

Let us proclaim the sacred power of this day:

it is awesome and full of dread

For on this day Your dominion is exalted,

Your throne established in steadfast love;

there in truth You reign.

In truth You are

Judge and Arbiter, counsel and Witness.

You write and You seal, You record and recount.

You open the book of our days,

and what is written there proclaims itself,

for it bears the signature of every human being.

The great Shofar is sounded, the still, small voice is heard;

the angels,

gripped by fear and trembling, declare in awe:

This is the Day of Judgement!

For event he hosts of heaven are judged,

as all who dwell on earth stand arrayed before You.

**As the shepherd seeks out his flock,
and makes the sheep pass under his staff,
so do You muster and number and consider every soul,
setting the bounds of every creature's life,
and decreeing its destiny.**

**On Rosh Hashanah it is written,
on Yom Kippur it is sealed:**

How many shall pass on, how many shall come to be;

who shall live and who shall die;

who shall see ripe age and who shall not;

who shall perish by fire and who by water;

who by sword and who by beast;

who by hunger and who by thirst;

who by earthquake and who by plague;

who by strangling and who by stoning;

who shall be secure and who shall be driven;

who shall be tranquil and who shall be troubled;

who shall be poor and who shall be rich;

who shall be humbled and who exalted.

**But repentance, prayer, and charity
temper judgment's severe decree.**

This is Your glory: You are slow to anger, ready to forgive.

**Lord it is not the death of sinners You seek,
but that they should turn from their ways and live.**

**Until the last day You wait for them,
welcoming them as soon as they turn to You.**

**You have created us and know what we are;
we are but flesh and blood.**

**Man's origin is dust,
and dust is his end.**

**Each of us is a shattered urn,
grass that must wither,
a flower that will fade,
a shadow moving on,
a cloud passing by,
a particle of dust floating on the wind,
a dream soon forgotten.**

But You are the King, the everlasting God!

**Tale of Rabbi Amnon's Unetaneh Tokef
(Based on Sefer Or Zarua 12c. By R. Isaac of Vienna)**

The story of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz, which was the greatest of his generation. Once, Rabbi Amnon was approached by the local bishop, who asks him to convert. Day after day the bishop would appear at his study to implore him to convert. The rabbi puts the bishop off, saying he will think about it and return with an answer in three days. Almost immediately, however, Rabbi Amnon is consumed with remorse for even suggesting that he might convert. He decides to refuse to appear when the three days are over.

Angered by the refusal, the bishop dispatched soldiers to bring him to the castle by force. "What's this Amnon, why didn't you come to me as you stipulated - that you would take into account and get back to me what I asked?" Amnon replied, "Let me adjudicate my own case." He explained that he should never have promised to come in the first place. Even saying he would, is agreement enough to undermine his own faith and his own people.

Amnon then said, “I am perfectly willing, to undergo any punishment. The tongue that lied to you should be sentenced to be cut off.”

“No” said the bishop, The bishop however maintained that the sin was not performed by Amnon’s tongue. [Instead Rabbi Amnon was tortured severely with many parts removed] at each moment, the torturer would ask, “Now Amnon, do you want to convert?” And the rabbi would say, “No.”

What was left of him after his ordeal was carried on the back of a knight’s shield to the Jewish quarter. And when Rosh Hashanah arrived, the Rabbi asked to be placed next to the Cantor. As a leader was about to recite the kedusha of the Musaf Amidah, the Rabbi asked for him to pause so that he could specifically add a prayer sanctifying God’s name. “And so, let all holiness rise up to You,” he began after which he recited the Unetaneh Tokef prayer, “And let us acknowledge the power of this day’s holiness...Truly, You are judge and prosecutor...There is a book and everyone’s signature is in it...and You will record all living beings.”

When he completed the final part of the poem he disappeared from before the congregation somehow by taken God and from this world.

Three days later, he reappears in a dream to "Rabbi Kalonymous Ben Rabbi Moshe" and taught him this sacred poem [called a piyut] and instructed him to publicize it far and wide throughout the diaspora as a witness to the testimonial to what he has done.

***Theodicy*—The vindication of divine goodness and providence in view of the existence of evil.**

The following theodicies are summarized from Rabbi Rachel Adler PhD., Rabbi David Ellenson Professor of Jewish Religious Thought, Professor of Modern Jewish Thought and Feminist Studies, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

Theodicy #1 – Survival of Chaos

In his book “Creation and Persistence of Evil,” Jon Levinson writes that chaos was not completely destroyed during creation. It resurfaces and has to be combated and suppressed by God. This “survival of chaos” theodicy says that prayer has a theurgic function. That is when we pray to God we remind God of our need and we rouse God to combat evil. When the children of Israel cry out to God about their hardships during slavery, their cries remind God that they need rescuing. It seems in reading the Torah at the beginning of Exodus that if they never cried out God might have left them to be slaves forever, but their prayers rouse God into battling evil on their behalf.

Theodicy #2—Accidents Happen

Rabbi Huna had wine stored in a dilapidated building. When he wanted to remove it, he took Rabbi Adda bar Ahavah into that building and kept him occupied in a learned discussion until he removed the wine. Then, as soon as Rabbi Add bar Ahavah left the building, it collapsed. When Rabbi Addas ben Ahavah realized that he was used for such a purpose, he was annoyed and quoted Rabbi Yannai, who once said, “A man should never stay in a place of danger in the hope that ‘surely a miracle will be wrought for me,’ for it might be that no miracle will be wrought for him. But even if it is wrought for him, it will be charged against his merits [in the world-to-come]. (Taanit 20b)

The universe contains some randomness. In order to face that randomness, human beings must take responsibility for their own lives. We cannot depend on miracles, we can't predict them and it's certainly arrogant to rely on them, even if you're pretty sure you deserve one.

Theodicy #3—it's not all about you

Psalms 104:

**You make springs gush forth in torrents;
they make their way between the hills,
giving drink to all the wild beasts;
the wild asses slake their thirst.**

**The birds of the sky dwell beside them
and sing among the foliage.**

**You water the mountains from Your lofts;
the earth is sated from the fruit of Your work.**

**You make the grass grow for the cattle,
and herbage for man's labor
that he may get food out of the earth—
wine that cheers the hearts of men
oil that makes the face shine,
and bread that sustains man's life...**

**How many are the things You have made, O Lord;
You have made them all with wisdom;
the earth is full of Your creations.
There is the sea, vast and wide,
with its creatures beyond number,
living things, small and great.**