

## Today is the Birthday of the World

A poem reflecting on the liturgy of *Malchuyot* (Sovereignty) and *Zichronot* (Remembrance) for Rosh HaShana

Today is the birthday of the world<sup>1</sup>.  
Today marks a new year of courts and kings,  
A new year of fallowness and fertility.<sup>2</sup>

Today I stand before You with breath in my nostrils,  
Waiting for You to take Your throne,  
Awaiting Your judgment.

Who is not called to account on this day?<sup>3</sup>  
Who am I to merit Your remembrance of me?  
Am I Your child or Your servant?

We pray You have mercy on us as a parent to a child.  
But on this day, we remember the binding of Isaac.  
The rabbis said Abraham suppressed his compassion in order to do Your  
will with a full heart,  
That You cut a covenant with him for that act,  
That You still remember me because my forebear was willing to give You  
his son.  
How can a knife against a throat be the mercy of a parent?

I want to be remembered for giving into my compassion, not controlling it.  
I want to be remembered for holding loved ones close, not losing them to  
my violent obedience.

We pray that You are gracious to us, Your servants.

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<sup>1</sup> From the liturgy: היום הרת עולם

<sup>2</sup> According to Rosh Hashanah 11a:17, God visited pregnancy on Sarah & Hannah on Rosh Hashana. As well, Rosh Hashanah is the turning point for Shemitta years.

<sup>3</sup> From the liturgy: מי לא נפקד כי היום הזה

You told your servant Jacob not to be afraid,<sup>4</sup>

But are these not the Days of Awe?

You are menacing and holy.<sup>5</sup>

We tremble at the blare of the Shofar,

Unsure of the compensation we deserve.

You reign through each of Your children and servants.

If not for us, you would rule only over dust and ashes.

Without us, there would be no covenant.

Dust and ashes may never turn stiff-necked and defiant, but neither can  
they keep a promise.

This is the covenant I offer You on this birthday of the world.

I promise to remember You.

I promise to remember what You meant to the ancestors of my people.

I promise to cultivate the divinity within me.

I believe Your reign is realized when all of humankind can share merciful  
godliness with one another,

When we remember You just as You remember us.

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<sup>4</sup> Jer. 30:10, 46:27, 46:28, & Isaiah 44:2

<sup>5</sup> From the liturgy: איום קדוש