

WHO SHALL LIVE AND WHO SHALL DIE: UN'TANEH TOKEF THROUGH THE LENS OF REFUGEE STORIES

A HIGH HOLIDAY TEXT STUDY 2016 • 5777



צדקה

תשובה



תפלה

SOURCE HANDOUT

UN'TANEH TOKEF

(א) בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה יִכְתְּבוּן,
(ב) וּבְיוֹם צוֹם כְּפוּר יִחְתְּמוּן.
(ג) כַּמָּה יַעֲבְרוּן, וְכַמָּה יִפְרְאוּן,
(ד) מִי יַחֲיֶה, וּמִי יָמוּת,
(ה) מִי בְּקִצּוֹ, וּמִי לֹא בְּקִצּוֹ,
(ו) מִי בַּמַּיִם, וּמִי בַּאֵשׁ,
(ז) מִי בַחֲרֵב, וּמִי בַחֲצֵה,
(ח) מִי בְרָעַב, וּמִי בְצָמָא,
(ט) מִי בְרַעַשׁ, וּמִי בַמַּגֵּפָה,
(י) מִי בַחֲנִיקָה, וּמִי בַסְּקִילָה,
(יא) מִי יָנוּחַ, וּמִי יָנוּעַ,
(יב) מִי יִשְׁקֵט, וּמִי יִטְרֹף,
(יג) מִי יִשְׁלֹו, וּמִי יִתְיַסֵּר,
(יד) מִי יַעֲנִי, וּמִי יַעֲשִׂיר,
(טו) מִי יִשְׁפֹּל, וּמִי יָרוּם.
(טז) וּתְשׁוּבָה וּתְפִלָּה וְצַדִּיקָה
(יז) מַעֲבִירִין אֶת רֵעַ הַגִּזְרָה.

1. On Rosh Hashanah is it is written,
2. on Yom Kippur it is sealed.
3. How many shall pass on, how many shall come to be;
4. who shall live and who shall die;
5. who shall see ripe age and who shall not;
6. who shall perish by fire and who by water;
7. who by sword and who by beast;
8. who by hunger and who by thirst;
9. who by earthquake and who by plague;
10. who by strangling and who by stoning;
11. who shall be secure and who shall be driven;
12. who shall be tranquil and who shall be troubled;
13. who shall be poor and who shall be rich;
14. who shall be humbled and who exalted.
15. But repentance, prayer, and charity
16. temper judgement's severe decree.



BABYLONIAN TALMUD, ROSH HASHANAH 16B

א"ר כרוספדאי א"ר יוחנן: שלשה ספרים נפתחין בר"ה. אחד של רשעים גמורין ואחד של צדיקים גמורין ואחד של בינוניים צדיקים גמורין. נכתבין ונחתמין לאלתר לחיים רשעים גמורין נכתבין ונחתמין לאלתר למיתה בינוניים תלויין ועומדין מר"ה ועד יוה"כ זכו נכתבין לחיים לא זכו נכתבין למיתה.

R. Kruspedai said in the name of R. Johanan: Three books are opened [in heaven] on New Year, one for the thoroughly wicked, one for the thoroughly righteous, and one for the intermediate. The thoroughly righteous are forthwith inscribed definitively in the book of life; the thoroughly wicked are forthwith inscribed definitively in the book of death; the doom of the intermediate is suspended from New Year till the Day of Atonement; if they deserve well, they are inscribed in the book of life; if they do not deserve well, they are inscribed in the book of death.

EXODUS 32:32

וְעַתָּה אִם־תִּשָּׂא חַטָּאתָם וְאִם־אֵין מְחַנֵּי נָא מִסִּפְרֶךָ אֲשֶׁר כָּתַבְתָּ:

Now, if You will forgive their sin [well and good]; but if not, erase me from the record which You have written!"

PSALM 69:29

יִמְחוּ מִסֵּפֶר חַיִּים וְעַם צְדִיקִים אֲלֵי־כְתָבָם:

May they be erased from the book of life, and not be inscribed with the righteous.

ISAIAH 4:3

וְהָיָה | הַנִּשְׁאָר בְּצִיּוֹן וְהַנּוֹתָר בִּירוּשָׁלַם קְדוֹשׁ יֵאמָר לוֹ כֹּל־הַכֹּתוֹב לְחַיִּים בִּירוּשָׁלַם:

And those who remain in Zion and are left in Jerusalem— All who are inscribed for life in Jerusalem— Shall be called holy.

MALACHI 3:16

אִז נִדְבְּרוּ יִרְאֵי יְהוָה אִישׁ אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ וַיִּקְשֹׁב יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁמַע וַיִּכְתֹּב סֵפֶר זִכְרוֹן לְפָנָיו לְיִרְאֵי יְהוָה וּלְחֹשְׁבֵי שְׁמוֹ:

In this vein have those who revere Adonai been talking to one another. Adonai has heard and noted it, and a scroll of remembrance has been written at God's behest concerning those who revere Adonai and esteem God's name.

BEN SIRA 15:11-17

(יא) אל תאמר מאל פשעי כי את אשר שנה לא עשה:
(יב) פן תאמר הוא התקילני כי אין צורך באנשי חמס:
(יג) רעה ותעבה שנה יי ולא יאננה ליראיו:

(יד) אלהים מבראשית ברא אדם וישתיהו ביד חותפו ויתנהו ביד יצרו:
(טו) אם תחפץ תשמר מצוה ותבונה לעשות רצונו: אם תאמין בו גם אתה תחיה:
(טז) מוצק לפניך אש ומים באשר תחפץ שלח ידיך.
(יז) לפני אדם חיים ומוות אשר יחפץ ינתן לו:

¹¹Do not say, "My transgression is from God." For God does not make that which God hates.

¹²Lest you say, "It is God who has made me accursed." For God has no need for violent human beings.

¹³Evil and abomination God hates and God will not cause it to befall to those who fear God.

¹⁴God made humanity from the beginning and put humanity into the hands of their kidnapper and gave into the hand of their own desire.

¹⁵If you so desire you will keep the commandment, for the doing of God's will is understanding. If you trust in God you will also live.

¹⁶Fire and water are poured out before you. Upon whichever one you desire you may reach out your hands.

¹⁷Life and death are before a person, whichever the person desires will be given to them.

HEADLINES FROM ARTICLES ABOUT TODAY'S REFUGEES

Who By Water? "The Young Girl and the Sea" – Another boat ferrying refugees to Europe has capsized between Turkey and Greece. Rescuers arrived too late to save them all.ⁱ

Who By Hunger? "Hunger, and Hard Choices, for Africa's Struggling Refugees" – Across the continent, funding shortfalls and insecurity are forcing steep cuts in food rations for many of the most vulnerable.ⁱⁱ

Who By Plague? "More than 1,200 Die of Starvation and Illness at Nigeria Refugee Camp" – Médecins Sans Frontières finds catastrophic humanitarian emergency at Bama camp for people fleeing Boko Haram.ⁱⁱⁱ

Who By Stoning? "Sad End for Young Refugee" – Asho Duhulow was keen to escape the dismal Kenyan refugee camp for displaced Somalis. So the 13-year-old returned to her parents' homeland. But there, she was raped and then stoned to death.^{iv}

“THE CALL TO TURN INWARD,” RABBI DAVID A. TEUTSCH, PHD,
FROM WHO BY FIRE, WHO BY WATER - UN'TANEH TOKEF,
PG. 227-228

T'shuvah, *t'fillah*, and *tz'dakah* will mitigate the bad in the decree (line 21). I cannot control the unexpected blows that will affect my family, my job, my health. But I can control how I live with them. *T'shuvah* means returning to awareness of the One and walking the path of Torah. *T'fillah* (“prayer”) can cultivate gratitude, innerness, connection to transcendent values, and spiritual depth. *Tz'dakah* is not just about giving significant amounts to charity and, thereby, cultivating personal generosity; it is also about making the pursuit of *tzedek* (“justice”) a central part of life. When we concern ourselves with feeding the hungry, healing the sick, and seeking peace, the ripples of goodness move both inward and outward. *T'shuvah*, *t'fillah* and *tz'dakah* will not stop stock-market crashes, lung cancer, or the other blows that come our way, but they can radically transform how we are affected by those blows.

Developing our commitment to making a difference in the world, to deepening our connection to the divine, and to living harmoniously softens the blows by giving us critically important perspective about what matters most.

SUBHI'S STORY

Walking down the street while holding hands with his boyfriend could have gotten Subhi Nahas tortured and killed in his hometown of Idlib, Syria, where he says hardline militias target gay men and execute them.

“My family has never accepted me for being gay, and at that point I wasn’t safe inside my home or outside in the city. I was afraid that my own father would someday tell [the militias] about me being gay,” said Nahas, who arrived in San Francisco in June 2015. He was resettled with the help of two organizations in northern California working to get lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) refugees out of dangerous environments.

The road to the Bay Area was not without hurdles. [Nahas] made two perilous journeys, one by car from Idlib to Beirut, the capital of Lebanon, and another from Beirut to Antakya, in southern Turkey.

“Returning to Syria wasn’t an option, so I used the last money that I had to pay for [my] flight to Turkey,” said Nahas, who helped translate for international organizations operating near the Turkish-Syrian border.

[In Turkey,] Nahas met an [attorney from the Organization for Refuge, Asylum, and Migration] who . . . guided him through the [asylum application] process supported by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency. The non-profit explained to him the US Department of Homeland Security interview process, and

eventually found him a host family to live with in the Bay Area. Nahas' skills also landed him a job at ORAM when he moved to the Bay Area. He helped with Arabic translations, designing publications and serving as a spokesperson for LGBTI refugee rights. He even detailed his incredible journey before the UN Security Council in August 2015.

"Resettling LGBT refugees is a slow and sensitive process because we build a support group around every person we resettle," said Amy Weiss, [Director of Refugee and Immigrant Services at Jewish Family and Children's Services East Bay, a HIAS resettlement partner agency].

One of those hosts is Judy Salomon, a 64-year-old grade school teacher from Berkeley, who has been hosting two gay refugees from Uganda since January. "When I heard that the greatest need for resettling refugees was housing for LGBT individuals, it made sense to me and I wanted to help," said Salomon, whose own kids are grown and no longer living with her.

"Our Ugandan guests were scared at first. Everything was new and they had already suffered so much trauma back home," said Salomon. "But what opened everything up was when they met my six-year-old granddaughter. Kids have a way of getting everyone to relax."^v

תפלה צדקה תשובה

i <http://tracks.unhcr.org/2015/09/the-young-girl-and-the-sea>

ii <http://tracks.unhcr.org/2014/07/hunger-and-hard-choices-for-africas-struggling-refugees>

iii <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/23/refugees-die-starvation-illness-nigeria-camp-bama-boko-haram>

iv https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2008/12/21/sad_end_for_young_refugee.html

v <http://tracks.unhcr.org/2016/05/finally-a-safe-place-to-be-gay>