

Shabbat shalom.

Every day, as Jews, we express our appreciation for the wondrous work of Creation, in the words of our blessings and our prayers.

Perhaps an hundred times a day, our thoughts enfold the intricate networks and flows of cells within our bodies, earthly cycles, the celestial systems that heat the planet, determine the seasons, and make food grow.

From Psukei D'Zimra, the morning psalms, to every recitation of Birkat HaMazon, we sing of trees, of animals great and small, of the sky and the seas, and most of all, of God's caring, clearly demonstrated by an encompassing plan that provides shelter and sustenance for all Earth's creatures...

What expresses this more beautifully than the 104th psalm, King David's poetic outpouring of appreciation for God's arrangement of the world that provides trees for birds' nests, prey for hungry little lions, high hills for mountain goats, and rocky refuges for badgers...

O My Soul, bless the One God,
You make springs gush forth in torrents to flow between the hills.
The wild beasts all drink from them.
Birds of the heavens rest on their banks
And lift their voices among the branches.
From your lofty abode You water the hills;
The earth is sated with the fruit of Your works

This we reserve for each new moon, as our Sages sought to remind us, through the liturgy, in cycles like those of Nature's days, weeks, months—of this awesome planet that God has made... and has charged us with the responsibility to protect:

According to midrash, God showed Adam and Eve the Garden of Eden and said, "I have made the whole thing for you, so please take good care of it. If you wreck it, there will be no one else to repair it besides you" (Koheleth Rabbah 7:13).

Even as the Torah teaches us that it is human to draw on the resources of this planet, to work the soil of this garden—we are obligated to take care of it, too.

Each Friday night as we recite *Kiddush*, we enter into *Shabbat*—a *zikaron l'ma'aseh bereishit*—a commemoration of those formative acts that created the world that God established and then entrusted to us.

This Shabbat, we bear this to mind as we approach Rosh Hashanah, *HaYom Harat Olam*, the day that recalls the birthday of the world.

We come together now to reflect on the world that God established and then entrusted to us and to recommit ourselves to a way of life that upholds this responsibility—one that, according to Jewish tradition, is central to being human.

On the Day of Judgment, to the sound of the shofar we recall the Creation of the world in awe, as though its fate and ours hang in the balance. Indeed, as our understanding of this marvelous earth and our impact on it grows, so does our awareness that its welfare *is* bound up in our behavior—a relationship resonant in this week’s Torah portion as we learn that there are severe consequences for “the land that we inherit” if we make poor choices, as there are abundant blessings to be garnered if we make good ones.

And so we offer this prayer today before we learn:

Elokeinu v'Elokei Avoteinu—God, and God of our Ancestors, whom we call
HaYotzer b'Chochmah—Wise Creator,
Mechalkel Chayim b'Hessed—Sustainer of the all-Encompassing Economy of Life,
Magen, Melamed—Shield and Teacher
Hazan et HaKol, HaMabit Umakshiv—Provider of Universal Sustenance, The One Who is Watching and Listening

May we, whom You have created in Your image,
Enter into the new year conscious of our being, too, *b'nei Adam*,
Descendants of the one whom you charged to be a *mensch*,
To care for this garden into which you placed us.

May our learning today help us to
Inherit your concern for the well-being of the planet
and improve our ability to care for it
and the systems of life within it.

May our communal reflection nourish our resolve
to find sustainable forms of energy and of living
that we model to our children.

May our appreciation keep us humble throughout the year,
So that we can change our ways without too much resistance
So that the intelligence and intuition that You’ve granted us to bring to this task
May be a blessing to the planet, and not a curse.

As you have covenanted never to destroy the world,
Let us be Your partners in this promise.

Baruch ata HaShem, Shomer HaBrit.

Amen.