

YOM KIPPUR  
SILENT CONFESSION

In my individuality I turn to You, O God, and seek Your help. For You care for each of Your children. You are *my* God, and *my* Redeemer. Therefore, while around me others think their own thoughts, I think mine; and as each one of them seeks to experience Your presence, so do I.

Each person's abilities are limited by nature and by the circumstances we have had to face. Whether I have done better or worse with my capacities than others with theirs, I cannot judge.

But I do know that I have failed in many ways to live up to my potentialities and Your demands. Not that You expect the impossible. You do not ask me: 'Why have you not been great as Moses?' You do ask me: 'Why have you not been yourself? Why have you not been true to the best in *you*?'

I will not lay the blame on others, though they may have wronged me, nor on circumstances, though they may have been difficult. The fault lies mainly in myself.

I have been weak. Too often I have failed to make the required effort to do my work conscientiously, to give my full attention to those who needed me, to speak the kindly word, to do the generous deed, to express my concern for my friends. I have not loved enough, not even those closest to me.

I have also neglected my duties to my community. The Jewish people is only a remnant of what it was, a fragment of what it might have been. It needs strength to rebuild itself and to carry on the task entrusted to it by a hundred generations. Have I been a source of this strength? Have I enhanced its good name? Have I shared fully in its life? Have I even acquainted myself sufficiently with the history of my people and the teachings of my faith?

And do I not share some responsibility for the social evils which I see, hear about, and read about daily? Have I always used my opportunities as a citizen to relieve suffering, to speak out against injustice, to promote harmony in the life of my city, my country, and the nations of the world?

There is much that I failed to do. There is also much that I wish I had not done. By many words and deeds I have caused harm. It is not easy now to remember the details; out of guilt I tend to shut them out of my consciousness. But clearly or dimly, the regretted memories now come back to me. I have, in many ways, hurt my sisters and brothers; I have betrayed their trust, offended their sensibilities, damaged their self-respect. Sometimes, indeed, I have done harm from what seemed at the time good motives. Sometimes my supposed love for others was in reality only a desire to dominate them. And sometimes what I took to be righteous indignation was only uncontrolled anger or unforgiving vindictiveness.

How I wish I had learned to master myself; to control my impulses; to curb my craving for pleasure, power, and possessions; to display consistently those qualities which are most admirable in others! Have I made any progress at all in this, the greatest of all arts, the art of living? Perhaps a little; certainly not enough.



Why? Because I have not been true to myself. Because I have not nurtured sufficiently the good in me. For there *is* good in me. 'The soul that You have given me is pure!' There is that in me which condemns me when I do wrong and urges me to do right, which holds up before me the ideal, and challenges me to reach toward it. There is in me a spark of Your divinity.

How to realize the 'divine image' in me—there is the question and the answer. Surely it means to seek You more earnestly, to submit myself to Your will; to say to You: Here I am; mould me, guide me, command me, use me, let me be Your co-worker, an instrument of Your redemptive purpose.

Help me then, O God; help me always, but especially now, on this sacred Day of Atonement; help me to banish from myself whatever is mean, ugly, callous, cruel, stubborn, or otherwise unworthy of a being created in Your image. Purify me, revive me, uplift me. Forgive my past, and lead me into the future, resolved to be Your servant.

May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable to You, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer. Amen.

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