

## Al Chet for Racial Injustice

The Torah teaches us that sin does not require intention. In our liturgy, we confess the sins we have committed *b'zaron u'vishgaga*, -- both consciously and unconsciously. On this day of atonement, we cannot fail to grapple with the sin of racism. While we see blatant and intentional racism in our society, the deeper and broader structures that support and nurture racism do not rely on evil intent. Those of us who are white continue to enjoy the benefits of a system organized along racial lines, even if the source of those benefits too often remain indistinct or even invisible to us.

The first step in atonement for an unintentional sin is to acknowledge and name it. Only then can we commit to turn from it and seek to repair the damage it has caused.

Today, we acknowledge together our sins of racism, and embrace our responsibility to turn from these sins and repair the brokenness they have caused.

*Al chet shechetanu l'fanecha -- for the sins we have committed, whether through our actions or our inactions, whether consciously or unconsciously:*

*---by averting our eyes from our own racial biases, explicit or implicit, and failing to confront and correct them;*

*--by harboring racist thoughts and attitudes, and by expressing them in our words and actions:*

*-- by remaining silent when others express racist sentiments, and failing to confront racism when we encounter it in our communities, our congregation, our workplaces and our families;*

*-- by failing to fully welcome and embrace people of color in our congregation, our fellow Jews and their family members; and hardening our hearts to the pain and discomfort that people of color still experience in our congregation and our community;*

*-- by ignoring or glossing over the extent to which, white privilege confers benefits and undeserved power upon those of us who are white;*

*--- by failing to educate ourselves about the realities of racism, and by the insincerity and half-heartedness of our commitments to confront and end it.*

***V'al kulam Eloha selichot, s'lach lanu, m'chal lanu, ka-per lanu: For all these sins, forgiving God: forgive us, pardon us, grant us atonement. May this awareness not stop at mere recitation, but lead us to growing awareness, a deeper caring, a commitment to challenge ourselves further to act decisively against racism throughout our lives and our world, and to affirm in words and action the truth that we are all created b'tzelem Elohim, in the image of God.***

God, you are merciful and have promised us that we could do *teshuvah*. So, accept our return—Forgive us, those who commit to justice and to leaving our racism in the past, so that we may keep turning inward and outward, and always toward truth. Together we say – *Amen*.

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