “you **are** cleansed!”.

And with the smell of the perfumed light your heart rests and you begin your return to this world. All is still, and the accusers of the Other Side have no place. The *k’ruvim* lift their wings once more and sing<sup>15</sup> so we all know that the prayer has been accepted.

Feel and experience the relief and joy as you exit the Holy of Holies in peace, whole and unharmed.

Together, we offer this prayer:<sup>16</sup>

Let it be Your Will, our Divinity and Divinity of our ancestors, that this coming year be for us, for your people *Yisra-El* and for all the peoples of the earth....

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְפָּנֶיךָ, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלְהֵי הוֹרֵינוּ, שְׁתֵּהֵא הַשָּׁנָה הַזֹּאת הַבְּאָה עֲלֵינוּ, וְעַל כָּל עַמְּךָ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תְּבֵלָה....

a year of plenty; a year of blessings;  
a year of grain, wine and oil; a year of growth and prosperity;  
a year of assembly together as a holy community;  
a year of ongoing *teshuvah* and cleansing of our souls;  
a year of dew and rain and warmth; a year of blessed bread and water;  
a year of excellent trading and merchandising; a year of safe travel to holy places;  
a year of pleasure; a year of womb-blessings and generativity;  
a year of peace and tranquility....

And for the residents of *Sharon* and other places of earth shakes and earth catastrophes, may it be the will of the Eternal שְׁלֹא יַעֲשׂוּ בְּתֵיבָהּם קְבָרֵיהֶם - that their homes not become their graves.

Let this be a prayer for our Holy Mother Earth, Gaia, that she be blessed and recover from all that we have done to her.

Let this be a prayer that, as brothers and sisters, we can share the holy refuge of community.

We now return to ourselves with the radiant face of the Kohein Gadol<sup>17</sup>.

We come back to our bodies which have been waiting for us outside the Tent of Encounter...

bright as the vaulted canopy of heaven,  
like lightening sparks from angels,  
like a rainbow in storm clouds,  
glowing like the faces of lovers,  
like sunrise in the Eastern sky.

Take a moment to return to your breath, to your body....

*The Hazzan then seamlessly continues the grand Aleynu: “lifnei Melekh Malkhei Ha Malkhim HaKadosh BarukHu!” All return to their seats and the Musaf continues.....*

<sup>13</sup> Zohar 3:67a

<sup>14</sup> Leviticus 16:30

<sup>15</sup> Zohar 3:67a

<sup>16</sup> Traditional Yom Kippur Musaf

<sup>17</sup> *Marei HaKohein Piyut*, traditional Mahzor for Yom Kippur