

A Ritual for Entering Into Summer

Adapted, with gratitude, from the teachings of Rabbi Jill Hammer.

(begin with a niggun / wordless melody)

Reader 1

Spring is ending. We remember the spring equinox, the "first day of spring." We remember Pesach...the Omer...Shavuot...Memorial Day. We remember everything which has unfolded this spring.

(Anyone who wishes may speak aloud a memory from this past spring.)

Now we let those experiences go. We release spring, so that we can enter wholly into summer. Tonight, as the new moon of Tammuz rises, we approach the longest day of the year.

Reader 2

Rabbi Jill Hammer teaches:

The first day of the month of Tammuz falls in the heat of summer, when grass dries up and flowers begin to fall. In the Middle East, this is a burning season when no rain falls and at midday the heat is too intense for work. This new moon is the gateway to two fast days that mourn the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans, the destruction of the Temple, and the exile of the Jewish people: the seventeenth of Tammuz, and the ninth of Av. This season marks the exile and suffering of the Shekhinah herself, who is willing to wander and to experience pain for love of Her creatures. It is the time of the heart, when we let ourselves feel the sorrows of the world. It is the time when the spent flower falls to earth, and we do not yet know if new seed will come.

Reader 3

In ancient Sumer they told tales of the god Tamuz, who died at this season and went into the underworld. He represented the standing grain, cut down in its maturity to feed the people. Our calendar preserves this memory in the name of this month, a time when we begin to descend into the spiritual "underworld" of remembered mourning.

Reader 4

On our calendar, today is the birthday of the patriarch Joseph. Like Tamuz, he too descended: not into the underworld, but into a pit, and then into Egypt. But because of his descent, he was able to ascend, and to bring others with him to new heights. May we find, in our summer descent, the seeds of new growth and renewal.

Reader 5

Though in the Middle East this season is hot and dry, here our landscape is different. All around us the world is leafy, green, bursting with abundance. We enter into summer with the intention of savoring its heat, its sunshine, its greenery, its gifts. Even the gifts of sorrow, of endings, of loss. When we open ourselves both to joy and to sorrow, our lives are transformed.

Havdalat ha Tekufah / Solstice Havdalah

Hold up the glass of wine or grape juice.

*Baruch ata Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam
borei p'ri hagafen.*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן.

Blessed are You, Adonai, our divinity who guides the world, creator of the fruit of the vine.

Hold up the seasonal herbs, then pass them around and inhale their sweetness.

*Bruchah at Shekhinah eloheinu ruach ha'olam,
boreit isvei vesamim.*

בְּרוּךְ אַת שְׁכִינָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם,
בוֹרְאִית עֲשֵׂבֵי בְשָׂמִים:

Blessed are You, Shekhinah, our divinity who embodies the world, creator of fragrant plants and grasses.

*Baruch ata adonai eloheinu melekh ha'olam,
oseh vereishit, asher bit'vunah meshaneh itim
umachalif et hazemanim. Od kol yemei
ha'aretz zera vekatzir vekor vechom vekayitz
vechoref veyom velailah lo yishbotu.
Beruchah at shekhinah, mevarechet
hashanim.*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, עוֹשֵׂה
בְּרִישִׁית, אֲשֶׁר בְּתַבּוּנָה מְשַׁנֶּה עֵתִים, וּמַחְלִיף
אֶת הַזְּמַנִּים. עַד, כָּל-יְמֵי הָאָרֶץ: זֶרַע וְקָצִיר
וְקוֹר וְחֹם וְקֹץ וְחֹרֶף, וַיּוֹם וְלַיְלָה--לֹא יִשְׁבְּתוּ.
בְּרוּךְ אַת שְׁכִינָה, מְבַרְכֶת הַשָּׁנִים.

Blessed are you, Adonai, our Divinity who guides the world, who makes creation, whose wisdom changes the times and turns the seasons. As long as the days of the earth endure, planting and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease. Blessed are you, Holy One, who blesses the years.

Reader 6

The prophet Malachi teaches: "A day is coming that burns like a furnace! I will shine upon you who revere the name of the Infinite a sun of righteousness, with healing in her wings." We place our trust and reverence in God Who cannot be wholly known or named. We choose to believe that even in the burning heat of summer, even as we prepare to mourn for our shattered Temple and our broken world, the light of justice and healing will shine on us and on creation.

And we say together: **Amen!**

*Dip a finger into the sanctified wine and paint a drop near each participant's eyes,
that our vision (literal and spiritual) might be blessed for the season to come.*

(close with a niggun)