

# AYEKAH WHERE ARE YOU?

**IMMEDIATE**



**RELEASE**

September 26, 2016

In Martin Buber's short treatise on Hasidic thought, *The Way of Man* (1964), he relates a story of Reb Shneur Zalman, the first rebbe of Chabad. In this tale, a soldier challenges the Rebbe, asking him: "If God knows everything, why did he ask Adam in Garden, where are you (ayekah)? Reb Shneur Zalman responds: "Ayekah is not a question for Adam, but for us. In every generation, God calls out to us: "Where are you in the world? You have such few days on Earth – how will you use them?"

This year, the VBS clergy selected this question – Ayekah? Where are you? – as the guiding question for the High Holy Day season. They have broken the question down into six, sub-questions – asking where we stand with regard to our own personal inventory, our relationships, our giving level, our creative output, our Jewish life, and our openness to self and communal renewal.

Each of the artworks selected for this exhibition, from five immensely talented Southern Californian Jewish artists – Ellen Cantor, Will Deutsch, Hillel Smith, Isaac Bryjegard-Bialik, and Doni Silver Simons – reflects on different aspects of these timely and timeless questions.

Ellen Cantor's photography and Doni Silver Simon's unique style of mark-making are both meditations of the passage of time and the process of aging, which begs questions about where we are in our personal lives and what we hope to do with our limited time. Will Deutsch's drawings from his *Notes from the Tribe*, reflect the wide variety of expressions of modern Jewish life, asking us where we find our place.



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Isaac Bryjegard-Bialik combines the ancient Jewish art of paper cutting with the contemporary medium of comic books to produce meditative collages on enduring Jewish themes, mingling archetypal imagery with selections from Jewish texts. Among his work included in this exhibition is a piece that reflects on the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and another that tackles the Akeida, the binding of Isaac that we read about on Rosh Hashanah, using the image of the sacrificial ram caught in the thicket. Hillel Smith uses creative typography and graphic design to also reflect directly on the themes of the High Holy Days, including his striking image of the word Ayekah, done in green and white, and appearing to leap out at you from the page, demanding an answer. Ayekah — where are you? Where are we? And where will we go from here?

The exhibition also includes an interactive element, asking our community to share our own responses to the question of Ayekah, and hopefully eliciting moments of honest reflection (heshbon ha-nefesh) that will lead us into the New Year and new possibility. You can also be a part of this experience by watching videos and sharing your reflections online at [vbs.org/Ayekah](http://vbs.org/Ayekah) and [#vbsAyekah](https://twitter.com/vbsAyekah).



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