

Prayer Composed by Rabbi Leo Baeck

For all Jewish Communities in Germany

For the Eve of the Day of Atonement, October 10, 1935ⁱ

At this hour the whole House of Israel stands before its God, the God of Justice and the God of Mercy. We shall examine our ways before Him. We shall examine what we have done and what we have failed to do; we shall examine where we have gone and where we have failed to go. Wherever we have sinned we will confess it: We will say "we have sinned" and we will pray with the will to repentance before the Lord and we will pray: "Lord forgive us "!

We stand before our God and with the same courage with which we have acknowledged our sins, the sins of the individual and the sins of the community, shall we express our abhorrence of the lie directed against us, and the slander of our faith and its expressions: this slander is far below us. We believe in our faith and our future. Who brought the world the secret of the Lord Everlasting, of the Lord Who is One? Who brought the world understanding for a life of purity, for the purity of the family? Who brought the world respect for Man made in the image of God? Who brought the world the commandment of justice, of social thought? In all these the spirit of the Prophets of Israel, the Revelation of God to the Jewish People had a part. It sprang from our Judaism, and continues to grow in it. All the slander drops away when it is cast against these facts.

We stand before our God: Our strength is in Him. In Him is the truth and the dignity of our history. In Him is the source of our survival through every change, our firm stand in all our trials. Our history is the history of spiritual greatness, spiritual dignity. We turn to it when attack and insult are directed against us, when need and suffering press in upon us. The Lord led our fathers from generation to generation. He will continue to lead us and our children through our days.

We stand before our God; we draw strength from His Commandments, which we obey. We bow down before Him, and we stand upright before Men. Him we serve,

and remain steadfast in all the changes around us. We put our faith in Him in humility and our way ahead is clear, we see our future.

The whole House of Israel stands before its God at this hour. Our prayer, our faith, and our belief is that of all the Jews on earth. We look upon each other and know ourselves, we raise our eyes to the Lord and know what is eternal.

“Behold, He that guardeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.”

“He who maketh peace in His high places, may He make peace for us and for all Israel and say ye, Amen.”

We are filled with sorrow and pain. In silence will we give expression to all that which is in our hearts, in moments of silence before our God. This silent worship will be more emphatic than any words could be.

Source: Y. Arad, Y. Gutman, A. Margaliot (editors), *Documents on the Holocaust, Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union*, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, 1981, pp. 87-88.

ⁱ The reading of this prayer was banned by order of the Gestapo, and Rabbi Leo Baeck and Otto Hirsch were arrested for a short period by the Germans .