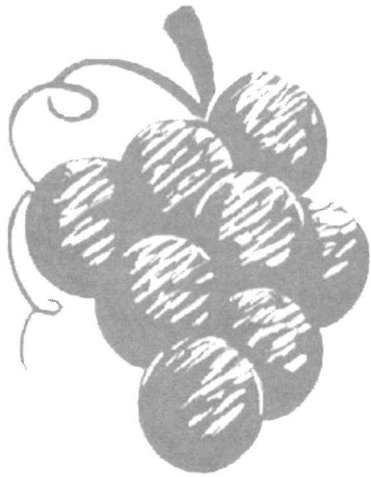


An Amidah Moment

Sheri Lindner



The *Amidah*, so I've been taught, is that time in the prayer service when we move from public to private prayer, when we pray from a place within, in silence. We begin this prayer by remembering our ancestors, sending our root-runners deeply into the rich loam of our past, to weave these newest of shoots into the ageless, clustered rope-braids that hold us so firmly upright, in anticipation of opening ourselves to the wonder and awe of all that lies before us and to the possibility of all that lies within us.

But as I stood for the *Amidah* this past Rosh Hashanah, I did not meditate upon the words contained on the twenty or so pages that comprise this core prayer in our service. For standing in the row in front of me, kippah askew so that it nearly covered his eyes, stood a young boy barely nine years old. I watched as he took within his hands great bunches of the multitudinous, slippery *tzitziot* [fringes] of his father's tallit and ran them through his fingers over and over again. And then, in a way that was almost too intimate for public display, he raised a handful of these *tzitziot* to his face, and brushed them slowly, softly, sensuously across his cheek again and again. He did this for the many minutes' duration of the *Amidah*.

I did not turn my siddur's pages. I did not need to. I stood, witness to a living *Amidah*, as I watched this young pray-er be simultaneously transported beyond himself and perfectly present in the rapture of this moment. His silent, wordless, enactment could not have come any closer to the liturgist's intention.

I do not imagine, thirty years from now, that this boy will remember this Rosh Hashanah moment, when the *Amidah* was alive within the webs and tips of his small fingers, this moment when he planted his child-seed-pod self in the soil of his father's land. But it will not matter. For the memory of this

moment will have been transformed into something else. I think, however, that there will be evidence that this moment existed. I imagine, thirty years from now, that this moment will be present, as a young one, standing at this one's side, reaches, almost unconsciously, as the gentle brush of fringes grazes his hands, and this new one, I imagine, will take up those tzitzit, those ancient signature-seals, and raise them to his cheek, and know the soft kiss of a thousand thousand fathers and mothers.



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