



MUSIC AND POETRY FOR THIS SEASON

High Holy Days 2020/5781

High Holy Day Music Playlist

Songs with themes that speak to this season, and this moment. I hope you enjoy.

[Click Here For Spotify Playlist.](#)

Poetry

A Prayer for Compassion

Baruch Atah Adonai
Brucha At Shechinah
Blessed One-ness, Blessed Connection,
Kadosh Baruch Hu:
We pray for all who are in pain
And all who cause pain.

We pray for those of us
Who are so angry
That we have lost compassion for the suffering
Of anyone who is not a member of our group.
And we pray for those of us
Who cannot see the suffering
Behind the loss of that compassion.

We pray for the strength
To resist the urge to inhumanity
That we feel in times of fear and mourning.

We pray for the courage
To resist the calls to inhumanity
That others may make upon us in times of crisis.

Baruch Atah Adonai
Brucha At Shechinah
Blessed One-ness, Blessed Connection,
Kadosh Baruch Hu:
May we find relief from our hurts and fears
And may we not, in our pain,
Lose our empathy
For the hurts and fears of others.
We pray for all who are in pain
And all who cause pain.

Amen

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Prayer for Words

When I think of words
I am one of those people
words all over
pieces of paper
I lose those papers
writing words trying to remember
small woman in the supermarket
she told me
her eggplant was the spitting image
of Richard Nixon this is my life,
although it goes by so quickly
especially summers when days
more beautiful than beautiful
begin and end before I can write
them down when I try to tell you
about the world
and my sitting
on the porch I am writing a few things
down
what I want to tell you
is how life, small wonderful
bright yellow life how life
can happen if you watch and if you try
to write it down

ESTHER COHEN

September a month when life is intended
to resume
school starts summer ends when days
are different days and yet here we are still
not knowing
if today is Wednesday or Thursday still
not knowing
what will happen about schools and
Covid and this
endless election knowing only that today,
already the 3rd day of September so
beautiful it is
possible to pretend the rest doesn't matter
for now.

ESTHER COHEN

Rosh HaShanah (Rosh HeShone)

To a new year that is good and sweet
with apples dipped in sticky honey
pomegranate seeds that stain—
the true fruit that tempted Eve.
For though we are imperfect and like she
we owe apologies, we may remain
another year in this messy world.
Surely even God above must know
a sweet beginning is a sacred need.

MAIA EVRONA**For I Will Consider Your Dog Molly**

BY DAVID LEHMAN

For it was the first day of Rosh Ha'shanah, New Year's Day, day of remembrance, of
ancient sacrifices and averted calamities.

For I started the day by eating an apple dipped in honey, as ritual required.
For I went to the local synagogue to listen to the ram's horn blown.

For I asked Our Father, Our King, to save us for his sake if not for ours, for the sake
of his abundant mercies, for the sake of his right hand, for the sake of those who went
through fire and water for the sanctification of his name.

For despite the use of a microphone and other gross violations of ceremony, I gave my-
self up gladly to the synagogue's sensual insatiable vast womb.

For what right have I to feel offended?

For I communed with my dead father, and a conspicuous tear rolled down my right
cheek, and there was loud crying inside me.

For I understood how that tear could become an orb.

For the Hebrew melodies comforted me.

For I lost my voice.

For I met a friend who asked "is this a day of high seriousness" and when I said yes he
said "it has taken your voice away."

For he was right, for I felt the strong lashes of the wind lashing me by the throat.

For I thought there shall come a day that the watchmen upon the hills of Ephraim shall
cry, Arise and let us go up to Zion unto the Lord our God.

For the virgin shall rejoice in the dance, and the young and old in each other's arms,
and their soul shall be as a watered garden, and neither shall they learn war any more.
For God shall lower the price of bread and corn and wine and oil, he shall let our cry
come up to him.

For it is customary on the first day of Rosh Ha'shanah to cast a stone into the depths of
the sea, to weep and pray to weep no more.

For the stone represents all the sins of the people.

For I asked you and Molly to accompany me to Cascadilla Creek, there being no ocean
nearby.

For we talked about the Psalms of David along the way, and the story of Hannah,
mother of Samuel, who sought the most robust bard to remedy her barrenness.

For Isaac said "I see the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the offering?"

For as soon as I saw the stone, white flat oblong and heavy, I knew that it had sum-
moned me.

For I heard the voice locked inside that stone, for I pictured a dry wilderness in which,
with a wave of my staff, I could command sweet waters to flow forth from that stone.

For I cast the stone into the stream and watched it sink to the bottom where dozens of
smaller stones, all of them black, gathered around it.

For the waterfall performed the function of the chorus.

For after the moment of solemnity dissolved, you playfully tossed Molly into the stream.

For you tossed her three times, and three times she swam back for her life.

For she shook the water off her body, refreshed.

For you removed the leash from her neck and let her roam freely.

For she darted off into the brush and speared a small gray moving thing in the neck.

For this was the work of an instant.

For we looked and behold! the small gray thing was a rat.

For Molly had killed the rat with a single efficient bite, in conformance with Jewish law.

For I took the rat and cast him into the stream, and both of us congratulated Molly.

For now she resumed her noble gait.

For she does not lie awake in the dark and weep for her sins, and whine about her con-
dition, and discuss her duty to God.

For I'd as lief pray with your dog Molly as with any man.

For she knows that God is her savior.

OPERATION MEMORY

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Love After Love

The time will come
when, with elation,
you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door, in your own mirror,
and each will smile at the other's welcome

and say, sit here. Eat.

You will love again the stranger who was your
self.

Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you

all your life, whom you have ignored
for another, who knows you by heart.

Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,

the photographs, the desperate notes,
peel your own image from the mirror.
Sit. Feast on your life.

DEREK WALCOTT, [COLLECTED WORKS](#)

תשובה

Encounter

I stirred in the small hours of the morning. Sensing a presence, I did not return to sleep, but ventured into the living room, apprehensively.

There, by the balcony, sat a familiar figure — cross-legged and reading in the semi-dark, with just the milky moonlight for company.

I do not know how I knew, but I did. I recognized the intruder, at once, with a mixture of dread and affection.

“I’m sorry,” were the only words to leave my lips. “I’m sorry, too,” replied my longed-for-self, with a sigh of infinite kindness and pity.

He did not rise to greet me and, somehow, spoke without words, transmitting what was needed.

Catching his glistening eye, the caring made me cry. “You’ve taken every detour to avoid me,” he gently reproached. “For every step I’ve taken towards you, you’ve taken back two”.

I did not know what to say in my defense (how could I protest against myself?) “I missed you,” he said, and feared you’d forgotten me.”

His admonishment was tender as a kiss. “I visit from time to time, and hope you’ll ask me to stay.” I knew what he said was true, and felt that way, too.

“I worried,” he continued, “if I postponed this visit, we might never meet, in this life... and so I came to sharpen your appetite.”

He rose and moved towards me. “There’s no need to speak, return to sleep. But when you rise, try to remember me. And to keep awake.”

YAHIA LABABIDI

A Blessing For Presence

May you awaken to the mystery of being here and enter the quiet immensity of your own presence.

May you have joy and peace in the temple of your senses.

May you receive great encouragement when new frontiers beckon.

May you respond to the call of your gift and find the courage to follow its path.

May the flame of anger free you from falsity.

May warmth of heart keep your presence aflame and may anxiety never linger about you.

May your outer dignity mirror an inner dignity of soul.

May you take time to celebrate the quiet miracles that seek no attention.

May you be consoled in the secret symmetry of your soul.

May you experience each day as a sacred gift woven around the heart of wonder.

JOHN O'DONOHUE

Mysteries, Yes

Truly, we live with mysteries too marvelous
to be understood.

How grass can be nourishing in the
mouths of the lambs.

How rivers and stones are forever
in allegiance with gravity
while we ourselves dream of rising.

How two hands touch and the bonds will
never be broken.

How people come, from delight or the
scars of damage,
to the comfort of a poem.

Let me keep my distance, always,
from those

who think they have the answers.

Let me keep company always with those
who say

“Look!” and laugh in astonishment,
and bow their heads.

MARY OLIVER, DEVOTIONS

DEAR YOU

Dear you,
You who always have
so many things to do
so many places to be
your mind spinning like
fan blades at high speed
each moment always a blur
because you're never still.
I know you're tired.
I also know it's not your fault.
The constant brain-buzz is like
a swarm of bees threatening
to sting if you close your eyes.
You've forgotten something again.
You need to prepare for that or else.
You should have done that differently.
What if you closed your eyes?
Would the world fall
apart without you?
Or would your mind
become the open sky
flock of thoughts
flying across the sunrise
as you just watched and smiled.

KAVERI PATEL**The Real Work**

It may be that when we no longer know
what to do
we have come to our real work,
and that when we no longer know which
way to go
we have come to our real journey.
The mind that is not baffled is not employed.
The impeded stream is the one
that sings.

WENDELL BERRY

STANDING BY WORDS

Thank you.

I hope you have found these poems supportive of your soulwork this season.

In this challenging year, I pray that you find spaces of rest and connection with your deepest self and with community. An unanticipated benefit of the pandemic is that it has opened the door to so many wonderful virtual experiences. I hope you will join us for our High Holy Day gatherings. You can find the dates and times [here](#).

Teshuvah is the process of returning - and it is itself a holy practice. The rabbis believed *teshuvah* was built into the very structure of creation.* This teaching acknowledges that the nature of human beings is to make mistakes, miss the mark, and stray from our intention. And there is a *way* to come back.

Again and again, we return. We are called back to center.

Please connect with me on your favorite social media platform.

Wishing you peace – shalom – overflowing blessings and a year of sweet renewal, justice and healing.

— Rabbi Jill

*Talmud (Pesachim 54a) & Pirke DeRabbi Eliezer 3:1.



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