

Interpretation by Binya Koatz & Anna Talhami

Cry out until your voice cracks, do not hold back!
And put your lips to that megaphone like a shofar and say:

*We belong to each other/
and yet/
we have brought harm to each other/
and we have been complicit.*

We have sought answers from the Holy
as if we are ready to live them.
We have asked for gifts from God,
without asking of ourselves:
What am I ready to give?

We long for Her closeness,
even while She is here in everything
and within us;
and so often,
it is us who move away from remembering Her and forget.

We cry:
“Why, when we fasted, did you not notice? Why didn’t you care?”

And She answers:
“My sweet loves,
your cries are not the only ones I’ve had to tend to today.

“My children labor under crushing weight.
Hands I created for holding and tending
find new use in bludgeoning and threatening.

“And I know that you want to be heard,
But, loves, do you think your hunger is the only way I hear you?”

Is this a true fast, while our siblings are hungry?
Is this the whole fast, if those among us suffer in strife?
Is this the real fast, if we hunger for profit?

Does the Holy One, who radiates within all of us,
simply want us to distress our souls and our bodies?

Is this the fast She desires?

Our prophets have heard a *better* word
And through them we learn
That the fast She desires, is to:

Shatter the chains of injustice.
Pry open the cages of oppression.
Welcome the houseless into our homes.
Offer the clothes off our backs.

Smash every cage /
Pry open every bar /
Lift the weight off every set of shoulders /
And share our bread with all who are hungry.

When we share in *this* fast --
The fast that *clothes*
The fast that *homes*
The fast that *feeds* --
then, will our light burst through like the dawn.

That will bring all our light out like the sun rippling over the Lake Merrit blue
and flow Her healing to Her children like the coursing Russian River

That's the fast which opens up HaShem's hotline.
When we will long for the Holy One and experience Her here on Earth,
When we will call for Her, and She will call back,

*Hineini,
I am here.*

When we turn towards each other's pain rather than away,
When we unlock the prison gates,
Soften our fisted hands and sweeten our caustic tongues.
Share what we can with each other,
As children of one eternal God.

Then we'll walk through the world like it is the Rose Garden in full bloom,
like we are an ocean fed by endless Sierra streams.

We will restore our ancestor's holy community.
And our children, and next generations,
will restore *even more* of what we couldn't get to in our short time here.

They'll lift up with them every generation before them

If we only just accept today the gift of holy rest
And fall back from the endless grind,

Then we will share, among all creatures, the limitless inheritance
that has been given to us, by the unnamable, endless Sacred.

This is what we hear her say, my loves.

This is the fast, that She desires.

בס"ד

ישעיהו

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 58