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## ABOUT OUR LEARNING MATERIALS

“And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy.” *Genesis 2:3*

Shabbat. Each week we have the opportunity to gather together, to find comfort, to restore our souls. Shabbat is a reminder to create space in our lives for what is most important and sacred, to affirm our part in making the world more whole. Shabbat is a gift.

How do we create this holy gift each week? How might we deepen our understanding and practice of Shabbat? This year, journey with your Sh'ma group through learning materials which explore different aspects of Shabbat. You will discuss prayers, ancient and modern interpretations, reflections from Temple clergy and more.

As always, if you have any questions, please be in touch with Alexandra Horn ([ahorn@tedallas.org](mailto:ahorn@tedallas.org)) or Rabbi Kim Herzog Cohen ([kherzogcohen@tedallas.org](mailto:kherzogcohen@tedallas.org)).

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## DURING SERVICES, AND THROUGHOUT THE WEEK, WE TAKE TIME FOR SILENT MEDITATION.

# How can silence be my strength?

### Elohai N'tzor

*Elohai, n'tzor l'shoni meira us'fatai  
midabeir mirmah, v'limkal'lai nafshi  
tidom, v'nafshi ke-afar lakol tih'yeh.*

*Yih'yu l'ratzon imrei fi v'hegyon libi  
l'fanecha, Adonai tzuri v'go-ali.*

אֱלֹהִי, נִצֹר לְשׁוֹנֵי מִרְעַ וּשְׂפָתַי  
מִדַּבֵּר מִרְמָה, וְלִמְקַלְלֵי נַפְשִׁי  
תִּדּוֹם, וְנַפְשִׁי כְּעָפָר לְכָל תְּהִיָּה.  
יְהִיו לְרָצוֹן אִמְרֵי יַפִּי וְתִהְיֶה יוֹ וְלִבִּי  
לְפָנֶיךָ, יְיָ צוּרִי וְגֹאֲלִי.

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart  
be acceptable to You, Adonai, my Rock and my Redeemer.

## COMMENTARY

### Jack Kerouac

“No man should go through life without once experiencing healthy, even bored solitude in the wilderness, finding himself, depending solely on himself and thereby learning his true and hidden strength.”

### Rabbi David Wolpe

“The secret to success is stamina. It is wonderful to have gifts, but I have known extravagantly gifted people who cannot lift their legs out of the mud.”

### Pricilla Stern

We reach for You, our God  
from our quiet places.  
May we stand still, for a brief moment,  
and listen to the rain—  
Stand still, for a brief moment,  
and watch the play of sunlight and shadow on  
the leaves.  
For a brief moment—listen to the world.

Let us stop the wheels of every day to be aware  
of Shabbat.  
Find the stillness of the sanctuary which the  
soul cherished.  
Renew the Covenant of an ancient people.

We need a quiet space to test the balance of our days.  
The weight of our own deeds  
against the heaviness of the world’s demands.  
The balance is precarious—steady us with faith:

Quiet places and stillness—  
where we will hear our own best impulses speak.  
Quiet places and stillness—  
from which we will reach out to each other.

We will find strength in silence  
and with this strength  
we will turn again to Your service.

### Cantor Vicky Glikin

The story of Moses and the burning bush is familiar to many. Moses is tending to his sheep in the desert when he comes across a burning bush. Moses observes the bush long enough to realize that although the bush is aflame, it is not being consumed. We do not know how long it took Moses to notice that the bush was not being consumed, but we can imagine that it was awhile. In slowing down and noticing the miracle before him, Moses discovers a connection to God and holiness. *What is the source of this holiness?*

Several commentators, including Rashi and Ibn Ezra, notice that the angel speaks to Moses *b’labat esh* (from the midst of the fire.) An examination of the word *b’labat* points to its connection to the word *lev* (heart.) In other words, Moses notices the holiness around him once he connects to his heart and to the essence of his lived experience.

Silence provides the opportunity to look within our hearts and to determine what’s burning for us at this moment. Is there an expression of gratitude waiting to be brought to light (“*hoda’ah*”)? A request for something concrete or abstract (“*bakasha*”)? A desire to praise the Source of all Blessing (“*t’hila*”)? Silence allows us to access the truth within our heart in that moment. And, whatever we find in our heart is precisely what should be there. Even when we cannot find the words to describe or understand what is in our heart, the silence itself is profoundly holy and a source of connection to the Divine. In the words of the Psalmist: **הַלְלוּ אֱלֹהִים בְּשִׁבְעָה**—to You, silence is praise (Psalm 65:2).

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How do you feel when you are immersed or surrounded by silence?
2. What do you hear when you “listen to the world?”