

Prelude to the "Thirteen Attributes"



Who has ever lived who did not sin?
Is there any mortal untainted by iniquity?

*No one is free of all transgression;
All, therefore, stand in need of God's forgiveness.*

Our ancestors sinned at the very foot of Sinai,
Where the command of God had just been proclaimed.

*Though they had pledged "we will do, we will obey,"
They soon broke their promise of loyalty to God.*

Faithlessly, they broke the commandments of the Lord;
They fashioned and worshiped a calf of gold.

*How wondrous then, was God's compassion;
For God did not destroy the rebellious people.*

Subduing the Divine wrath, God forgave our ancestors,
Revealing the thirteen aspects of Divine mercy.

*Now we, O Lord, come before You in contrition,
Recalling those same attributes of Your compassion.*

As You had mercy upon our ancestors,
Have mercy also upon us, we pray;
For we, O God, have also sinned.

*We, too, forsake and break our pledge;
We, too, worship the work of our own hands;
We, too, make of gold a god;
We, too, cast off the Torah's yoke.*

Show compassion, O Lord; forgive our sins;
For we, like our ancestors, need Your pardon.

Hershel J. Matt (adapted)

We are clay



"We are clay.
You are the potter
Who shapes us at Your will."
Mold us into worthy vessels
Even though we're only clay.
Do not smash us if we prove imperfect,
Remember we are only clay.

"We are glass.
You are the artisan
Who can form us into many shapes."
Form us into finest crystal—
Even if You have to twist and turn us.
But do not smash us if we are not pure,
Remember we are only glass.

"We are silver.
You are the smith
Who molds us as You wish."
Hammer us as You design
Even though we are not gold.
Do not smash us if we tarnish,
Remember we are only silver.

"We are the rudder.
You are the helmsman
Who steers us to the left or to the right."
Direct us to the shore You choose.
Do not let us idly spin
Even if we consistently resist Your grasp,
Remember that the waves are very strong.

"We are threads.
You are the weaver
Who creates the patterns that You like."
Weave us, God, into Your plan.
Make us supple, straight, and true.
And do not discard us
If we should be imperfect.
Remember we are only threads.

Michael Hecht (adapted)