

Our Hearts Are Restless

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Yamim Nora'im

Georgia O'Keeffe, known for her enlarged and stylized flower studies, once said, "Nobody sees a flower really; it is so small. We haven't time, and to see takes time, just as having a friend takes time."

It is the beginning of autumn, the time of change. The spring and summer flowers so beloved by Georgia O'Keeffe have faded, and the asters and other autumn flowers – also so beloved by her – are coming into bloom. The hot weather crops have been harvested, and the winter crops are being planted. The leaves are turning from their summer green to the fall riot of colors. Throughout the United States – save only the southernmost tips of Florida and Texas and the distant states of Alaska and Hawaii – the rainbows of leaves are appearing.

When I lived in Atlanta, one of my friends, who had grown up in New England, expressed disappointment with what she perceived as the "dullness" of the Georgia autumn. "The colors were so much brighter in New England," she would say to me. "I don't know how people here can even enjoy the autumn."

"But the autumn in Georgia is exactly like the autumn in New England," I replied. "It's just that in New England the scene is done in oil paints; in Georgia it's done in pastels."

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Autumn is a time for changing. The beginning of autumn is the time for celebrating Rosh Hashanah, the New Year, and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Collectively called the High Holy Days, this period is a time for introspection. We call it the “Ten Days of *T’shuvah*,” the “Ten Days of Repentance,” but *t’shuvah*, which we commonly render as *repentance*, actually means *turning* – a turning from life-denying actions toward a more life-enhancing way of life.

And it is a time for us to turn our way of thinking as well. Throughout the year, we proclaim our belief in G*d. At this time of the year, through our honest introspection, we encounter the Divine Spark within our souls, and we come to know that, important as it is that we believe in G*d, it is far more important – and always true – that G*d believes in us.

On Rosh Hashanah, the *shofar*, the ram’s horn, is blown to proclaim the Festival. The ritual begins with a whole note, followed by three shorter broken notes and a series of nine short shattered notes. Then Yom Kippur is concluded with a very long note, lasting until the one blowing the *shofar* runs out of breath. It is the cry of our own soul, our pure soul, our true essence, our Divine Spark which is a part of G*d. As does the ram’s horn, our hearts and our souls cry out for love and healing because we feel the pain of living in this imperfect world where the Divine Presence is not known fully. It is broken – the world is broken – and it cries out for the healing, for the wholeness, which can come only from the Creator. Our hearts find no rest until they rest in G*d.

Shanah Tovah.

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