

"The soul which You, my God, have given me is pure. You created it. You formed it. You breathed it into me. You keep body and soul together. One day You will take my soul from me, to restore it to me in life eternal. So long as this soul is within me I acknowledge You, Lord my God, my ancestors' God, Master of all creation, sovereign of all souls."

These poignant words are recited every morning by the observant Jew. They are among the first words in the Shacharit service--the morning service recited every day. They remind the slumber-laden davener to appreciate the blessing of the soul. Shortly after awakening in the morning the siddur directs us to thank God for the blessing of our soul.

As late summer begins to fade into early fall, we Jewish people welcome the fall holidays into our lives. Beginning with Rosh Hashanah, followed by Yom Kippur, Sukkot, and Simchat Torah the fall is our season of the spirit like no other time on the calendar. Unwilling to give our spirit time to breathe throughout the year we find ourselves looking forward to the High Holy Days and their capacity to touch our spirit.

Rosh Hashanah signals the first of the Ten Days of Repentance- Aseret Yimei Teshuvah. After having spent the month of Elul preparing for Rosh Hashanah we seek to purify our soul of all blemishes. For ten days, beginning with Rosh Hashanah and concluding on Yom Kippur we review our past year. We question our motives. We challenge our convictions. We review our choices. During the course of the Ten Days of Repentance we pre-prepare ourselves, as best we can for the New Year.

Deep inside each of us is an unquenchable fire. The embers of that flame refuse to relinquish our spiritual quest for meaning. The human spirit is alive with the desire to identify our purpose in life, the reason for our pain, the goal of humanity. The world's perplexing questions continue to gnaw at us, ensuring that the High Holy Days present us with the time to ponder these eternal questions.

As we anticipate sharing long periods of time together over the course of the next few weeks we know our souls will be nourished. This spiritual time on our calendar provides the necessary opportunity for our souls to be reinvigorated. We pray that each of us will discover something new about ourselves during the course of Yom Tov. We pray that the words and thoughts expressed by our Machzor will find a receiving heart deeply embedded in each of us. May we, in fact never overlook the wonder of the soul God has breathed into us, utilizing our best efforts to keep it pure, to keep it healthy, and to keep it ever ready to underscore the inherent link it represents between us and our Creator.

On behalf of Wende, Danielle and Gilad, Jordana, and Adina, Talia and Rabbi Kushnick, Nadav and Levi, I extend to each of you, as members of our extended family at Anshai Torah, a Shana Tova u'Metuka--a New Year of 5776 filled with sweetness, good health, blessing, prosperity, and the opportunity to bring peace to our world.

*Rabbi Stefan J. Weinberg*