

## ***Selichot [Forgiveness] Prayers for Institutions***

Elul 5785 Text added to older machzor liturgy

\*\*borrowed from *Machzor Lev Shalem* (Rabbinical Assembly 2010) with minor adaptations\*\*

The soul is Yours, the body is Your creation  
Have compassion on Your handiwork    \*\* (p.225)

In function and in failure, our institutions are Yours as well  
Re-orient us to divine sparks and powers within  
Save us from ourselves with ourselves under Your guidance

Grant relief to this driven leaf (Lev 26:36)  
Have compassion on that which is but dust and ashes  
*Cast away our sins, be kind to Your creations.*

God saw it and appraised it, examined it and plumbed it,  
and then God said to human beings:  
*"The fear of HASHEM -- that is wisdom;  
departing from sin -- that is true knowledge"* (Job 28:28)    \*\* (p.224)

Our institutions are at once fragile and ponderous,  
fleeting and stagnant, intractable and so easily toppled  
conflict and confusion foster many modes of collapse

Keep us from contributing our own brittleness and turmoil  
Remind us of connection's strength and possibility  
Help us pursue repair when all seems lost

If you see within me cause for sadness, guide me toward eternal truths  
*Hear my prayer, God, give ear to my cry; do not disregard my tears;  
like all my forebears I am a wanderer, a guest in Your house*  
Make me an instrument of Your salvation    \*\* (p.228)

*My soul yearns for You, though I am afraid of Your judgment*  
My heart is caught in the web it has spun.  
Form me anew, granting me a heart freshly born    \*\* (p.230)

Our understanding is limited, obstacles abound  
Our errors serve as brambles, adding pain along the way  
We've lost ourselves and misled others

Clarify our missteps so we know when we must turn  
Teach us to notice stumbling-blocks and dangers in the road  
When despair threatens, nudge us back toward hope

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We call out in words You taught Moses to use in times of trouble: "HaShem, HaShem, God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, full of kindness and trust, extending kindness to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin --" (Ex 34:6-7)

For the sin we have committed before You in destroying without thought to the future  
For the sin we have committed before You by bowing down to the past

For the sin we have committed before You by focusing on policy in a world on fire  
For the sin we have committed before You by thinking crisis overrides all planning and care

For the sin we have committed before You by thoughtlessly allowing ourselves to be led  
For the sin we have committed before You by refusing to honor leadership

For the sin we have committed before You by failing to ask how we can help  
For the sin we have committed before You by assuming it's easier to do it all ourselves

For the sin we have committed before You by approving decisions that worry us  
For the sin we have committed before You by second-guessing every step

For the sin we have committed before You by treating critique as attack  
For the sin we have committed before You by attacking under the guise of help

For the sin we have committed before You by treating lock-step as unity  
For the sin we have committed before You by mistaking variety of opinion for inclusion

For the sin we have committed before You by assuming we know too little to offer opinion  
For the sin we have committed before You by thinking we know it all

For the sin we have committed before You by assuming our perspectives somehow universal  
For the sin we have committed before You by assuming our own experiences unique

For the sin we have committed before You by mistaking outrage for justice  
For the sin we have committed before You by succumbing to complacency

For the sin we have committed before You by fearing uncertainty and pause  
For the sin we have committed before You by letting uncertainty paralyze us

For the sin we have committed before You by bringing punitive efforts into abolition work  
For the sin we have committed before You by using abolition language to absolve real error

For the sin we have committed before You by putting Movement above people  
For the sin we have committed before You by failing to keep our eyes on the prize

To all these sins, awaken us, help us recognize harm, and grant us ability to change  
Bring us to the day when we can ask that you forgive us, pardon us, and grant us atonement.