

“Transgender Remembrance Day, 100% in God's Image”

Occupy K Street Judaism – McPherson Square, November 18, 2011

WELCOME ALL!! This service, honoring Transgender Remembrance Day, will follow the basic arc of Jewish prayers for nightfall and for welcoming the Sabbath as it arrives on Friday night.

On another day of the week, such a gathering might focus on informing ourselves and taking action. There is much to be done to make the Jewish community and the wider world a safer, more just and more welcoming place for all. And there is much grieving to be done for lives lost to anti-trans violence. And on this Occupy site, we are acutely aware of how much needs changing to create a just political and economic system that works for 100%. The Jewish Sabbath, however, asks us to follow God's lead as the seventh day approached and cease.

God ceased on the seventh day from all the work that God had made
and God gave the seventh day God's blessing and hallowed it.

For on it God ceased from all work that by creating God made. (Gen. 2:2-3)

So, we cease with the petitions, the task forces, marches and legislation. We stop *doing* and *be*.

In many ways “Shabbat Shalom” is as much a challenge as an invitation. An invitation to affirm and celebrate Creation, a world of such variety, so many faces, minds and genders. But it's also a challenge to envision a world in which 100% of humanity is recognized as 100% “in God's image,” -- a world where gender-conforming, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people can all “embrace their whole selves and live up to their divine potential”*-- and **then to live for a day – or even for an hour or two – into the wholeness of such a vision.**

Please feel free to use the words offered here, in your own prayerbook and/or in your heart.

Shabbat Shalom – a day of wholeness!

Gathering: Circle Round – chant by Linda Hirschhorn

Circle round for freedom

Circle round for peace

For all of us imprisoned circle for release

Circle for the planet

Circle for each soul

For the children of our children keep the circle whole

Opening prayer: Twilight People

As the sun sinks and the colors of the day turn, we offer a blessing for the twilight,
for twilight is neither day nor night, but in-between.

We are all twilight people. We can never be fully labeled or defined.

We are many identities and loves, many genders and none.

We are in between roles, at the intersection of histories, or between place and place.

We are crisscrossed paths of memory and destination, streaks of light swirled together.

We are neither day nor night. We are both, neither, and all.

May the sacred in-between of this evening suspend our certainties,
soften our judgments, and widen our vision.

May this in-between light illuminate our way to the God who transcends all categories and definitions.

May the in-between people who have come to pray be lifted up into this twilight.

We cannot always define; we can always say a blessing.

Blessed are You, God of all, who brings on the twilight.

[--Rabbi Reuben Zellman, TransTorah.org, Keshet guide*]

Shalom Aleychem – Welcome, Angels of Love and Kindness!

R. Rami Shapiro writes: Angels are another name for feelings. When we love and act with kindness, we create angels of love and kindness; when we hate and act with violence, we create angels of hatred and violence. It is our job to fill our world with angels of love: messengers of kindness that link people together as one family.**

So, as we honor this day of Transgender Remembrance and welcome Shabbat, let's take a moment to consider those acts of hate and violence that make this world unsafe for trans and gender-variant people. Shabbat does not ask us to ignore the damage or forget the victims. But we are asked to focus for a few hours on affirmation and welcoming the angels of love and kindness. Participants are invited to name some messengers that we are welcoming: respect in using preferred pronouns, support for gender neutral restrooms.....

*Shalom aleyhem malahey hasharet
malahey elyon
mimeleh malhey hamalahim
ha kadosh baruh hu.*

Welcome, ministering angels,
angels of the Highest One,
from deep within us, Majesty of majesties,
the blessed Holy One.

*Bo'ahem leshalom, malahey hashalom...[repeat]
Barehuni leshalom, malahey hashalom.....[repeat]
Tzethem leshalom, malahey hashalom...[repeat]*

Come, then in peace, angels of peace,...[repeat]
Bless us with peace, angels of peace,...[repeat]
Depart in peace, angels of peace,...[repeat]

[--Adapted from *Kol Haneshamah*]

Shabbat is often welcomed with verses from Psalms 95-99 and 29, recognizing that, whatever we might believe about Creation and Creator, there is much that is bigger than us. We take a few moments to celebrate the variety in Creation and the variety among us, recalling again our status as “Twilight People.” Here are just a few verses...

from Psalm 95:

*Lehu neranenah ladonay
nari'ah letzur yishenu*

Come, sing in ecstasy to THE ETERNAL,
ring out a fanfare to our rock of rescue

from Psalm 96:

*Shiru ladonay shir hadash,
shiru ladonay kol ha'aretz
...Yismehu hashamayim vetagel ha'aretz
yiram hayam umlo'o*

Sing out to THE REDEEMER a new song
Sing to THE ETERNAL all the earth!
...Let the skies rejoice, the earth have glee.
Ocean resound, in all your fullness!

From Psalm 97

*Or zaru'a latzadik,
ulyishrey lev simhah*

Light is sown when we're righteous
And joy when we're upright in heart

In the song *Lehah Dodi*, friends address one another, encouraging all to come greet the Sabbath. Often the congregation stands and faces the doors, bowing as the Sabbath enters.

One tradition notes that the congregation is, thus, turning away from the leaders and whoever else is at the front – often the more prominent members of the community – and bowing toward the back, where some of those who are at the margins of the community may be found. On this Transgender Remembrance Shabbat, let us pause to consider the vulnerability of all those at the margins and remember that we are called to recognize the image of God in every human individual.

So, tonight, let us turn to one another and invite our friends, new and old, to come greet the Sabbath. And then let us turn our circle inside out and call to all those around us:

“Come, my friends, let's greet the Sabbath.

Join us, and help us carry the Sabbath Presence to all we meet.”

from Psalm 92

*Mizmor shir leyom hashabbat.
Tov lehodot ladonay
ulzamer leshimeha elyon
Lehagid baboker hasdeha
ve'emunateha baleylot...
Mah gadlu ma-asecha Yah,
me'od amku machshevotecha...
tzadik katamar yifrach
ke'erez balvanon yisgeh
shetulim b'veit adonay,
behatzrot eloheynu yafrihu
Od yenuvun besayvah
deshenim vera'ananim yihyu
Lehagid ki yasha adonay,
tzuri velo avlata bo*

A psalm. A Song for the Day of Shabbat.
A good thing to give thanks to THE ETERNAL
to sing out to Your name supreme
to tell about your kindness in the morning,
and your faithfulness at night...
How great are your deeds, BREATH OF ALL,
Deep are Your thoughts!...
The righteous flourish like palm trees
Like cedars of Lebanon they grow
implanted in the house of THE ALL KNOWING
amid the courtyards of our God they bear fruit
In old age they'll put forth seed
fleshy and fresh they'll ever be
to tell the uprightness of ONE ALONE
my Rock, in whom no fault resides

Call to Prayer

As we bless the Source of Life, so we are blessed.
As we bless the Source of Life, so we are blessed.
And the blessing gives us strength and makes our vision clear.
And the blessing gives us peace, and the courage to dare. [- Faith Rogow]

*Barehu et adonay hamvorah
Baruh adonay hamvorah
le'olam va'ed*

Bless THE INFINITE, the blessed One!
Blessed is THE INFINITE, the blessed One,
now and forever

“Listen”

We bless THE ETERNAL by whose word the evenings fall.

We bless THE ONE who teaches us to demand justice and to learn law.

We speak of ONENESS

*shema Yisrael adonay eloheynu
adonay ehad*

Listen, Israel: THE ETERNAL is our God,
THE ETERNAL ONE alone!

And you must love THE ONE, your God, with your whole heart, with every breath, with all you have.
Take these words I command you now to heart. Teach them intently to your children. Speak of them
when you sit inside your house or walk upon the road, when you lie down and when you rise. And bind
them as a sign upon your hand, and keep them visible before your eyes. Inscribe them on the doorposts
of your house and on your gates.

We remember how quickly and deeply things turn disastrous when we forget or turn astray.
We remember Moses and Miriam and all the Israelites standing – with a history of violence and
oppression behind them, an unknown future ahead, and a sea that seemed uncrossable – calling out to
THE REDEEMER. And we pray: Spread over us the shelter of Your peace.

The “Standing” Prayer

[We stand together for our individual prayers in the words of our own traditions and/or in the words of our hearts. Traditional Shabbat blessings here recall

- the many ways our ancestors understood and honored the divine
- divine power – upholding the fallen, healing the sick, freeing the captive, bringing life to all
- the holiness of THE NAME
- holiness of the Sabbath
- the importance of our worship
- the many things for which we owe thanks
- peace

We close this “Standing Prayer” recalling our own responsibility to “protect my tongue from evil” and to “seek peace” and add our silent thoughts/prayers.]

A reading:

When I was a little boy, I prayed to God. I prayed God would make me a girl because I knew I wasn't really a boy, not inside. I didn't want to keep pretending to be a boy because it was hard to pretend all the time. I knew I couldn't go on forever pretending like that. It made me very tired and sad. I wondered why God would want me to be tired and sad every day. But I tried hard not to disappoint God.

One morning, after praying like this for many years, I woke up and God had changed me. God had changed my tiredness into courage. God gave me the courage to tell the truth. God gave me the courage to tell people I wasn't a boy, even though it made some people laugh and some people get mad.

God's courage has made me happy. God's courage has taught me to love myself. God's courage lets my outside be like my inside. God's courage gives me the gift of honesty. God is Truth.

I thank God for giving me the courage to tell the truth. I thank God for giving me the courage to be me.

Thank you God, for creating the infinitely complex universe, and for creating infinitely complex me. [--Dr. Jill Weiss, *Siddur B'chol L'vav'cha*, Congregation Beit Simchat Torah; Keshet guide*]

Concluding Prayers

And then all that has divided us will merge.
And then compassion will be wedded to power
And then softness will come to a world that is harsh and unkind
And then both men and women will be gentle.
And then both women and men will be strong
And then no person will be subject to another's will.
And then all will be rich and free and varied.
And then the greed of some will give way to the needs of many.
And then all will equally share in the Earth's abundance.
And then we will all care for the sick and the weak and the old.
And then all will nourish the young.
And then all will cherish life's creatures.
And then all will live in harmony with each other and the Earth.
And then everywhere will be called Eden once again.

[(c) Judy Chicago, 1979 – graciously made available through Ritualwell.org]

Remembering

God, full of mercy, bless the souls of all who are in our hearts on this Transgender Day of Remembrance. We call to mind today young and old, of every race, faith, and gender experience who have died by violence. We remember those who have died because they would not hide, or did not pass, or did pass, or stood too proud. Today we name them: the reluctant activist, the fiery hurler of heels, the warrior for quiet truth, the one whom no one really knew.

As many as we can name, there are thousands more whom we cannot, and for whom no Kaddish may have been said. We mourn their senseless deaths, and give thanks for their lives, for their teachings, and for the brief glow of each holy flame. We pray for the strength to carry on their legacy of vision, bravery, and love.

And as we remember them, we remember with them the thousands more who have taken their own lives. We pray for resolve to root out the injustice, ignorance, and cruelty that grow despair. We pray, God, that those who perpetrate hate and violence will speedily come to understand that Your creation has many faces, many genders, and many holy expressions.

Blessed are they who have allowed their divine image to shine in the world. Blessed are You, God, in whom no light is extinguished. — [Rabbi Reuben Zellman, *Siddur Sha'ar Zahav*; Keshet guide*]

We recall now those whom death has recently taken from us, those for whom we are still in a period of mourning, and those who died at this season in years past. We take into our hearts, too, the victims of transphobic violence, and all those who have died with no one to recite Kaddish for them –

Mourners' Kaddish

*Yitgadal veyitkadash shemey raba
be'alma divra hirutey veyamlich malhutey
behayehon uvyomeyhon uvhayey dehol beyt yisrael
b'agala uvizman kariv. Ve'imru: amen.*

*Yehay shemey raba mevarah
le'alam ulalmey almaya*

*Yitbarah veyishtabah veyitpa'ar veyitromam
veyitnasey veyit-hadar veyitaleh veyit-halal shemey
dekudsha berih hu. Le'ela min kol birhata
veshirata tushbehata benehemata
da'amiran be'alma. Vei'imru: amen*

*Yehey shelama raba min shemaya vehayim aleynu
ve'al kol yisra'el. Ve'imru: amen*

*Oseh shalom bimromav hu ya'aseh shalom aleynu
ve'al kol yisrael ve'al kol yoshvey tevel. Ve'imru:
amen.*

Let God's name be made great and holy in the world that was created as God willed. May God complete the holy realm in your own lifetime, in your days, and in the days of all the house of Israel, quickly and soon. And say: Amen.

May God's great name be blessed, forever and as long as worlds endure.

May it be blessed & praised & glorified & held in honor, viewed with awe, embellished & revered; & may the blessed name of holiness be hailed, though it be higher than all the blessings, songs, praises, & consolations that we utter in the world. And say: Amen.

May Heaven grant a universal peace, and life for us, and for all Israel. And say: Amen.

May the one who creates harmony above, make peace for us and for all Israel, and for all who dwell on earth. And say: Amen.

Concluding song

*Several prayers and the “divine potential” quote (R. Joseph Berman) taken from *A Jewish Guide to Marking Transgender Day of Remembrance*, prepared by Keshet: working for the full inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Jews in Jewish life, keshetonline.org.

**The Shalom Aleyhem drash, the transliterations and most translations borrowed from *Kol Haneshamah*, the prayerbook of the Jewish Reconstructionist movement, www.jrf.org

***Liturgy prepared by Virginia Spatz, songeveryday.wordpress.com, for Occupy Shabbat DC