



**Pardes Hannah**  
*The Jewish Renewal Community  
of Ann Arbor, MI*

[pardeshannah.org](http://pardeshannah.org)

Hineini.

Pema Chodron observed:

the truth is that things  
don't really get solved.  
they come together  
and fall apart.  
they come together again  
and fall apart again.  
it's just like that.  
the healing comes from  
letting there be room for  
all of this to happen:  
room for grief,  
for relief,  
for misery,  
for joy.

**pema chödrön**

Joanna Macy calls these times the Great Turning. I'm calling this reflection, "What does the wisdom of this high holiday season have to do with this seismic shift that is underway?"

We know from our own experience that transitions can be both wrenching and growth-filled, often changing the course of our lives -- perhaps true not only for us as individuals, but also as a collective. Institutions and structures are crumbling before our eyes. In our bewilderment, anxiety, and exasperation, it's natural to want something to cling to: a mask, a vaccine, science, a comfortable way of life, a way of seeing the world. But it's the constancy of tradition that can be our most faithful companion.

The first time I participated in a Kol Nidre service was with Chava Bahle in Traverse City. There was one looooong prayer shawl draped over the seats around all our shoulders, wrapping us in love and protection.

So many of the concepts I thought were about our individual lives may be better understood as collective: collective reckoning and healing, collective teshuvah, collective transformation, collective salvation.

This is a time when we ask forgiveness, one individual to another. But what about the collective apologies that could be made from one group to another? Could apologies done with integrity and heart help put us back into right relationship within the great circle of life? What might these apologies look like?

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, I participated in a silent vigil in Harbor Springs on the site of one of Michigan's Indian boarding schools, impossibly named Holy Childhood. As more and more remains of children are found on Turtle Island, imagine the opening that could be created if Pope Francis would offer a sincere apology to indigenous peoples for inflicting much of this harm in the name of G-d.

What if the President of the United States repented on behalf of the nation for the harm that the government has inflicted in Latin America in the form of meddling with elections, assassination, support of dirty wars, coups, oppressive dictators, destruction of local economies and cultures, and the exploitation of people's labor?

What if Friday's news led with an apology from ExxonMobil to our children and grandchildren, on behalf of the oil and gas industry, for perhaps the greatest crime against humanity. What's the apology you long to hear?

In these intense times, holes are appearing in our collective boat faster than we can plug them. The immune system of the caterpillar destroys the first imaginal cells of the butterfly until it is finally overwhelmed. Then something magical happens. Kol Nidre asks the Holy One to absolve the community's vows from the prior year and the coming year. These vows could be seen as the many cords of loyalty or passivity that tether us to the status quo, even if it no longer brings life. The die has been cast, and the book will soon be sealed again. I think of Oran's

practice of allowing each day come to him. What if we would practice that, too during this shmita year? We could learn to surrender to the powerful forces at play and keep our joy as we learn to love one another and our world back to life.

Amen.