

1) Verses from Leviticus formed into a prayer by Rabbi Starr

דַּבֵּר אֶל-כָּל-עַדְת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם קְדָשִׁים תִּהְיוּ.¹

Speak to all of the people of Israel, and say to them, You shall be holy;

בַּעֲשׂוֹר לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי הַזֶּה יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים הוּא מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָנוּ

וְנַעֲוֶה אֶת-נַפְשֹׁתֵינוּ לְכַפֵּר עֲלֵינוּ.²

On the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement; it shall be a holy gathering to us; and we shall afflict our souls to make an atonement for ourselves.

נֶפֶשׁ אִו כָּל עַדְת יִשְׂרָאֵל תַּחֲטָא בְשִׁגְגָה וְנוֹדְעָה הַחֲטָאת אֲשֶׁר חָטְאָה

וְהִתְוֹדְתָהּ וּבִקְשָׁה סְלִיחָה וְנִסְלַחָה.

If an individual or the whole congregation misses the mark through ignorance and the congregation is made aware of their sin, they should acknowledge their mistake, request forgiveness and be forgiven.

וְלֹא נִכְחַשׁ בַּעֲמִיתֵינוּ וְנִשְׂבַּע עַל-שִׁקְר עַל-אֲחַת מְכֹל אֲשֶׁר-יַעֲשֶׂה הָאָדָם

לְחַטָּא בְהִנָּה.³

1. Leviticus 19:2

2. Leviticus 23:27-28

3. Leviticus 5:21

Let us not deceive our neighbor; if we do deceive our neighbor we shall admit our wrong, and atone for our sin.

לֹא נִפְנוּ אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים⁴ לֹא אֱלֹהֵי מַסֵּכָה וְלֹא כֶסֶף.

We shall not turn to idols, neither molton gods nor money.

לֹא נִגְנוּב וְלֹא־נִכְחַשׁ וְלֹא־נִשְׁקַךְ אִישׁ בְּעַמִּיתוֹ⁵.

We shall not steal; we shall not deal deceitfully or falsely with one another.

לֹא נַעֲשֶׂה עוֹל בַּמִּשְׁפָּט בַּמִּדָּה בַּמִּשְׁקָל וּבַמְּשׁוּרָה⁶:

We shall not falsify measures of length, weight, or capacity.

לֹא־נַעֲשֶׂק אֶת־רֵעֵינוּ וְלֹא תִגְזֹל.

We shall not defraud our fellow.

לֹא־תִלֵּין פְּעֻלַּת שָׂכִיר אֲתָנוּ עַד־בֹּקֶר⁷.

The wages of a laborer shall not remain with us until morning.

4. Leviticus 19:4
5. Leviticus 19:11
6. Leviticus 19:35
7. Leviticus 19:13

לֹא נַעֲשֶׂה עֹוֹל בְּמִשְׁפָּט לְאִנְשָׁא פְּנֵי־דָל וְלֹא נִהְדָּר פְּנֵי גָדוֹל בְּצַדִּיק

נִשְׁפָּט עִמֵּיתָנוּ.⁸

We shall not render an unfair decision: nor favor the poor nor show deference to the rich; we shall judge our kins fairly.

וּנְקַצֵּר אֶת־קִצִּיר אֲרָצֵינוּ לֹא נִכְלֶה פֶּאֶת שְׂדֵינוּ לְקַצֵּר לְעֲנִי וְלִגֵּר נַעֲזֹב

אֹתָם.⁹

When we reap the harvest of our land, we shall not harvest up to the corners of our field; rather we shall leave them to the poor, and to the stranger;

לֹא נַעֲמֹד עַל־דָּם רֵעֵינוּ.¹⁰

We shall not profit by the blood of our neighbor.

לֹא נִקְלֹל חֵרֶשׁ וְלִפְנֵי עִוֵּר לֹא נִתֵּן מִכְשָׁל.¹¹

We shall not insult the deaf, nor place a stumbling block before the blind.

8. Leviticus 19:15
9. Leviticus 19:9-10
10. Leviticus 19:16
11. Leviticus 19:14

כְּאֶזְרַח מִמֶּנּוּ יִהְיֶה לָנוּ הַגֵּר | הַגֵּר אֶתְנוּ מִשְׁפָּט אֶחָד יִהְיֶה לָנוּ¹². וְאֶהְבֵנוּ

לֹא כְמִינוּ¹³.

The stranger who resides with us shall be to us as one of our citizens. We will love our neighbor as yourself.

אֵלֶּה הֵם מוֹעֲדָי. שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲשֶׂה מְלָאכָה וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבַּת שַׁבְּתוֹן

מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ¹⁴.

These are my feasts: Six days shall work be done; but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, a holy gathering.

וּבַחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה חַג הַמַּצּוֹת לִי שִׁבְעַת יָמִים מַצּוֹת

נֹאכֵל¹⁵:

And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to Gd. Seven days we shall eat unleavened bread.

טו וּנְסַפֵּר לָנוּ מִמַּחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת נִסְפָּר חֲמִשִּׁים יוֹם¹⁶.

12. Leviticus 24:22

13. Leviticus 19:34

14. Leviticus 23:2-3

15. Leviticus 23:5-6

16. Leviticus 23:15-16

We shall count from the next day after the sabbath to the next day after the seventh sabbath shall we count fifty days.

בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּאַחַד לַחֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָנוּ שִׁבְתוֹן זְכוֹרֹן תְּרוּעָה
מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ¹⁷.

In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, we shall have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of shofars, a holy gathering.

בְּעָשׂוֹר לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי הַזֶּה יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים הוּא מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָנוּ
וְנַעֲנֶה אֶת-נַפְשֹׁתֵינוּ לְכַפֵּר עָלֵינוּ¹⁸.

On the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement; it shall be a holy gathering to us; and we shall afflict our souls to make an atonement for ourselves.

בַּחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי הַזֶּה חַג הַסֻּכּוֹת¹⁹.

The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Booths.

דַּבֵּר אֶל-כָּל-עַדַת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם קְדָשִׁים תִּהְיוּ כִּי קָדוֹשׁ²⁰.

Speak to all of the people of Israel, and say to them, You shall be holy; for I am holy.

17. Leviticus 23:24

18. Leviticus 23:27-28

19. Leviticus 23:34

20. Leviticus 19:2

2) Rabbi Shmuly Yanklowitz

“It is easy to scream and blame others (politicians, neighbors, detractors). However, instead of blaming others, we need to look inward and ask if we are doing enough ourselves. It is not an easy question to ask. We may prefer to blame others instead. We may prefer to judge others in order to avoid judging ourselves. We are not allowed to do that. Analyze and learn, we must.”

3) Rabbi Shmuly Yanklowitz

“Perhaps the biggest change we can make in our own lives is to become ready to change. The ever-changing world we live in requires us to assess our own needs and the needs of others everyday. In order to truly take care of our souls and support others, we have to change constantly. Only then are we able to give back. That is what it means to take care of our souls.....Part of maturation of the spirit is managing complexity. The evil in our world might numb us, but it might also awaken us to rise and fight for kindness and justice; lack of justice might infuriate us, but it might also deepen our relationship to Gd and our understanding of our own responsibility.”

4) As we recite these ancient confessionals, let us remember the contemporary ones that plague our souls, and the soul of our country. May we remember that we can only ask Gd for forgiveness after we have fixed our wrongs with all that live in our world.

For the sins of pollutant, the byproducts of greed that assault, making toxic the air, earth, and water of our planet.

For the sins of putting profit before life, breaking our bodies with systems of sick care-not health care-that serve too few.

For the sins of embedded white supremacy that bruise our very souls as children remain in cages, families are separated, refugees drown in desperation, and People of Color are shot by militarized police.

For the sins of the illusion of a melting pot of promise that uses Black and Brown bodies as the fuel under the pot of oppression, burning with the salty tears of their mothers.

For the sins of transnational colonialism that have led to genocide after genocide, with those of privilege using their power to make some lives matter more.

For the sins of the legacy of slavery and discrimination that continue to exploit women and People of Color through cheap labor.

For the sins of the spies, who lacked the vision to move forward, to change and transform, and to do more than talk about equity, equality, and justice. Making a place where the citizen and the stranger are one until there is no stranger requires us to sacrifice privilege and go beyond our comfort zones.

For the sin of Korach, leaders who care only for their own seats at the power tables, hoarding and gaining advantage at the expense of others.

For these sins, S'lach lanu, Gd forgive us if we do not turn this moment into a movement for change.

M'chal lanu, pardon our past failures to do and be better.

Kaper-lanu, lead us as we dare to be courageous and bold enough to redeem the future of our planet and humanity with fewer sins in the coming year

