(Starting after the ברכה of מחיה המתים)

קדושת השם

"אתה קדוש ... יהללוך סלה"

You, Hashem, are קדוש — and thus separate and far removed from this physical world; and all that we see You do (שמך) is beyond our understanding. But we, the Jewish People, we are "קדושים" and are also separate and somewhat removed from the values and the "normal" of the regular physical world (look at the miracle of our survival throughout Jewish History). And therefore, even though many times what happens to us seem to not make sense – we, Your People, praise and thank You every day.

"ובכן"

"And also" – also what? In the first two ברכות of שמונה עשרה we have been discussing and worrying about ourselves as a nation – the Jewish People. But on ראש השנה, the whole world is being judged – and therefore we must focus on broader issues which we normally do not think about on a day to day basis because we are so busy with our personal issues. But today we show Hashem that those bigger issues ARE important to us. (And during עשרת ימי תשובה we will make a credible and workable plan to bring those issues more and more into our daily lives.)

"ובכן תן פחדך ... על כל מה שבראת"

All nations, all peoples, all cultures, wherever they are, were created by You, Hashem. Please get them to understand the Truth of Your power and Kingship. Please help them see through all the illusions of their military and economic might; and help them come to the realization that true success is ONLY thanks to You, Hashem. Help them drop their differences and wars, and unite together to serve You and follow Your Teachings and Will eagerly and with a full heart. Because we, בני ישראל, we know the truth - that Hashem, You are the only true Ruler of the universe, who created all and controls all. (Even if maybe during the year we did not always act that way.)

"ובכן תן כבוד ... במהרה בימינו"

And also Hashem, give honor to Your Nation בני ישראל(instead of the way it is now that so many people look down on us); and those who fear Hashem and have the courage to do what is right regardless of what others say – they should be praised (and not made fun of); and please give hope and courage to those who seek You and are at least trying to discover the right path; and to those of us trying to speak to You – open our mouths and help us find the right words to say. Bring happiness to Your land ארץ ישראל, and bring joy to Your city ירושלים; bring back the Kings of the House of דוד המלך and bring משיח quickly – in our days.

"ובכן צדיקים ... ממשלת זדון מן הארץ"

And also – let the world become a place of Truth and Goodness, such that the צדיקים will look out at the world and be happy, and the honest and straightforward people will sing praise, and the righteous will be happy and sing, because all evil will close its mouth (there will be no more lies and hypocrisy); and all wickedness will evaporate like smoke - when You Hashem will get rid of the power and leadership of evildoers from the world.

"ותמלוך אתה ... לדור ודור הללו-ה"

Then (with all the evil gone), You Hashem will rule alone over everything and everyone, from הר ציון — the place where Your כבוד can be most felt, in ירושלים, Your holy city. For as the פסוק tells us: O ציון – Hashem your G-d will rule forever – for all generations!

"קדוש אתה ... המלך הקדוש"

You, Hashem are holy (separate from mere humans and therefore we cannot understand who or what Hashem is) and Your Name is awe-inspiring (we cannot fully understand how Hashem deals with the world); but we do know that there is no other power in the world besides Hashem; as the פסוק tells us: Hashem's judgments are on high (above our understanding) and Hashem is sanctified in righteousness (all His judgments on us are fair and just, even if we, as mere people, cannot see it).

ברוך אתה ה' – You, Hashem are the source of everything; המלך הקדוש – You are the holy King.

קדושת היום

"אתה בחרתנו ... עלינו קראת"

You, Hashem, have chosen us out of all the nations of the world to be Your special people; and You have shown Your love for us by giving us the great mission of being the ones who are privileged (yes – privileged!) to keep Your מצוות – which sanctify our lives and give it meaning; and thus we are known to the world as Your unique People.

"ותתן לנו ... ליציאת מצרים"

And because of Your love for us, You, Hashem, who controls everything, have given us this [Day of שבת to rest and to step back from the day to day material world, and also this] Day of Remembrance (we remember our connection to our history and our mission, and Hashem "remembers" our unique relationship with Him and judges us); a day of sounding and remembering the שופר. This entire day and the opportunities that it gives us are based on the fact that Hashem chose us and took us out of מצרים to give us the תורה and מצוות.

"אלקינו ואלקי אבותנו יעלה ויבא ... ורחום אתה"

Hashem – Who controls everything and has taken care of the Jewish people throughout our history – please view us in a good way; and take into account our special relationship with You, and the promises You made to the אבות: The promise to bring משיח and to rebuild ירושלים and restore its holiness; and to remember all of the Jewish People all over their Exile – to deliver us from our Exiles (physical, emotional and spiritual) and to grant our requests and have mercy on us (even if we are not deserving); and to give us all life and peace on this יום הזכרון. Give us all goodness, blessings, and life – even if we are not all deserving – show compassion on us – because we have turned to You for help, because we know that You Hashem do control everything, and You are a compassionate and merciful King.

Machzor Companion for Teens
שמונה עשרה של שחרית, מנחה, ומעריב

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Introduction

What This Is Not: This is not a translation of the תפילות. This is not even an in-depth understanding of the deeper meanings of the תפילות. This does not follow the תפילות word by word. This does not even discuss all or most of the תפילות. This is not meant to be a substitute for davening. And this is certainly not a final product!

What This Is: This is simply an overview of the basic main points of the key paragraphs in the שמונה עשרה of ראש השנה davening; written in simple English, putting it into terms that are relevant to today's teenagers. This is also a work in progress that needs your help, critique and input!

Why This Is: תפילה is "עבודה שבלב" and is meant to be a very personal and heartfelt communication with Hashem. חז"ל wove many deep, meaningful and lofty ideas and concepts into the תפילות. Unfortunately, in today's world, many teens are not that comfortable with לשון הקודש, and even the English translations do not always "speak" to them or seem relevant today. Thus, this is a simple attempt to help teens understand something of what the תפילות are meant to convey – and thus have an easier time pouring out their hearts to Hashem on the ימים נוראים.

How To Use: Use this in any way you want!! It is your heart, your תפילה and your יום הדין! Of course, whenever possible, one should say the תפילות in the original Hebrew and use this merely as an aid in understanding what you are saying. חז"ל have infused our תפילות with many very special meanings. There is a reason why it is called **לשון הקודש**! But remember - Hashem understands all languages – as long as the person speaking is sincere and honest!

How Can You Help?: Please send any comments, suggestions, ideas or critiques to rabbiyfeigenbaum@gmail.com (Please put "Machzor Companions" in the subject line.) With your help - hopefully we can help others have a more meaningful תפילה. תזכו למצוות!

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A Thought on למנצח לבני קרח and עקדת יצחק, שופר

As we know, one of the elements of תקיעת שופר is that it connects to the זכות of עקדת יצחק. But what role did the שופר play in עקדת יצחק? The תורה tells us that the ram (which was brought as a קרבן in lieu of יצחק) got caught by its horns in a bush, and thus אברהם was able to take it as a קרבן. Rav Schwab זצ"ל points out that this would seem to be quite a secondary and peripheral connection! He answers by offering the following explanation. חז"ל tell us that this ram was around since Creation. Just imagine – for over 2,000 years this ram wandered around the world, and not once did its horns ever get stuck in a bush! And suddenly – "it just happened" that this ram should be in that place, just at that time, and just then its horns get stuck! Clearly Hashem had a plan for this ram – and Hashem made sure that it was in the place it had to be, at the time it had to be there.

The message is clear – Hashem sets up our reality: in what era we are born, what community, what kind of family situations, and our raw material. We cannot spend our lives escaping that. Rather, our job is to deal with what we have been handed, and make the best choices available to us! It is up to us to choose whether we belong to the ספר החיים - those who are living, making choices, and dealing with their issues, or חס ושלום to the ספר המתים – those who have given up, blame circumstances for their bad decisions, and have stopped battling their challenges.

With this we can understand one of the reasons why חז"ל chose פרק נז of תהילים – composed by the children of קרח, to be read 7 times before we blow the שופר. The children of קרח could have blamed their families, friends and surrounding for making the wrong choices and rebelling against משה. Yet they rose above that, did תשובה, and became part of our ראש השנה davening!

As we listen to the תורה reading, and hear the sounds of the שופר, let each of us commit to moving out of our comfort zone, accepting responsibility for our choices, and join the battle to increase קדושה in the world, and be proud representatives of Hashem's nation –each one of us with our own mission.

"אלקינו ואלקי אבותנו מלוך על כל ... ויום הזכרון"
Hashem - Who controls everything and has taken care of the Jewish people throughout our history – rule over the entire universe with Your great glory, and reveal Your strength to all the inhabitants of the world; let everything that was created (including us!) realize that You are its Creator; and let everything that breathes proclaim that: "Hashem, the G-d of the Jewish People is King, and that He rules over everything." [Hashem - Who controls everything and has taken care of the Jewish people throughout our history – we hope You are pleased with our observance of this day of שבת and] please (even though we may not show this always in our daily lives, but in truth we do want You to) make us holy and special through Your מצוות; help us find our unique connection to Your תורה; help us feel satisfied with the good You give to us; and make us happy with Your salvation; [and please Hashem, give us and all Jews the day of שבת as our unique inheritance, and us, the Jewish People who sanctify Your Name – may we always be able to rest on the שבת] and purify our hearts and desires (since we live in such impure times and societies) so that we will be able to serve You sincerely and not superficially or hypocritically. For You, Hashem, are the True G-d and Power, and Your word is true and lasts forever.
ברוך אתה ה' – You, Hashem are the source for everything; מלך על כל הארץ – You are King over the whole world; מקדש [השבת ו] ישראל ויום הזכרון – and has specifically made the [שבת and] the Jewish people and the Day of ראש השנה holy and unique.

Continue with "רצה"