**(Poetry**)

**Read**: Today you are invited read Jewish-American poet [Robin Becker’s](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/robin-becker) [“Yom Kippur, Taos, New Mexico”](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/50815/yom-kippur-taos-new-mexico)

I’ve expanded like the swollen door in summer

            to fit my own dimension. Your loneliness

is a letter I read and put away, a daily reminder

            in the cry of the magpie that I am

still capable of inflicting pain

            at this distance.

Like a painting, our talk is dense with description,

            half-truths, landscapes, phrases layered

with a patina over time. When she came into my life

            I didn’t hesitate.

Or is that only how it seems now, looking back?

            Or is that only how you accuse me, looking back?

Long ago, this desert was an inland sea. In the mountains

            you can still find shells.

It’s these strange divagations I’ve come to love: midday sun

            on pink escarpments; dusk on gray sandstone;

toe-and-finger holes along the three hundred and fifty-seven foot

            climb to *Acoma Pueblo*, where the spirit

of the dead hovers about its earthly home

            four days, before the prayer sticks drive it away.

Today all good Jews collect their crimes like old clothes

            to be washed and given to the poor.

I remember how my father held his father around the shoulders

            as they walked to the old synagogue in Philadelphia.

"We're almost there, Pop," he said. "A few more blocks."

            I want to tell you that we, too, are almost there,

for someone has mapped this autumn field with meaning, and any day

            October brooding in me, will open to reveal

our names—inscribed or absent —

            among the dry thistles and spent weeds.

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**Deepen the Experience:**

***Questions to Ponder:*** This poem reflects the introspection of Yom Kippur through an imagined intimate conversation with someone once hurt. That introspection is evoked in the comfort of a place of peace and beauty, bringing back as well a memory of a father’s tenderness. The poem ends with invitation to a kind of spiritual rest, “almost there,” whether our names be “inscribed or absent.” How does this journey from the acknowledgement of harm caused, to the recollection of tenderness learned from a parent, and ending in a kind of peace, relate to your own thoughts as you travel between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur?

***Do you like to write?*** Imagine yourself in a place of great beauty and comfort. What images of tenderness in your life, which teachers of tenderness, can help you during this time of introspection?

***Do you like to go outdoors? For Singles, Families and Households of all Ages:***  Is there a place nearby that you can go to that brings you a sense of peace and comfort? What can you pick up in that setting that you can turn over in your hand? Is it a stone, a stick, a leaf, a seed pod or a cone? What does it feel like? Is it rough, or smooth? What do you like about holding it? What thoughts about life does it bring to mind? If you can bring that object or a few of them home, how might you arrange them on a table or a piece of paper? As you touch each one, can you say a word that represents the positive attributes that you hope for (love, forgiveness, etc.).