THESE ARE NAMES: ANSWER US!

A Poem to Beseech A Forlorn God



In this unit we will read and write together, reflecting on some difficult theological questions using modern Israeli liturgy & building some resilience. The unit includes two poems and two creative writing exercises.

Bacol Serlui, an Israeli poet, wrote *These Are Names* on the third day of the Hebrew month of Heshvan, immediately after October 7th. This poem is a modern lamentation raising some big questions for people of faith.

Read the poem out loud. Each participant should read one short phrase and the next person in the group should pick up. You might want to read it out loud two or three times. Suggest that the learners write down emotions and thoughts as the reading proceeds.

THESE ARE NAMES (3 HESHVAN 5784)

G-d of Ofakim, G-d of Be'eri, G-d of Zikim, G-d of Holit, G-d of Yachini, G-d of Israel, G-d of Kfar Aza, G-d of Kisufim, G-d of Kerem Shalom, G-d of Magen, G-d of Mefalsim, G-d of Nachal Oz, G-d of Nirim, G-d of Nir Oz, G-d of Nir Yitzchak, G-d of Nir Am, G-d of Netiv Ha'asarah, G-d of Netivot, G-d of Sderot, G-d of Sufa, G-d of Sa'ad, G-d of Ein Habisor, G-d of Ein Hashlosha, G-d of Alumim, G-d of Pri Gan, G-d of Re'im, G-d of the Holy Sabbath, G-d of innocence irretrievable, G-d of eyes won't be shut, G-d of the dead children, G-d of the burnt houses, G-d In affliction and in captivity

What name shall I call out till you hear me.

In wrath, present at the sights of horror.

Pain-struck we've come to entreat you.

Tell me the obscure from the lucid as you appear

In gathering of the names, the faces, the fears

I fear for the flesh, afraid of Man forlorn and wretched at your no-face.

Myriads of men, atoms of soul

Only the shofar bleating bitter

Ayeka?* ('where are you?')

ג' חשוון התשפ"ד

אֶ־לֹהֵי אֱפָקִים, אֱ־לֹהֵי בְּאֵרִי, אֱ־לֹהֵי זִיקִים, אֱ־לֹהֵי חוֹלִית, אֱ־לֹהִי יָכִינִי, אֱ־לֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, אֱ־לֹהֵי כְּפַר עַזָּה, אֱ־לֹהֵי כָּסוּפִים, אֱ־לֹהֵי כָּרָם שָׁלוֹם, אֱ־לֹהֵי מָנֵן, אֱ־לֹהֵי מְפַלְסִים, אֱ־לֹהֵי נַחַל עֹז, אֱ־לֹהֵי נִיִרִים, אֱ־לֹהֵי נִיר עז, אֱ־לֹהֵי נִיר יִצְחָק, אֱ־לֹהֵי שִׁדַרוֹת, אֱ־לֹהֵי נְתִיב הָעֲשָׁרָה, אֱ־לֹהֵי נְתִיבוֹת, אֱ־לֹהֵי שִׂדַרוֹת, אֱ־לֹהֵי סוּפָה, אֱ־לֹהֵי סַעַד,

אֶ־לֹהֵי עֵין הַבְּשׁוֹר, אֵ־לֹהֵי עֵין הַשְׁלוֹשָׁה, אֱ־לֹהֵי עֲלוּמִים, אֱ־לֹהֵי פְּרִי נֵּן, אֱ־לֹהֵי רֵעִים, אֱ־לֹהֵי שַׁנַּיִם שָׁלֹא יֵעָצְמוּ, אֱ־לֹהֵי הַיְּלָדִים הַמֵּתִים, אֱ־לֹהֵי הַבָּתִּים הַשְׂרוּפִים, אֱ־לֹהִים בַּצַרָה וּבַשָּׁבַיָה

שמות

ּבְּאֵיזֶה שָׁם אֶקְרָאֶךְּ עַד שָׁתַעֲנַנִי. אֲנִי יְרֵאָה עַל הַבָּשָׂר, חֲרֵדָּה מֵהָאָדָם עֲזוּבָה וּמְרוּדָה בְּאֵין פָּנֶיךְ. לַמְדֵנִי סָתוּם מִן הַמְּפֹרָשׁ שָׁעָה שָׁאַתָּה נִגְלָה בְּזַעַם, נוֹכָחַ בְּמַרְאוֹת הָאֵימָה. הַבּוֹאוֹת אָדָם, רְסִיםֵי הַנֶּפָשׁ הַלוּמֵי כְּאֵב אָתָאנוּ לְחַלוֹת פָּנֶיךָ. בְּהַאָּסַף כָּל הַשֵּׁמוֹת, הַפָּנִים, הַמּוֹרָאוֹת אַיַכָּה





* The final question, "Ayeka?" – Where are you?— is an existential question. It is found in the Torah, where God calls out to Adam & Eve in the Garden of Eden, asking them where are they after they ate from the forbidden fruit. The same Hebrew letters in different punctuation refer to the Book of Lamentations – Eicha – which is read on the Ninth of Av, commemorating the destruction of the Temple and of Jerusalem

Discuss the following questions:

- What is the poem about?
- What questions can this poem answer?
- What Jewish objects or symbols do you recognize, and how do they contribute to the poem?
- + How does this poem help you understand, clarify or gain a new perspective on this moment?
- If you wish to explore and understand more about the atrocity of 10/7/23, you can look at the names of the different locations mentioned in the poem above by clicking here or scanning this QR code.





ANENU: ANSWER US!

The Anenu prayer is usually chanted during the Sephardic Selichot and is a central part of the prayers. Begin with a free writing exercise, keeping in mind the idea that we're looking for help, for answers, for salvation.

- Begin by placing your pen or pencil on the paper.
- Let your hand write whatever comes naturally without overthinking.

ANENU

עננו

Answer us, God of Abraham, answer us.	עֲנֵנוּ אֶלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם עֲנֵנוּ.
Answer us, fear of Isaac, answer us.	עֲנֵנוּ וּפַחַד יִצְחָק עֲנֵנוּ.
Answer us, powerful one of Jacob, answer us.	עַנַנוּ אֲבִיר יַעֲקָב עֲנַנוּ.
Answer us, shield of David, answer us.	עֲנֵנוּ מָגֵן דָּוִד עֲנֵנוּ.
Answer us, the one who answers in times of heavenly favor, answer us.	עֲנֵנוּ הָעוֹנֶה בְּעֵת רָצוֹן עֲנֵנוּ.
Answer us, the one who answers in times of trouble, answer us.	עֲנֵנוּ הָעוֹנֶה בְּעֵת צָרָה עֲנֵנוּ.
Answer us, the one who answers in times of mercy, answer us.	עֲנֵנוּ הָעוֹנֶה בְּעֵת רַחֲמִים עֲנֵנוּ.
Answer us, God of the heavenly chariot, answer us.	עֲנֵנוּ אֱלֹהֵי הַמֶּרְכָּבָה עֲנֵנוּ.
Answer us, God of Meir, answer us	עַנַנוּ אֱלָהָא דְּמֵאִיר עֲנַנוּ.
Answer us for the sake of Bar Yochai, answer us.	עֲנֵנוּ בַּזְכוּתיה דְבַר יוֹחַאי עֲנֵנוּ.
Answer us, merciful and full of grace, answer us.	עֵנְנוּ רַחוּם וְחַנּוּן עֵנֶנוּ:

- Think of who in your social, communal & national circles was answered who was in great fear or cried, and their cry— their prayer – was heard. Write it all down.
- On the following page, create your poem following the Anenu structure.

Encourage participants to share what they wrote with the group. Try to focus on the positive and refrain from being critical.







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AN ACROSTIC POEM

Bacol Serlui uses an Acrostic technique as she mentions the name of the kibbutzim & towns that were massacred on October 7th. We will use this poetic decoration to strengthen our resilience.

- Free writing:
 - Set a timer for 5 minutes
 - Place your pen or pencil on the paper
 - Let your hand write whatever comes naturally without overthinking
- Make a list of different feelings, experiences, thoughts and memories you experienced since October 7th
- Look back at your free write of your list of experiences and create an acrostic poem of your name. For example, the name Shlomit could be:
 - Shelter signs everywhere
 - How can one handle all the loss
 - Love is as big as the world's sorrow
 - Our reality is shattered
 - Mothers crying from the world's end
 - I am awake all week long
 - Till when G-d, till when?

Encourage participants to share what they wrote with the group. Try to focus on the positive and refrain from being critical.



