

Not Knowing What to Say When Yom Kippur Ends

CARLIE HOFFMAN, Assistant Director, MFA in Creative Writing

When the day ends and the September sun goes red, paused between the trees like you and I, stopped in the middle of a conversation—two birds, one yellow, the other the color of a peach, perch on an upper branch of a blue spruce. Impossible, no doubt, it must be the glare from a streetlight waking, delight teasing the eye. When we eventually pick up speed under the Chagall-blue sky, the story arrives like a respite, like birds returning: Once there was an ordinary person searching in the Book of God for some word like a sword to slay us. Day after day he fed his horse. Women carried bowls of olives as they passed. A boy played melancholic music on his harmonica. Rain came, washing the evening's blue skin. When words rose like blisters to the tip of his tongue, they burned there until he blurted out: *I once saw a frozen waterfall. Frozen solid. In midflow.* When Yom Kippur ends, we are paused in the middle of a difficult sentence, and the birds reveal the story along the branches—once there was a tyrant searching in the Book of God for words to serve him like a sword to slay us, but instead he came upon a frozen waterfall. A thing of beauty—he wanted to say—how the sight of it made his heart expand with grief, how it was like seeing something no living person was meant to see.



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