

#OccupyHeaven: A Poem for Ne'ilah 5777

United not by common language or experience
but by action, by clapping, using our hands
to give voice to our rising power
transcendent heartbeat of our collective will, we say

petaj lanu sha'ar b'et ne'ilat sha'ar ki fanah
hayom yifneh hashemesh yavo veyifneh navoah sh'arekha
Keep the gate open for us when the day turns to night!
As surely as the closing bell sounds, we will rush the gates!

The word ne'ilah means closing time, buildings locked, gates bolted, alarms set
so no intruders can infringe on God's spare time He spends like spare change
Ne'ilah means our time is up, you don't have to go home but you can't stay here
If God didn't get to you today, you should have showed up earlier

Forced to participate in this frustrating process of penitence
God's yearly performance review of humankind
all denied food and water for the last twenty-four hours
some denied food and water each and every twenty-four hours

we convene today for protest's sake
as the sun sets on this Day of Atonement
The Day of Judgment
when even the Hosts of Heaven are judged
God thinks if management has to do this too that we won't notice
the glorified injustice of the pinnacle of our calendar year

So we're here ready to make some noise - our voices will be heard
We will make God listen; that's what we're here to do, to insist on
to insist on not being ignored, to insist on disrupting God's dinner party
"No humans allowed" except the help; be sure to use the service entrance

If you are a veteran of actions like these, great. If this is your first, even better.
Let's start with refreshing our memory at why we're here
God says He seeks our repentance, not perfection
God says this is all He desires, as soon as we repent, He will forgive

Adonai adonai el rajum vejanun
erech apayim verav jesed ve-emet
notzer jesed la-alafim
nose avon vafesha vejata-a venakeh

My Lord, My Lord, God is merciful and gracious
endlessly patient overflowing with kindness and truth
bestowing kindness to the thousandth generation,
forgiving wrongdoing, sins of commission and omission and granting pardon

What a load of -
oh right, no cursing - there are children present - yeah, right
You may not know yet but we have the full text of that quote about God's kindness
it's taken out of context and when you play the tape all the way to the end
He's actually talking about how He won't forgive

and instead He'll punish people to the third and fourth generation - at least
God and His cronies don't want us to know He seeks revenge and calls it justice
God and His cronies don't want us to know the Messiah is ready to come tomorrow
if police lay down their weapons and superintendents reopen closed schools

if we tear down separation walls and throw welcome home parties for refugees
as they come back to the properties whose deeds they have safeguarded for generations
if we abolish prisons and establish a justice system that respects even the cockroach
and one that never treats humans like roaches - but that would destroy God's master plan

Hypocrite on High - we see through Your empty rhetoric
this was the year that God increased, not decreased, extrajudicial execution of Black boys
this was the year that dancing in your queer Brown body became punishable by death on
Shavuot
that going to mosque in Queens became a capital crime for Imam Alauddin Akonjee

On Tisha B'av. This was the year God further punished poverty
and humiliated and killed transgender women of Color
this was the year God sanctioned the scapegoating of Muslims for violence
even though God gave us violence millennia before the life of the Prophet

that's why we're here to #occupyHeaven, here for the immigrant, for the beggar, for the
refugee
for the orphan and the child soldier, for the domestic workers, the sex workers, and
ourselves
here to negotiate a new covenant, here to strike if needed
God and His cronies don't want us to know we can throw off their yoke

But now is the time
we #occupyHeaven
Now is the time
we deem God an unsuitable negotiation partner
Now is the time
we hold out for a better offer
Now is the time!

Now is the time

we say *no más* to deportation

Now is the time

we make the sun stand still over Jericho and Silwan and Susiya
declaring #existenceisresistance against God's weaponized bulldozers
until Jacob and Esau once again embrace

This is the year, the poet says, this is the year the squatters evict landlords
the year we refuse to go home until everyone has housing
the year we refuse to be satisfied with forgiveness until all are forgiven
the year we tell God not to make foolish promises, the year we abolish not only prisons but
sin

The sun hasn't set yet, the gates are still open. So here's what we'll do
even the worst sinners and those whose guilt weighs heavily though they are blameless
we're going to join hands and enter the open gates. Our chant starts simply:
Hear our voices! Hear our voices! Hear our voices! Hear our voices!

(Jay Stanton)