

DARKEKHA

Singing Our Desperation

Hadar's Rising Song Institute



On Yom Kippur, we stand on the precipice. On this day of sealed fates, we remove everything—both extraneous and essential—from our immediate experience and fill the empty space before us with radically honest prayer.

Joey Weisenberg's setting for the *piyyut*, "Darkekha," channels this nothing-left-to-lose clarity of purpose. As vocalist, Rabbi Yosef Goldman said during the recording sessions: "The melody captures the directness that comes from desperation: 'I'm putting it all out before You. Save us.'"

Appearing in Yom Kippur's opening Ma'ariv service, the lyrics of "Darkekha" are stark:

דַּרְכֶּכָּה אֶלְקִינוּ לְהַאֲרִיךְ אִפְּךָ
לְרַעִים וְלַטּוֹבִים וְהִיא תְּהַלְתֶּךָ
לְמַעַנְךָ אֶלְקִינוּ עֲשֵׂה וְלֹא לָנוּ
רָצָה עֲמִידָתְנוּ דָּלִים וְנִקְיִים

*It is Your way, our God, to slow
Your anger*

*against the wicked and the
good and that is Your praise*

*Do it for Your sake, our God,
not for ours*

*look at our position—poor and
empty handed*

Joey Weisenberg's rendition of this liturgical poem is a song of pleading that pairs Ashkenazi *nusah* (prayer chant) with elements of the Blues to deepen the supplication of *selihot* (pleas for forgiveness).² To Joey, the Blues is not just grit and yearning; it's also about admitting vulnerability. And being vulnerable is fundamental to spiritual life. Letting your guard down is a prerequisite to sensing the divine presence in this world. We need to have the openness and honesty to say: "Here's where I am. It's not that great. But it's real."

On the studio version of "Darkekha," there is a moment where

composition gives way to improvisation, to pure prayer. Echoed in this cantorial trembling is the traditional High Holidays *nusah*. Searing down deep, finally it is free to burst forth and soar away. It's the longest track in Joey's discography, as if mirroring the immensity of the day.

Coming toward the beginning of Yom Kippur, "Darkekha" is a rock-bottom plea in which we leave ourselves behind and are thereby set free. Intoning our atonement for twenty-five hours, weak-kneed and wandering among hundreds of pages of liturgy, our individually whispered intentions intermingling with feverish collective devotions, we can experience the spiritual weightlessness of being "poor and empty handed." We have nothing. You are everything. Don't get mad too quickly. We're here together. Come, let us sing. ♦



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- ¹ This *piyyut* is attributed to R. Yose ben Yose, perhaps the earliest composer of *piyyutim* who is known by name. The song's text is derived from a much longer quadruple-acrostic liturgical poem. Though most congregations no longer chant the full *piyyut*, its alternating two-line refrain remains.
- ² "Darkekha," Rising Song Records, 2022. Music composed and directed by Joey Weisenberg. Featuring Joey Weisenberg (guitar, lead vocals), Daniel Ori (bass), Richie Barshay (percussion), Yosef Goldman (vocals), and Deborah Sacks Mintz (vocals).

Darkekha

Joey Weisenberg

♩ = 54

A Dm Gm F Gm

Dar-ke- kha E-lo - kei - nu l' - ha-a - rikh a - pe - kha

9 F

la - ra - im v'-la - to - vim v' - hi

15 E♭ Dm Cm Dm

s' hi la - se - kha (lai lai....) (oh) - f' -

B Dm B♭ F Gm

ma - a - n' - kha E - lo kei - nu a - sei v'
(r)ei ami - da sei - nu da - lim v'

28 Dm

1. 2.

lo la - nu - - R'