

Pre-Planning For Atonement

By Allan Appel

This part really wasn't a dream although maybe it should have been:
We recently sent you an email, a follow-up, really,
To the one sent way back in late summer in which
You were given the opportunity, an honor, in fact,
To hold a Toran on Kol Nidre. We didn't receive a response
So now we're asking if you will please advise if you want
To accept this honor, and –as I like an honor as well as the next guy –
I did a little proof-reader's double take about the Toran I was
Being asked to carry, for surely they meant Torah
But I could find no entry for Toran in the Jewish Encyclopedia.
So now I began to wonder –and this part *was* a daydream although
I wished it real because maybe, just maybe there was something
Startling, amazing, something new under the Jewish sun
That I am being asked to hold, a holy Toran
And I surely do not mean a combo of Torah and Koran
Although that's not a bad idea at all No
I'm talking about a new real thing, no typo at all
But rather a Torah to the *n*th power, a Super Torah
The newest word of God, a new something-or-other
The inventive Jews have come up with, a Torah to the *n*th power
So blazingly insightful it will lead finally to an honest peace
With the Palestinians, preserve democracy and in the process
Desalinate the seas and decarbonize the air.
Frankly, who else could do this but us?
Or was something utterly different at play –now this part
Was also a daydream and I really wanted it remain that way –
Maybe the offer was nefarious, no honor at all but quite the opposite.
Was it perhaps a way to single out a certain type of Jewish person
Someone so careless with the tradition he actually
Thinks a Toran might exist! Someone like me, for example,
Who actually checked the spelling so it was no error at all
That *I* had been specifically chosen, and
Only me, the chosen one, to hold a Toran.
And then I took it a step further, because that's what
Daydreams are for, and I thought perhaps Toran-carrying
Suddenly is happening not only to me

But similar offers are trending out there.
Something percolating that indeed is radical in the Jewish world
And it must work like this: Each synagogue by committee
Vote or urgent rabbinical recommendation is asked to choose
One person, a single member, only one a year they would like
Both to honor and also get rid of, yes, through this powerful
New tradition of Toran-carrying, because the recipient
Doesn't get the Jews and never will and the Jews
Certainly don't get him, and yet neither can let go
Of each other and that explains the creation of the peculiar
New custom, honor and gentle mocking hilarity
All in one swoop so there I am now –this is how
The daydream draws to a close –I'm on some dais
Nervously waiting for the presentation of my Toran
While the several others on the dais are solemnly
Holding their Torahs and I can't help myself but begin
To search everywhere for where the rabbi and cantor
Might have hidden the Toran, and I don't find it
Of course because still no one has any idea of what it is
Yet that turns out to be okay for my frantic search
Beneath chairs, under ceremonial coverlets,
Looking everywhere, in the rabbi's pockets,
In the folds of the cantor's robe, I mean
Ladies and gentlemen, where the hell is my Toran!
Yet that turns out also to be precisely the point for
In the end Toran-carrying is the necessary provision
Of a little comedic diversion for the otherwise
Seriously austere Kol Nidre rituals and re-enactments
At the beginning of the end of the world, a little laugh,

In any event, I have just responded, and we shall see.