



2020 / תשפ"א / 5081

# GUIDE TO CELEBRATING



# THE HIGH HOLY DAYS

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# INTRODUCTION

## USING THIS GUIDE TO CELEBRATING THE HIGH HOLY DAYS

Praying together, seeing old friends, simply being together, are all so integral to our High Holy Day experience. So, when the decision was made to not have in-person services this year, it was made with deep thought, caution and even reluctance. Yet ultimately, there was no alternative.

To help overcome the challenges of making the High Holy Days a completely “at home” experience this year, Temple Beth David’s “*2020/5081 Guide to Celebrating the High Holy Days*” has been compiled and designed to help our community prepare themselves and get into the New Year frame of mind, find personal relevance and inspiration in the Holy Days and engage in some related activities. Nancy and Ron Kraus and Howard Brill were tremendously helpful in selecting texts which we hope will be both accessible and meaningful.

We distribute these texts to you much as we would pass around photocopied handouts at a Torah Study class: with the hope that you will find educational value in them, and with no expectation of receiving any money for them. Rather, I have listed the sources of these texts below and I strongly encourage you to purchase or borrow them for yourselves, in order learn even more than this selection can offer you.

My very best wishes to you and your loved ones for a New Year that is filled with good health, joy and peace.

Rabbi Michael Silbert

- CCAR, *Mishkan Hanefesh - Machzor for the Days of Awe*, CCAR Press
- Leonard Cohen
- Custom & Craft, *Rosh HaShanah Seder*, Haggadot.com
- HighHolidays@Home, *Seeker Season - A High Holiday Guidebook for the Curious and Courageous*, Haggadot.com
- Abraham Joshua Heschel, *I Asked for Wonder*
- Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman, PhD., Ed., *Naming God: Avinu Malkeinu, Our Father, Our King*, Jewish Lights
- Dane Kuttler, *Social Justice Warrior’s Guide to the High Holy Days*, danepoetry.com
- Kerry M. Olitzky and Rachel T. Sabbath, *Preparing Your Heart for the High Holy Days - A Guided Journal*, JPS
- Rabbinical Association, *Mahzor Lev Shalem, Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur*
- The Rabbinical School of Hebrew College, *The Rabbinical School of Hebrew College: High Holy Days Companion*
- Howard Thurman

# PART 1:

## \*ELUL - PREPARING FOR THE HIGH HOLY DAYS

### INTRODUCTION TO ELUL

Elul, the final month of the Jewish year, gives us an opportunity to reflect on the past year - the good, the challenging, the beautiful and the difficult. While no holidays take place during the month itself, it serves as a bridge between the outgoing and incoming years and is immediately followed by the High Holy Days of Rosh haShanah (the Jewish New Year), and Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). Because the High Holy Days are so important, the days of Elul which lead up to it are seen as an auspicious period - a period in which we have an opportunity to get ready, spiritually, for the High Holy Days.

The Talmud therefore teaches that the Hebrew word “Elul” is understood to be an acronym for “*Ani L’dodi V’dodi Li*” - “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine” (Song of Songs 6:3), as Elul is seen as a time to search one’s heart and draw close, reconnect and reunite with God.

It is customary to blow the shofar every morning during Elul, aside from Shabbat mornings. The shrill, piercing sounds of these blasts are understood to awaken our spiritual side and to inspire us to begin already with the soul searching process (*cheshbon hanefesh*) which we typically associate with the High Holy Days.

However, there is an important difference: while on Rosh haShanah and Yom Kippur we come before God to plead for our lives to be spared and for us to be granted spiritual wellbeing in the New Year, our tradition teaches that God is not in a position to forgive us for how we have wronged other individuals. Therefore we are first required in the month of Elul to go to others whom we may have wronged and to ask for their forgiveness, before we have the audacity - the *chutzpah* - to present ourselves to God over the High Holy Days and to ask God to overlook all the instances in which we missed the mark in our relationship with God this past year.

And so, Elul is about readiness and about a gradual self-immersion into the space of the High Holy Days in the month to follow. It’s about anticipation of our personal encounter with God.

While this process certainly should be taken seriously, at the same time one need not be consumed with a sense of dread, but rather with deep appreciation that we are given the opportunity every year to wipe the slate clean and to begin anew.

\*In 2020, the Jewish month of Elul corresponds with the period from August 21<sup>st</sup> through September 18<sup>th</sup>

# LIVE, INTERACTIVE ELUL DISCUSSIONS ON ZOOM - WITH HOWARD BRILL

## JOURNEYING WITH GOD: ELUL 1

Sunday, September 6 at 1:00pm

THE MONTH OF ELUL is a time of preparation for the High Holidays. We'll look at the themes of Rabbi Alan Lew, in the book, *This is Real and You are Completely Unprepared*, which is about preparing for the High Holy Days. We will discuss developing a journaling-and contemplation-practice based on those themes that we'll try during the month. I will share "prompt" questions based on Lew's book that we'll use to help us journal.

This class will take place on Zoom. In order to find the Zoom link, please go to:  
[www.TBDrochester.org/HH](http://www.TBDrochester.org/HH)

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## JOURNEYING WITH GOD: ELUL 2

Sunday, September 13 at 11:00am

WE'LL CONTINUE TO EXPLORE the themes of Rabbi Alan Lew in the light of our own journaling practices. Howard will also present a Hasidic story about journaling for the High Holy Days and its role in *Teshuvah*.

This class will take place on Zoom. In order to find the Zoom link, please go to:  
[www.TBDrochester.org/HH](http://www.TBDrochester.org/HH)

LIVE (ZOOM)  
DISCUSSIONS

## ACTIVITIES AT HOME DURING ELUL

### GETTING READY: ELUL

Before we enter the High Holy Days in the month of Tishrei, we need to prepare ourselves by developing a sense of spiritual fitness or readiness. That is why our tradition teaches us to engage in an “accounting of the soul” - *cheshbon hanefesh* - during the month of Elul.

In the United States, we have become used to identifying February with “Black History Month”, March with “Women’s History Month”, etc. Well, in Jewish life, Elul can similarly be seen as “Accounting of the Soul Month”, or “Personal Reflection Month”.

Here are some ideas to help you reflect on the past year, take responsibility for where you might have made mistakes and do some spiritual accounting:

#### Reflection Questions

- What am I proud of in this past year?
- What do I regret?
- From whom should I ask forgiveness? What do I need to say for them to be able to really hear me?
- Whom must I forgive?
- What can I release and let go of from the past year?
- What do I want to embrace in the year to come?
- What do I want to notice and focus greater attention on in the New Year?
- What do I want to bring nearer to myself / what do I want to bring myself nearer to in the year ahead?
- What values and intentions do I want to nurture?
- What role does God currently play for me in any of these?
- What role would *I like* God to play for me in any of these?
- What are my next steps towards achieving those goals?

# INSPIRATIONAL ELUL READINGS

## POEM FOR ELUL

Dane Kuttler, *The Social Justice Warrior's Guide to the High Holy Days*

And G!d says: You think these are my office hours? That only in these precious days I can hear you? No! I walk with you through the valleys and the fields, gridlocked streets and riot blocks. It is YOU who hears ME in these coming days. It will be you who stops to listen. These gates are open for YOU.

## QUARANTINE FOR THE SOUL

Abraham Joshua Heschel, *I Asked for Wonder*

Prayer clarifies our hopes and intentions. It helps us discover our true aspirations, the pangs we ignore, the longings we forget. It is an act of self-purification, a quarantine for the soul. It gives us the opportunity to be honest, to say what we believe, and to stand for what we say. For the accord of assertion and conviction, thought and conscience is the basis of all prayer.

## THE ART OF TESHUVAH

Rabbi Adina Allen in *The Rabbinical School of Hebrew College: High Holy Days Companion*

*Teshuvah* is the foundational practice of the High Holy Day season. Literally translated as “return,” *teshuvah* is understood as a process of turning away from those ways in which we have missed the mark so we might come back into right relationship with others, with the Divine, and with ourselves. Whether those ways have been through carelessness, egotism, or laziness, *teshuvah* challenges us to admit our transgressions, make amends, and resolve to do better in the coming year. Yet according to the great Hasidic master Rabbi Kalonymous Kalman Shapira, *teshuvah* is also a kind of creativity. More than a simple return to what has been, it is a process of remaking ourselves anew. But how?

Rather than turning away from our missteps, the creative potential of *teshuvah* lies in a turning towards those places in which we faltered and failed. In the words of psychologist David Richo, “Hidden in everything negative is something alive and beautiful that wants to belong to us.” Immense power and potential dwell in the dark, wild places that are unresolved in our soul. For it is only when we allow ourselves to come face to face with these less desirable parts of ourselves that we can understand and unlock the creative vitality contained within them.



In this way, we emulate the creative process of the Divine. A beautiful midrash on the creation of the world conveys an argument between a certain philosopher and Rabban Gamliel, the leading rabbinic authority of his time: Reflecting on the first verses of the Torah, the philosopher remarks, “Your God is indeed a great artist, but surely God found on hand suitable materials which were of help in creating!” Intrigued, Rabban Gamliel asks, “What are those materials?” The philosopher replies, “Chaos, void, darkness, water, wind, and the depths” (Genesis Rabbah 1:9).

When *teshuvah* leads us back into ourselves, we too find chaos, void, and darkness in our depths. Rather than turning away from our human failings, *teshuvah* beckons us towards these complicated, not-yet-integrated places within. The ways in which we miss the mark arise from those dark and unknown corners of ourselves, those places of chaos and void. It is within these very places that our own artist’s palette lies hidden. Like a half-finished painting that yearns to be fully realized, *teshuvah* is the work of re-engaging with all that yet remains unknown and unresolved, so that a fuller, richer, more vibrant self might emerge.

In this season of new beginnings, *teshuvah* calls us to return to and encounter our deepest selves. May we have the courage of spirit, intrepidity of mind, and openness of heart to see all that we find there as pigments on our palette, as the raw materials for us to create ourselves anew.

## THE LIGHT OF GOD

Abraham Joshua Heschel, *I Asked for Wonder*

Worship  
is a way of seeing the world  
in the light of God.

## ELUL (1)

Adonai is my light and my life. Whom shall I fear? [Ps. 27:1a]

Olitzky & Sabath, *Preparing Your Heart for the High Holy Days – A Guided Journal*

Forgiveness is difficult whether you are the one who asks for forgiveness or grants it. Even simple words of apology seldom come easily, especially when we are peering into the hidden recesses of our own souls and we know that God is looking in the same place. While it is certainly difficult to say, “I’m sorry,” and mean it, such words of remorse are also hard to accept. Frequently, we regard these familiar words as we would the apology of a young child forced by a parent to offer regret to a younger sibling. But we need to recognize that regret is the first step to real change. Without earnest introspection and forgiveness of ourselves and others, we will not change. Only in the reflection of divine light-uncorrupted by the demands



of our ego-are we are able to see where we went wrong, what we did to hurt another and how we thereby harmed ourselves.

Our tradition calls this process of self-reflection *cheshbon hanefesh*, literally “making an accounting of the soul.” It’s what the month of Elul is all about. This is a period of preparation, as we anticipate standing naked and humble before God during the High Holy Days period. It takes time to ready ourselves to stand before God. And it takes a lot of work, too. Although these tasks are not easy, Elul does offer us an opportunity to begin again, fully restored to life. Each day, we take stock of our lives, as we consider our actions and interactions over the previous twelve months. Today we begin only with ourselves, unafraid to confront our previous exploits. For in the transformational process of *t’shuvah*, we come to learn that these actions are no longer part of who we are now.

## ELUL (3)

Adonai is the foundation of my life. Whom shall I dread? [Ps. 27:1b]

*Olitzky & Sabath, Preparing Your Heart for the High Holy Days – A Guided Journal*

It takes a long time for some of us to recognize that God is the foundation of our lives-the foundation of *all* life. Some people never even try to reach that understanding. It might be easier for us if we didn’t have to struggle with personal faith, if it came to us with less effort. But that doesn’t seem to be the Jewish way. Our tradition teaches us that faith develops-it ebbs and flows. We constantly grapple with issues of faith. As we move through our lives, we are bombarded daily with challenges to that faith. No one is going to come along and provide us with all the answers. Such religious “spoon-feeding” would rob us of the opportunity to achieve spiritual maturity. Remember the story of Jacob’s dream? He wrestled with God throughout the night before he was moved to declare, “God was in this place and I never realized it before.” Like Jacob, I am prepared to declare: God is with us in this place and every place, no matter how distant divine light seems to be and no matter how profound the darkness. Let us join together to find the light.

This season in the Jewish calendar presents us with many opportunities for spiritual struggling. Each day during the month of Elul and the early days of Tishrei, as we wrestle with our understanding of God, we also confront who and what we are as individuals. Through humble petitionary prayers of *selichot*, of forgiveness, we ask for divine guidance so that we might muster the strength to change, so that we again might become the person we once aspired to be. So “Whom should we dread?” Only the self we used to be-if we allow it to prevent our becoming a new self.

## MAKING HOLY SPACE

*HighHolidays@Home, Seeker Season – A High Holiday Guidebook for the Curious & Courageous*

Most years, making space to celebrate Rosh haShanah means writing a seating chart at our local synagogue. Usually, it's about sitting in the front, but not too far forward that the rabbi can tell if we're not paying attention, and not in the direct path of the air conditioning. Your mother gets chilly. But 2020/5781 is not most years. This year, it's about making space in our homes, which have already become our offices, our classrooms, our gyms and our restaurants. Now, our homes must transform into spiritual sanctuaries.

## ELUL (4)

The Creator has blown into my nostrils a living soul, wisdom of heart and the gift of reason that I might recognize and fear God . . . After having been created for this purpose and having acted in opposition to it, what is life to me? [Rabbi Jonah of Gerona, Gates of Repentance, First Principle]

*Olitzky & Sabath, Preparing Your Heart for the High Holy Days – A Guided Journal*

The more we become aware of God as our Creator, the more we understand what God's purpose for us is. Then we are able to know how we have fulfilled or frustrated God's plan. In Elul, we are encouraged to take a look at how and what we are doing with the precious living soul God has breathed into us. We come to appreciate that God has given us life; this alone should inspire us to act in accordance with God's will. Moreover, God has given us "wisdom of heart and the gift of reason" so that we might recognize how we have acted in opposition to God's purpose.

Using these gifts of wisdom and reason, we are able to discern between what we have become and what we are striving to become. With this holy gift of recognition, we see which of our actions were holy and helped to fulfill God's plan, and which were unholy. We are also able to differentiate the three parties against whom we have sinned this year: God, others, and ourselves. Consulting our heart of wisdom we know, as Maimonides discovered centuries ago, that different kinds of sin require different kinds of confession. For our sins against God, or God's plan, we must seek divine forgiveness. For our sins against others, we must acknowledge our wrongdoings and ask forgiveness from those whom we have wronged. And for our sins against ourselves, we must accept that we have damaged our own lives. Although it is dizzying to try to turn simultaneously in three directions at once, we understand that the more purposefully we turn, the more our lives will have purpose.

## ELUL (9)

One thing I ask of Adonai only this do I seek: to live in the house of Adonai all the days of my life, to gaze upon Adonai's beauty, to frequent God's temple. [Ps. 27:4]

*Olitzky & Sabath, Preparing Your Heart for the High Holy Days – A Guided Journal*

How wonderful it would be just to remain in God's presence all day, every day, as the psalmist says, "to live in the house of Adonai all the days of my life." As a matter of fact, we already do. We just don't always realize it. When the Torah was given at Sinai, there was complete silence instead of an anticipated blast of noise. Six hundred thousand people stood at the foot of the mountain in the wilderness of the desert, and no one talked, nothing moved. We didn't even hear the flapping of birds winging their way across the sky. There was total silence unmarred by noise of any kind. Only in this way could everyone hear the divine message. God hasn't stopped speaking to us since that day at Sinai, but there is so much noise in the world that we are prevented from hearing God's voice.

So what can we do? We need to get rid of the many noises that distract us. Our world is too full of them. We need to listen to and then still the inner voice tugging at our gut, reminding us that we have done something we should not have done. Even if what we did months ago seemed inconsequential at the time, the time now has come to ask for forgiveness-what our tradition calls begging *m'chilah*-from those we love. If we don't, that inner voice will get so loud that we may never be able to hear God's voice. Seek out those whom you have wronged and then listen carefully.

What you hear may astonish you.

## ELUL (10)

Who has achieved complete *t'shuvah*? A person who confronts the same situation in which he [or she] sinned and abstains, although that person has the potential to commit the sin again. [Moses Maimonides, Laws of Repentance 2:1]

*Olitzky & Sabath, Preparing Your Heart for the High Holy Days – A Guided Journal*

Becoming someone else means reimagining who we are. *T'shuvah* means turning from who we were into someone different, someone who behaves differently. It means envisioning ourselves returning to an earlier situation but making another choice this time, doing it differently. The rabbis forbid us to offer prayers that ask to alter what has already occurred in the past. Rather, they teach us that God demands *t'shuvah*. We pray that our future actions and their consequences will be different.

It's difficult to imagine ourselves doing differently everything we regret about the past year.

So let's take a single past event and envision ourselves responding differently this time. Remember the moments just before you acted. Try to remember who you were and what you were thinking. Did you carefully consider what you were doing? Did you weigh the consequences? Did you have any idea then how ashamed you would be now?

Think to yourself and pray, "God, I am trying to remember exactly what I was thinking then. I do not know how I could have behaved that way. Had I the sense of Your presence and of who I want to be in Your eyes and in my own, I might have acted differently" When we imagine ourselves in that same situation in the future, we know that we will respond differently because of our *t'shuvah*. For that act, at least, our *t'shuvah* is complete.

## ELUL (16)

There are sins that can be atoned for immediately and other sins which can only be atoned for over the course of time. [Moses Maimonides, Laws of Repentance 1:4]

*Olitzky & Sabath, Preparing Your Heart for the High Holy Days – A Guided Journal*

*T'shuvah* is not a single act or a single moment of personal transformation. Rather, it is a lengthy process, a daily struggle that our tradition emphasizes during this month and a half of the Jewish calendar. This focus on our own transformation, on repentance and renewal during Elul and Tishrei, however, is framed by the remainder of the Jewish calendar, which demands daily *t'shuvah*. We must recognize that despite the intense pressure on us during this time of year, some of the *t'shuvah* we need to do cannot happen just yet. Some of what we must repent for, ask forgiveness for, and a great deal of what we want to become must be left for the coming year.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, like Maimonides, taught that *t'shuvah* can be sudden or gradual. Sometimes repentance is instantaneous, forgiveness is immediate, and change is felt at the moment. But there is also a slower, more gradual repentance. In this case, the movement toward regret and forgiveness involves tiny steps. Each small attempt to transform ourselves is nearly imperceptible. "Sudden repentance," according to Rabbi Kook's categories, "derives from a spiritual flash entering the soul ... immediately the person experiences inwardly a complete change for good." Gradual repentance, on the other hand, results from a feeling inside that tells us we must go forward and improve our ways. *T'shuvah*, both sudden and gradual, is open to us when we are open to it.

## ELUL (24)

The kernel of Torah is “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” But in our day we seldom find it so, and few are they who love their fellowmen [ and women] with all their heart. On the contrary, if a person can contrive to ruin one’s neighbor, nothing pleases him more. [The Memoirs of Glukel of Hameln, Trans. Marvin Lowenthal]

*Olitzky & Sabbath, Preparing Your Heart for the High Holy Days – A Guided Journal*

As we become aware through doing *t’shuvah* of the parts of ourselves we must shed, we can begin to admit how we may have hurt others. We can acknowledge that we sometimes have forgotten the counsel that “you should love your neighbor as yourself.” Reviewing our behavior during of the past year, we realize that we often have released at others the anger we should have directed at ourselves. And yet we also must learn to forgive ourselves. How else can we learn to love our neighbors as ourselves?

We cannot really love others until we love ourselves. Loving ourselves, however, as we take stock of all the wrong we have done and realize all the *t’shuvah* we have yet to do, becomes increasingly difficult. We should be gentle with ourselves as we engage in the process of change. By forgiving ourselves and by embracing who we are becoming through the process of *teshuvah* we gradually come to love ourselves more. Then we are able to love others.

Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev taught that our ability to love others is indicative of our ability to love God. “Whether a person really loves God,” the Berditchever said, “can be determined by the love that person shares with others.”

## SHARERS OF GENTLE JOY

*Abraham Joshua Heschel, I Asked for Wonder*

Mindfulness of God rises slowly, a thought at a time. Suddenly we are there. Or is He here, at the margin of our soul? When we begin to feel a qualm of diffidence lest we hurt what is holy, lest we break what is whole, then we discover that He is not austere. He answers with love our trembling awe.

Repentant of forgetting Him even for a while, we become sharers of gentle joy; we would like to dedicate ourselves forever to the unfoldment of His final order.



## PART 2

# ROSH HASHANAH

### \*INTRODUCTION TO ROSH HASHANAH

Rosh haShana, the Jewish New Year, is a two-day celebration that focuses on themes of renewal, personal growth and one's relationship with God. The celebration of the New Year often entails a mixture of emotions: on the one hand there is a sense of gratitude at having lived to this time; last year, we may have prayed that we be given another year, and thankfully we are here to see this day. However, for some the past year will have been marked by grief and loss, and absences will be felt strongly. Furthermore, the beginning of a new year also raises questions for us: What will my fate be? Will I be healthy? Will *I* live to see another Rosh haShanah?

Beyond questions pertaining to our physical survival, we are encouraged to dig deeper into our souls and ponder our spiritual wellbeing: Will I spend my time wisely, or will it be filled in a way that does not truly bring happiness? What do I want out of life? What makes me proud? What makes me ashamed? What are my most fundamental commitments? Where have we been and where we are going, what have we done, and in what ways do we need to embark on different and new paths. We are tasked with reflecting on our lives and practicing *teshuvah* (repentance, returning). Through *teshuvah* we examine our actions over the past year, seek forgiveness from others, the Divine, even from ourselves, and dedicate ourselves to doing better this time around.

This year, some will be disappointed by not being able to attend services in Temple. Surely many of us will feel like something important is missing from the High Holy Days. At the same time, while we pray that nothing should ever prevent us from attending services again in the future, this year's aberration also offers us a gift: the opportunity to focus more on our *teshuvah* than we usually do. So, take a quiet moment for yourself when you are at home this Rosh haShanah and give some thought to the following:

#### 1. Reflection

Over the past year, did I fully live my values? Did I treat other people how I would want to be treated? What do I most regret? What am I most proud of?

#### 2. Forgiveness

From whom must I ask forgiveness? To whom must I give my forgiveness (regardless of outcome)?

#### 3. Letting Go and Moving Forward

How can I release myself from any residue of the past year?

What do I want to practice, seek, or commit myself to this year?

\* Adapted from Machzor Lev Shalem and the combined works of Custom & Craft at High Holidays at Home

# PRERECORDED ROSH HASHANAH SERVICES

Numerous prayers which are traditionally recited during Temple Beth David's Rosh haShanah services have been video recorded and will be available online if you wish to view them:

## Rosh haShanah, First Day

### *Shacharit* (Morning Service)

- *The Sh'ma* and its blessings
- Chazan's repetition of *The Amidah*
- *Avinu Malkeinu*
- *D'var Torah* / Sermon (first day)

### *Mussaf* (Additional Service)

- *Hineni*
- Chazan's repetition of *The Amidah* including *U'netaneh Tokef*
- Concluding prayers

## Rosh haShanah, Second Day

### *Shacharit* (Morning Service)

- *The Sh'ma* and its blessings
- Chazan's repetition of *The Amidah*
- *Avinu Malkeinu*
- *D'var Torah* / Sermon (second day)

### *Mussaf* (Additional Service)

- *Hineni*
- Chazan's repetition of *The Amidah* including *U'netaneh Tokef*
- **Shofar blowing**
- Concluding prayers

PRERECORDED  
SERVICES

Please note: recordings have not been made of any sections of the service that require a *minyán*, such as *Bar'chu*, *Kedushah*, *Kaddish* and Torah readings.

## WHEN & WHERE CAN THESE RECORDINGS BE FOUND?

All Rosh haShanah video recordings (i.e. both the first and second day's) will be available online from Thursday, September 17, at 9:00am, through Monday, September 21, at 9:00am.

To find the recordings, please go to: [www.TBDrochester.org/HH](http://www.TBDrochester.org/HH) where you will find links to the videos which have been uploaded to YouTube.

## WHO CAN WE EXPECT TO SEE IN THE VIDEOS?

- The *davenning* (recitation of prayers) is led by Ellen Brandwein who joins Temple Beth David virtually in 2020, in this, her third year with us in the role of chazan at our High Holy Day services.
- *Divrei Torah* / sermons are delivered by our own Rabbi Michael Silbert.
- The shofar is magnificently blown for us once again this year by Henry Berger. We are extremely grateful to Henry and his parents for recording Henry's shofar blowing just a few weeks ago, before he left home for his freshman year at Yale University.



# LIVE, INTERACTIVE ROSH HAsHANAH DISCUSSION ON ZOOM - WITH HOWARD BRILL

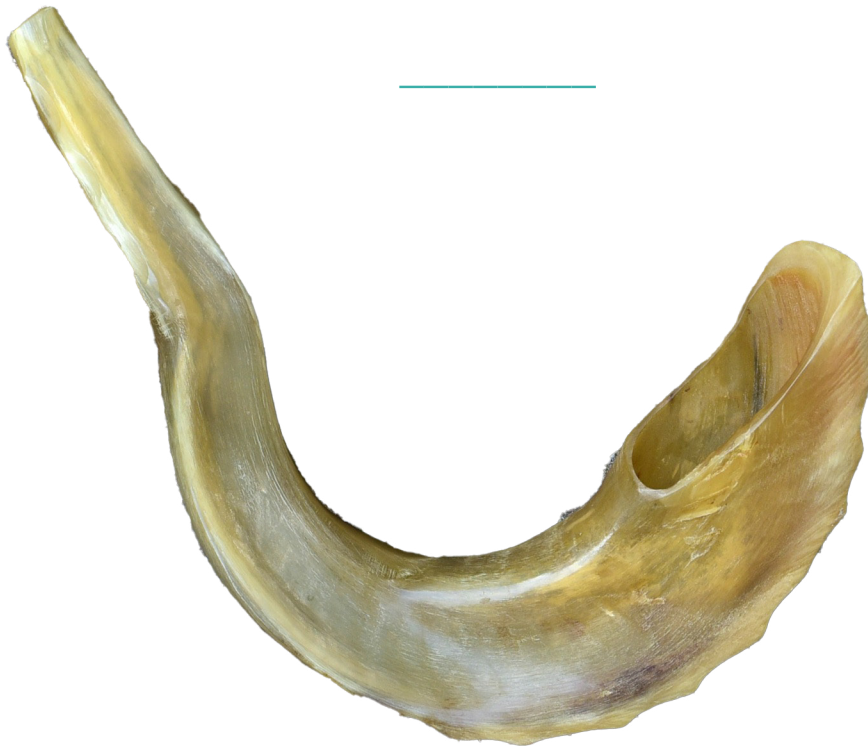
## BEING WITH GOD: ROSH HAsHANAH

Sunday, September 20 at 11:00am

Rosh haShanah is a time to recognize our relationship with God. It involves what we do and don't control in our lives, and how we live with that. We consider what is important to remember and what is not important. We seek to come back to a place of wholeness, from where we can move forward. What have been our personal experiences in our lives that speak to being with God, including experiences of absence.

This class will take place on Zoom. In order to find the Zoom link, please go to:  
[www.TBDrochester.org/HH](http://www.TBDrochester.org/HH)

LIVE (ZOOM)  
DISCUSSION



## ROSH haSHANAH ACTIVITIES AT HOME

For those who will spend Rosh haShanah at home this year, neither attending services, going to work nor doing the kinds of things we might usually do on a “day off”, there are numerous alternative ways in which to spend these days and attempt to give them structure and meaning:

1. Aspects of Temple Beth David’s Rosh haShanah services have been video recorded and are available online if you wish to view them. Please see page 15 for more information.
2. If you would prefer to connect to a live online broadcast of a service, many Conservative, Reform and other Jewish congregations across the country will be offering these viewing opportunities to non-members. A search term such as “live streaming High Holy Days service” ought to yield numerous options.
3. For those who would prefer to avoid using technology as a pathway to finding Rosh haShanah fulfillment this year, take the opportunity to closely examine the personal questions which are raised in the introduction to this section, on page 14. Discuss these with a friend or family member, or contemplate them individually.
4. People have celebrated Rosh haShanah with a festive gathering since Talmudic times. This year, numerous Jewish educators have expanded on the traditional Rosh haShanah gathering by borrowing from the tradition of Pesach and designing Rosh haShanah “seders” and accompanying *haggadot*. Please visit our website at [www.TBDrochester.org/HH](http://www.TBDrochester.org/HH) for a list of public access materials as well as some recent news articles about how Rosh haShanah will be observed this year.

On the next few pages we have included the *kiddush* and *brachot* (blessings) that are traditionally recited in the home on Rosh haShanah.



## CANDLELIGHTING

### Erev Rosh haShanah (Rosh haShanah eve)

The Holy Day is brought into the home with the lighting of two candles, just like Shabbat and many other Jewish festivals are. Traditionally the candles are lit 18 minutes before sunset. In 2020 / 5081, this will be at 6:55pm in the Rochester-area.

Immediately after lighting the candles, the blessing is recited:

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam,* בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
*asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav, v'tzivanu l'hadlik* אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק  
*ner shel (Shabbat v'shel) Yom Tov.* נֵר שֶׁל (שַׁבָּת וְשֶׁל) יוֹם טוֹב.

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, whose *mitzvot* make us holy and who gave us the *mitzvah* to kindle lights for (Shabbat and for) the Festival.

When the blessing is complete, take a moment of silent reflection with your eyes covered and then open your eyes and enjoy the beauty of the candlelight which has ushered the New Year into your home.

Because this is the first time that Rosh haShanah candles have been lit since last year, we express our gratitude for reaching this season once again by reciting the “*Shehechyanu*” blessing:

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam,* בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
*shehechyanu v'kiymanu v'higgi'anu lazman hazeh.* שֶׁהַחַיָּנוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לַזְמַן הַזֶּה.

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who has granted us life, sustained us and has brought us to this moment.



## KIDDUSH AND BLESSINGS BEFORE EATING

### Only on a Friday night:

Shabbat is the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, so when a festival occurs on Shabbat, it is honored first by remembering the importance of its role in the Creation Story (Gen. 2:1-3):

*Vayehi Erev vayehi voker, yom hashishi.*

*Vayechulu hashamayim v'ha'aretz*

*vechol tzeva'am. Vayechal Elohim*

*bayom hashvi'i melachto asher asah*

*vayishbot bayom hashvi'i mikol*

*melachto asher asah. Vayevarech*

*Elohim et yom hashvi'i vayekadesh oto*

*ki vo shavat mikol melachto asher barah Elohim la'asot.*

וַיְהִי-עֶרֶב וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי: וַיְכַל הַשָּׁמַיִם  
וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל-צִבְאָם: וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי  
מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי  
מְכָל-מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה: וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-יוֹם  
הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ כִּי בּו שְׁבֹת מְכָל-מְלַאכְתּוֹ  
אֲשֶׁר-בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת:

There was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. The heaven and the earth were finished, and all their array. On the seventh day God finished the work that God had been doing, and God ceased on the seventh day from all the work that God had done. And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because on it God ceased from all the work of creation that God had done.

### On other nights, begin here:

We bless wine, an ancient symbol of ritual holiness, before a meal as a way of extending and projecting holiness over Shabbat and other Jewish Holy Days.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam,*

*borei p'ri hagafen.*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,

בוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן.

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe,  
who creates the fruit of the vine.



## Kiddush

In this final paragraph of the Kiddush, we praise God for making Israel holy, *Kadosh*, and it is from this that the set of prayers takes its name:

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech  
ha-olam, asher bachar banu mikol am,  
v'romemanu mikol lashon v'kidshanu  
b'mitzvotav. Vatitten lanu Adonai  
Eloheinu b'ahavah et Yom (haShabbat  
hazeh v'et Yom) haZikaron hazeh, Yom  
(Zichron) Teruah (b'ahavah) mikrah  
kodesh, zecher litzi'at mitzrayim, ki vanu  
vachartah v'otanu kidashtah mikol  
ha'amim, u'devarchah emet vekayam  
la'ad. Baruch Atah Adonai, Melech al kol  
ha'arets mekadesh (haShabbat ve)Yisrael  
veYom haZikaron.*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל עָם  
וְרוֹמְמָנוּ מִכָּל לָשׁוֹן, וְקִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו.  
וַתִּתֵּן לָנוּ יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּאַהֲבָה  
אֶת (יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת הַזֶּה וְאֶת) יוֹם הַזִּכְרוֹן הַזֶּה.  
יוֹם (זִכְרוֹן) תְּרוּעָה (בְּאַהֲבָה),  
מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ זֶכֶר לִיצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם  
כִּי בָנוּ בְּחֶרֶת, וְאוֹתָנוּ קִדְּשָׁתָּ  
מִכָּל הָעַמִּים. וַיְבָרֶךְ אֶמֶת וְקִים לְעַד.  
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, מֶלֶךְ עַל כָּל-הָאָרֶץ  
מְקַדֵּשׁ (הַשַּׁבָּת וְ) יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיוֹם הַזִּכְרוֹן.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, ruler of time and space, who has chosen and distinguished us by sanctifying our lives with His commandments. With love, You have bestowed on us, Adonai our God, (this Shabbat and) the Day of Remembrance, a day for (recalling) the shofar sound (with love), a day for holy assembly and for recalling the Exodus from Egypt. For You have chosen us, sanctifying us among all people, and Your faithful word endures forever. Baruch Atah Adonai, ruler of all the earth, who makes (Shabbat,) the people Israel and the Day of Remembrance holy.

## Shehechyanu

The Shehechyanu blessing is recited at the first meal of Rosh haShanah:

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam,  
shehechyanu v'kiymanu v'higgi'anu lazman hazeh.*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
שֶׁהַחַיָּנוּ וְקִימָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמָּן הַזֶּה.

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who has granted us life, sustained us and has brought us to this moment.

## Hand Washing

It is customary to pour water two or three times over each hand and then to recite this blessing before eating bread, which is reminiscent of ancient Temple ritual:

ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם, *Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam,*  
אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו על *asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al*  
נטילת ידים. *netilat yadayim.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe,  
who has sanctified us with His commandment to  
wash our hands.

## HaMotzi – the Brachah before the meal

ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם, *Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam,*  
המוציא לחם מן הארץ. *hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe,  
who has sanctified us with His commandment to  
wash our hands.

## Apples and Honey

For Ashkenazi Jews, the primary symbolic food of Rosh haShanah are apples (symbolizing the round, completeness of the year) dipped in honey, together representing the hope for a sweet New Year.

ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם, *Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam,*  
בורא פרי העץ. *borei p'ri ha'etz.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe,  
who creates the fruit of the tree.

יהי רצון מלפניך, יי אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, *Yehi ratzon milfanechah, Adonai Eloheinu*  
v'Elohei avoteinu, she't'chadesh aleinu *v'Elohei avoteinu, she't'chadesh aleinu*  
shanah tovah u'metukah. *shanah tovah u'metukah.*

May it be your will, Adonai our God and God of our ancestors,  
to renew for us a good and sweet year.



## INSPIRATIONAL READINGS FOR ROSH HASHANAH

### PRECIOUS ABOVE ALL IS THE SOUL WITHIN ME.

*Mishkan Hanefesh – Machzor for the Days of Awe, Rosh HaShanah*

Precious above all is the soul within me.  
A spark of childhood innocence:  
curious, hopeful, loving, and good.  
Whatever I've done, wherever I've gone wrong,  
however I've been hurt-  
I know its light still shines.

May I return and reconnect  
with the part of me that belongs to You-  
my divine core: eternal, incorruptible.

### NO PANACEA

*Abraham Joshua Heschel, I Asked for Wonder*

However, prayer is no panacea, no substitute for action. It is, rather, like a beam thrown from a flashlight before us into the darkness. It is in this light that we who grope, stumble, and climb, discover where we stand, what surrounds us, and the course which we should choose. Prayer makes visible the right, and reveals what is hampering and false. In its radiance, we behold the worth of our efforts, the range of our hopes, and the meaning of our deeds.

### CELEBRATING A CONFLICTED RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

*Rabbi Asher Lopatin in Naming God: Avinu Malkeinu, Our Father, Our King (Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman, PhD., Editor)*

It is one of the most haunting and beautiful tunes of the High Holy Days. It is the tune we all sing together, our eyes lifted from the words on the machzor page, and then half-closed, half looking up to heaven, to take in the power of the moment. *Avinu Malkeinu, choneinu va'aneinu ki ein banu ma'asim* ("Our father, our king, be gracious to us and answer us, for we have no merit").

Some congregations sing it twice. Some slower or faster, some softer or louder, but inevitably, although it ends on a low note, it constitutes an emotional crescendo to the service.

Even though there is no Jewish legal obligation to say *Avinu Malkeinu*-not the first line, not the last line; not any of the lines-it feels as obligatory as the *Amidah* or the *Sh'ma*. The service would not be complete without it.



Except... on Shabbat.

On Shabbat, *halakhah* prohibits *Avinu Malkeinu*. The general reason given is that it is too petitionary to be appropriate for Shabbat. On Shabbat, we are to experience the world as perfect, with nothing lacking, nothing still uncreated, nothing yet to work on. So *Avinu Malkeinu* needs to step aside, despite its grandeur, beauty, and power.

It is consistent for *Avinu Malkeinu* to take second fiddle to Shabbat, because when Rosh haShanah falls on Shabbat, Shabbat completely dominates it. *Halakhah* cancels even the blowing of the shofar then (if we cancel the shofar, we can certainly cancel *Avinu Malkeinu*).

Yet things are not that simple, because Yom Kippur, in many ways, takes precedence over Shabbat. Normally, we are supposed to eat even an extra “third meal” on Shabbat (*s’udah sh’lishit*), but on Yom Kippur we fast. We dress up for Shabbat, but on Yom Kippur we wear plain, non-leather shoes. Yom Kippur is filled with crying and sadness, with requests for God’s forgiveness and for blessings in the New Year. Almost none of this penitential liturgy is suppressed on Shabbat.

Yet, on Yom Kippur, *Avinu Malkeinu* is halakhically banned-smuggled in only at the end of *N’ilah*, when it is hardly Shabbat anymore (the sun has set a long time ago). We cling to the end of Yom Kippur and our chance, finally, to sing *Avinu Malkeinu*-and ask humbly for everything we could not mention during all of the long day just over.

Why is this? Why do we allow every other Yom Kippur consideration to override Shabbat but not *Avinu Malkeinu*? Even the few parts of the service that are changed when Yom Kippur occurs on Shabbat are more than compensated for-for example, we drop the thirteen attributes that we would normally sing when we take out the Torah, but we then say them multiple times over in other parts of the service throughout the day. Not so *Avinu Malkeinu*: it must wait until Shabbat is over; only then do we say it with gusto, with passion, with all the love that we might have for a precious child or sibling who has disappeared for so long and finally returns. Why is *Avinu Malkeinu* so absolutely antithetical to Shabbat that we eliminate it even from a Yom Kippur that falls on Saturday?

Perhaps the reason is deeper than just the usual notion that it seems too petitionary for Shabbat.

Perhaps the reason is found in its very name, which starts every single one of its lines. The phrase *avinu malkeinu* reflects the need for the Jew, the human being, to break the one and only God almighty into two different attributes. *Avinu*, our father, our mother, the God we love, the God to whom we look for help; and *malkeinu*, our king and ruler, but the God we cannot figure out, who makes us angry, who acts in ways that distance us, the God with whom we cannot even usefully fight or disagree.

We know God is one. We know the same God that permits all the horrors in this world is the same God who makes blessing and goodness possible. Yet in *Avinu Malkeinu*, God is split. We look to *avinu* for our salvation, but recognize *malkeinu* in the deaths of innocents- *yonkei shadayim shelo chatu*, “our young ones and babies who have not sinned.” One God alone, mind you! Not a bad God and a good God, but a single God we love but also fear and fail to relate to.

Not only is God split; so too are we. We are nobodies to ask something from God (*ki ein banu ma’asim*, “we have no merit”); but at the same time we are the ones entrusted with sanctifying God’s name, the ones sacrificing to pursue lives that make God a presence in the world. We are the lowest of the low who begin by confessing, “We have sinned before You,” and end by admitting, “We have no merit.” But in between we demand from God a huge list of things that we need and, by implication, we have every right to demand. And “demand” is exactly the right word—we do not just petition or request, we demand due justice and kindness from a God of justice and kindness. From *avinu*, we get it; from *malkeinu*, we may not.

Shabbat has none of this ambivalence. It is altogether beautiful, holy, the greatest gift any people has ever received. Shabbat is simple: God rested, we rest; God completed the world’s creation, we live in a fully created world. Shabbat, said the Rabbis, is a “taste of the world to come.” It is a simple sheltering cave, an abundant oasis, a “palace in time,” as Abraham Joshua Heschel called it. Shabbat celebrates one God, one Jewish people, and one unified world of humanity, all of us God’s creatures. On Shabbat, God’s dreams for the world all come together in perfection—as symbolized so beautifully by the way we hold together the two split *challot* at the Shabbat meal and then eat them as one. On Shabbat, everything is simple; everything makes sense.

*Avinu Malkeinu* is the opposite: It is the prayer that tells us that God does not always feel like the parent God really is; where God’s judgments, the king’s edicts, do not always make sense—even for God’s own goals in this world. It is the prayer that juxtaposes our defects and our lowliness with our power and purpose. *Avinu Malkeinu* reflects a broken world that is not easily put together—like separate *challot* that cannot be pressed together to make everything nice and neat. We love You, God, *avinu*—it says—but how can You, God, *malkeinu*, allow our children—any children—to be killed and tortured and used as pawns in senseless wars? Are You a God who wants the world to be sanctified or a God who is willing to let it be destroyed by evil? Should we submit to injustice or demand righteousness from You?

The ambiguity of *Avinu Malkeinu* is too much for Shabbat. Shabbat can handle fasting and even crying, pleading, and petitioning. But it cannot live with ambivalence about God and our own self-doubt as to what and who we really are. *Avinu Malkeinu* is reality; Shabbat is a dream, a vision, a hope. Our tradition loves Shabbat too much to challenge it even on Yom Kippur—for if it were to fall, so too would everything we stand for. It cannot be threatened by *Avinu Malkeinu*.

Yet we love *Avinu Malkeinu* as well. Our people has survived not only because of our Shabbat vision, but because we respect reality too. On the High Holy Days, particularly, we admit how challenging the world is. We see God as *malkeinu*, not just *avinu*, avoiding the easy pitfall of lulling ourselves into a dream where God is sweet, the world is sweet, and we need never awaken to the fact that even the kind and loving God is answerable for a world that makes God look harsh and uncaring.

And who are we? Nobodies or everybodies? Weak and humble, but also proud and critical about a world that demands improvement. We not only live with these contradictions, we celebrate them, we sing them. Together, out loud, with tears and triumph in our eyes.

God, You are our loving parent but also a ruler over a harsh and bleak world. On Shabbat we put aside the great questions of our tradition and their critique of life's realities. But otherwise, the High Holy Days demand we face these fissures in life's smoothness. In the end, we need them both: the calming dream of Shabbat, and the searing reality of *Avinu Malkeinu*.

## HOLY IS

Rabbi Chaim Stern in *Mishkan Hanefesh – Machzor for the Days of Awe, Rosh HaShanah*

Holy is the dignity that is human;  
sacred the mystery we call divine.

Holy is the sacrifice made for those we love;  
precious the pains they take for us.

Sublime the glory of the heavens above us;  
sacred the beauty that glows within us.

Noble is the mind in search of meaning.  
The heart is happy that finds its way.

Awesome is the power that rules our being;  
holy the kinship that makes us one.  
Learning the Language of the Heart: Hannah and Prayer.

## IN THE MIRROR OF THE HOLY

Abraham Joshua Heschel, *I Asked for Wonder*

We do not step out of the world when we pray; we merely see the world in a different setting. The self is not the hub, but the spoke of the revolving wheel. In prayer we shift the center of living from self-consciousness to self-surrender. God is the center toward which all forces tend. He is the source, and we are the flowing of His force, the ebb and flow of His tides.

Prayer takes the mind out of the narrowness of self-interest, and enables us to see the world in the mirror of the holy. For when we betake ourselves to the extreme opposite of the ego, we can behold a situation from the aspect of God.

## LEARNING THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART: HANNAH AND PRAYER

Dr. Judith Kates in *The Rabbinical School of Hebrew College: High Holy Days Companion*

The “high holy days” draw us into the most intense immersion in prayer in the Jewish year. However we define ourselves as Jews, we understand that the way to make this a sacred time is through participation in communal prayers. But if the prayer language we speak in synagogue services may open our hearts and souls to our own needs and feelings, it can also fill us with questions and doubts, or even push us away, if we find it too much of a “foreign” language. We can be grateful that the rabbis of the Talmud chose to include the story of Hannah, the beginning of the biblical book of Samuel, for us to read as the haftarah for the first day of Rosh haShanah. It plunges us into an experience of heartfelt, individual prayer, which can guide us toward finding our own voices in the midst of community.

Hannah’s story follows a familiar biblical plotline—the story of the “barren” woman who ultimately bears a child, because she is “remembered” or “paid attention to” by God. But this version of the story pays remarkably detailed attention to the striking character of its female protagonist. Although she suffers wounding mockery from her co-wife, Peninah, who torments her “because the Lord had closed up her womb,” she endures these provocations in silent dignity. She reveals her inner suffering and longing for a child, through her tears and her withdrawal from the communal feasting the family enjoyed each year, in their pilgrimage to the sacred space of the shrine at Shiloh.

This silence and isolation, while projecting a sense of self-control and dignity, might also suggest what the Bible scholar Nehama Aschkenasy has called her “quiet desperation.” She seems to have turned completely inward. But, in an extraordinary narrative turn, she finds her voice, as she summons the courage to address herself directly to God, alone on the threshold of “the Lord’s temple,” without the permission or help of husband or priest.

Hannah, in this story, is simply herself—no family genealogy, no social role other than as a man’s wife, no history of actions or accomplishments. Yet she feels herself “adequate,” to use a term from the philosopher David Hartman, to speak to God of her needs and pain. In fact, according to the rabbis of the Talmud, she teaches us how to pray.

She begins with weeping, a form of prayer in itself according to our tradition. But she moves from that wordless expression of her inner reality to giving eloquent and even daring voice to her needs, desires, and hopes for the future. In the process of verbally re-making her own life, she creates a previously unknown pathway to God, re-shaping ritual in public sacred space into a vessel that can hold each person’s self-expression and longing to reach beyond ourselves.

Her presence in our machzor inspires us to find ways to speak our community's language of prayer in our own voices.

## MAY I BE A VESSEL OF HOLINESS

*Mishkan Hanefesh – Machzor for the Days of Awe, Rosh HaShanah*

Help me to serve You truly,  
with purity of heart.  
When I hear hateful or degrading speech,  
let me focus on good words and worthy thoughts.  
When my worst instincts cause me torment,  
teach me to care for myself and for others.  
In rough waters and misfortune,  
let harbor patience and strength.  
Make my soul a sanctuary,  
That Your light may dwell within me.  
Align all my acts in pursuit of goodness-  
So may I be a vessel of holiness,  
serving You with purity and truth.

## THE SHOFAR

The great shofar is sounded and a still small voice is heard. [Machzor]

*Olitzky & Sabath, Preparing Your Heart for the High Holy Days – A Guided Journal*

Whose voice do we hear beckoning us to change? Is the shofar blast the sound of our own soul, the voice of our heart that we have sought to silence for so many years? Or is it the voice of angels whom God has sent to remind us that we already know what we have to do? Many teachers have suggested meanings for each sounding of the shofar. The Baal Shem Tov believed that the blasts represent our tears, expressing the deep emotion we feel each time we hear the shofars call. One thing is certain—one warning blast is not enough. The shofar must be blown many times to rouse us from our walking slumber and demand our full attention.

Menachem Mendl of Kotzk taught that God can hear a cry of sorrow even when it is not uttered. We, too, can hear our own small voice, the cry of our heart, even over the trumpeting blare of the shofar. All we need is the courage to say, “Hineini”-”I am finally here, God. I know I have to change. And I am ready. Do what you will with me.” Such self-abdication is difficult for most of us, but often, as some of our teachers have taught, we come to realize that all that stands between God and each of us is our blind “I.”

## THE RAM'S HORN: ON BEING CAUGHT IN THE THICKET

Rabbi Sharon Cohen Anisfeld in *The Rabbinical School of Hebrew College: High Holy Days Companion*

The ram's horn is silent at first  
As is the ram.  
Caught in the thicket,  
Waiting for Abraham to lift his head and see,  
It appears at the last minute,  
Out of nowhere,  
When it's almost too late.

Of course, it was there all along.  
Since twilight  
On the eve of the first Shabbat, we are told.  
It was there before darkness fell.  
(We barely knew what darkness was then.)  
It was there all along.  
Waiting for us to open our eyes.  
Waiting for us to see another way.  
It's not just our stubbornness that blinds us.  
Sometimes it's the commanding voice of faith.  
Sometimes it's the commanding voice of despair.  
And sometimes it's the thicket itself.  
The thorny, tangled overgrowth of our lives.

It's not that we're blind,  
We're just busy.  
Schlepping the wood,  
Tending the fire,  
Building the altar,  
Trying to quiet the children  
Trying to answer their questions  
Even though God knows  
We can't answer our own.

Up until the angel calls out, and Abraham lifts his eyes, up until the ram suddenly appears, caught in the thicket, the trajectory of the story-the tragic momentum of the story-seems irresistible, irreversible, inevitable. The sacrifice has to be offered. The child will have to die.

This is the power of the ram's horn. It beckons us back to this moment in the story. No longer silent, it calls us back to the ram from which it came and asks us:



Think about the thicket of your own life. What possibilities have you not seen? Think about a story you are telling yourself-whose outcome you think you already know. What alternatives have you not noticed? And think about the path we are all on together. The altars at the end of the road. The children we love but seem prepared to sacrifice.

Look up. Listen.

Incline your heart, your ear

To the hollow, bent ram's horn

Through which human breath becomes a summons and a blast.

What might we hear? How might we respond?

## ROSH HASHANAH MUSAF: SUBMISSION, MEMORY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Rabbi Arthur Green in *The Rabbinical School of Hebrew College: High Holy Days Companion*

### I: Malkhuyot (God's Sovereignty)

The line “*Adonai melekh, Adonai malakh, Adonai yimlokh l’olam va’ed*” (God reigns, God has reigned, and God will reign forever) is found here and several other places in the machzor, but does not appear anywhere in the Bible. It is an early formulation of Jewish liturgy as it was first emerging in the post-biblical era. It is a statement of the eternal and unchanging truth that our faith proclaims. There is a One who stands behind all being, whose life force permeates all that exists. That One existed before Creation and will be here after all of us are gone. Each of us creatures, as varied and unique as we are, stands in the presence of that One.

Rosh haShanah is our season of renewing that faith. It is all about Creation and re-creation, birth and rebirth. Our Torah readings in this season begin with the birth of Isaac and conclude with the re-birth of Jonah. *Adonai Melekh*, repeated in so many ways on this day, is our way of affirming that we can turn to the One who created us to help us create ourselves anew. We do it by teshuvah, the act of acknowledging and returning to our Source, to the place we came from, to our truest selves, to the truest Self.

To say *Adonai Melekh* is an act of submission, something so very hard for us headstrong moderns. “I recognize that I did not create myself. I do not have all the answers. I will not live forever, and I do not know why I am here. Please help me to figure it out.”

### II: Zikhronot (God's Remembering)

Jews are all about memory. We have been around longer than most identifiable human families, and our memory goes all the way back. Abraham. Moses. Ruth. David. Esther. They all still live in our calendar, hence in our imagination. They link to all our personal memories: friends, parents, grandparents; all of them come and surround us, especially in this sacred season.



But those are human memories. Here we are looking for much more: God's memory. The unchanging One, the great One of being. Does it remember? What we are really asking here is: "Am I remembered? Is my life memorable in any way? Is anybody paying attention? Am I being noticed?"

This is our answer. "Yes, You, Adonai, remember the whole enterprise. Each one of us, every creature in Your image, is seen and noticed, remaining eternally present within that One.

### III: *Shofarot* (God's Calling)

We submit. We are noticed. We do not have all the answers, but our lives make a difference. The truths of *malkhuyot* and *zichronot* now lead us to a third step: *shofarot*. We are being called. The shofar verses we invoke here call to us from the past and from the future. They are the shofar of Sinai, the soundtrack of that smoking mountain where we were first called to live in God's presence, and the herald of a messiah yet to come, calling us all to partake of the great redemption, the fulfillment of all our human dreams.

We stand here in the middle, hearing the shofar sound forth from the past and the future. But the sound we most need to hear is the call of the present, the shofar that says to us in this very moment "Wake up! You are being called."

We submit. We are noticed. We are being called.

*Adonai melekh, Adonai malakh, Adonai yimlokh l'olam va'ed.*

## U'NETANEH TOKEF: FACING DEATH, EMBRACING LIFE

Rabbi Suzanne Offit in *The Rabbinical School of Hebrew College High Holy Days Companion*

On Rosh haShanah it is written and on Yom Kippur it is sealed. Who shall live and who shall die.

On these awesome days, our liturgy posits that God sits in judgment of our behavior, assesses our actions, and determines whether we warrant another year of life.

This assertion of divine knowledge calls attention to the frightening depths of our own not-knowing. None of us knows whether we will die this year, or next year, or in many years.

Perhaps there is a quiet moment amidst all the words we say on these days. When we allow ourselves to come more fully into this awareness. We imagine that the judgment of our lives will be sealed at the end of Yom Kippur. And in facing death, we face the limits of our lives.

We are beckoned to become our own judge.

There is time.

And now is the time.

We are not here to try to accrue bonus points in some kind of cosmic ledger.  
We are not here to try to escape death by gaining favor with an unforgiving God.

We are here to listen to the question that calls out softly, insistently,  
From within and beyond us:  
What do you want to do with the time you have left?

And teshuvah, tefilah, and tzedakah avert the severity of the decree.

The harshest decree is not  
Dying-without breath.  
The harshest decree is  
Not living-with breath.

Teshuvah. We turn inward, hear our own hearts with courage, and resolve to do better.  
Tefilah. We call out, offering our gratitude, our vulnerability, and our desire for discernment.  
Tzedakah. We extend a hand, share what we have, give sustenance, and dignify with hope.

With each of these three gestures,  
we are offered a gift.  
The gift of breath  
That connects us to everything that is, was, and will be.  
This, only this,  
Can avert the severity of the decree.

To live  
In relationship,  
To find our own breath  
in syncopation with another.



## PART 3

# YOM KIPPUR

### \*INTRODUCTION TO YOM KIPPUR

Yom Kippur is the tenth day of Tishrei, the seventh month of the Jewish calendar year. The moon is waxing and is between half crescent and full. This is the most solemn day of the year. It is said that those not inscribed in the Book of Life on Rosh HaShanah are given the Ten Days of Repentance in which to pray for forgiveness and to perform good deeds so as to be “sealed” in the Book of Life on Yom Kippur.

Yom Kippur is considered to be the Sabbath of Sabbaths. It is the one day in the Jewish year which is equal in importance to the Sabbath. Because fasting for two days would be a severe hardship, this is the only major holiday in the Diaspora with no second day of observance.

There are several references to this day in the Torah, including “...the tenth day of this seventh month is a day of atonement... a sacred occasion for you. You shall practice self-denial, and you shall bring an offering by fire to the Lord; you shall do no work throughout the day... For this is a day of atonement, to cleanse you from all your sins, so that you shall be clean before God.. Do no work whatsoever; it is... a Sabbath of complete rest for you...” (Leviticus 23:27-32)

From the Talmud we learn that on this day Moses descended (for the second time) with the Ten Commandments along with God’s pardon for the sin of the golden calf (B. Bava Batra 121a). On this the holiest day of the year, the *Kohen haGadol* (the High Priest), who was the holiest person in Israel, entered the holiest place in the world (the Holy of Holies in the Temple in Jerusalem), to recite the holiest word: the four letter Name of God. There he made atonement for himself, for his family, and then for all of his people Israel. It is reported that as he said the holy Name, the people outside the Temple would respond with the words, “Blessed be the honored Name and majesty forever and ever” (Mishnah Yoma 6:2).

Since this was such an intense occasion, there was always the possibility that the Kohen haGadol could succumb to some physical or emotional infirmity while in the inner sanctum. Because no one would be able to go in after him, a rope was affixed around his ankle so that he might be drawn out. Indeed, the experience was so filled with awe that friends of the High Priest feared for his life and would welcome him after he emerged from the temple, escort him home, and spend the evening together with him.

## PRERECORDED YOM KIPPUR SERVICES

Numerous prayers which are traditionally recited during Temple Beth David's Yom Kippur services have been video recorded and will be available online if you wish to view them:

### Kol Nidre (Yom Kippur Eve)

- *Kol Nidre*
- *The Sh'ma* and its blessings
- Repetition of the *Amidah*, including  
Prayers of Forgiveness (*Selichot*)  
*Ya'aleh*  
*Ki Hinei kaChomer*  
*Ki Anu Amecha*  
Prayers of Confession (*Vidui*)  
*Al Chet*  
*Ashamnu*  
*Hu Ya'anenu*
- *Avinu Malkeinu*
- *D'var Torah* / Sermon (Kol Nidre)
- Concluding Prayers

### Yom Kippur Day

#### *Shacharit* (Morning Service)

- *The Sh'ma* and its blessings
- Repetition of *The Amidah*
- *Avinu Malkeinu*

#### *Yizkor* (Remembrance Service)

- *D'var Torah* / Sermon (Yizkor)
- Yizkor Service

#### *Mussaf* (Additional Service)

- *Hineni*
- Repetition of *The Amidah*, including:  
*U'netaneh Token*  
The *Avodah* Service (with Bonnie Abrams)  
Prayers of Forgiveness  
Prayers of Confession
- Concluding prayers

#### *Minchah* (Afternoon Service)

- Repetition of the *Amidah*, including  
Prayers of Forgiveness (*Selichot*)  
Prayers of Confession (*Vidui*)
- *Avinu Malkeinu*

#### *Ne'ilah* (Concluding Service)

- Repetition of the *Amidah*, including  
Prayers of Forgiveness (*Selichot*)  
Prayers of Confession (*Vidui*)
- *Avinu Malkeinu*
- Conclusion, including Shofar blowing

Please note: recordings have not been made of any sections of the service that require a minyan, such as *Bar'chu*, *Kedushah*, *Kaddish* and Torah readings.

## WHERE & WHEN CAN THESE VIDEO RECORDINGS BE FOUND?

All Yom Kippur video recordings (i.e. both Kol Nidre night's and Yom Kippur day's) will be available online from Friday, September 25, at 9:00am, through Tuesday, September 29, at 9:00am.

To find the recordings, please go to: [www.TBDrochester.org/HH](http://www.TBDrochester.org/HH) where you will find links to the videos which have been uploaded to YouTube.

PRERECORDED  
SERVICES

## YOM KIPPUR ACTIVITIES AT HOME

For those who will spend Yom Kippur at home this year, neither attending services, going to work nor doing the kinds of things we might usually do on a “day off”, there are numerous alternative ways in which to spend these days and attempt to give them structure and meaning:

1. Aspects of Temple Beth David’s Yom Kippur services have been video recorded and are available online if you wish to view them. Please see page 33 for more information.
2. If you would prefer to connect to a live online broadcast of a service, many Conservative, Reform and other Jewish congregations across the country will be offering these viewing opportunities to non-members. A search term such as “live streaming High Holy Days service” ought to yield numerous options.
3. One of the most recognizable Yom Kippur prayers is “*Al Chet*”, the Confession, which people recite while gently striking their chests, symbolizing their regret for their behavior in the outgoing year. Below is a reinterpretation of this prayer by Rabbi Avi Weiss, in which he offers both sins to be confessed, or “thorns”, as well as positive attributes and actions to be appreciated, or “roses”.

As a way to derive new meaning from Yom Kippur this year, take the opportunity to closely examine these two lists and discuss them with a friend or family member, or contemplate them individually. Which resonate for you? What would you like to add?



## Thorns

We have behaved arrogantly  
We have betrayed ourselves and others  
We have acted out of contempt  
We have been dishonest  
We have erred out of ignorance  
We have forgotten who we are  
We have gossiped  
We have been hypocritical  
We have been insensitive  
We have justified bad decisions  
We have killed our impulse to do good  
We have looked the other way  
We have been mean  
We have been neglectful  
We have acted out of fear instead of love  
We have pushed too much  
We have been quiet  
    when we should have spoken up  
We have refused to help  
    when we had the ability  
We have slandered  
We have taken from others  
    when we had enough for ourselves  
We have been untrue  
We have behaved violently  
We have withheld  
    what could have been given freely  
We have been xenophobic  
We have yielded to our worst impulses  
We have zealously protected evil-doers

## Roses

We have adored  
We have blessed ourselves and others  
We have comforted  
We have directed our energies toward truth  
We have been empathetic  
We have forgiven past wrongs  
We have grown  
We have helped even when we weren't asked  
We have insisted on loving each other  
We have been just  
We have been kind  
We have learned  
We have been merciful  
We have nursed compassion from scorn  
We have been open-minded  
We have spoken positively  
We have questioned in a healthy way  
We have respected our friends and family  
We have supported strangers  
We have cultivated truth  
We have unlearned falsehoods  
We have validated each others' feelings  
We have been willing to change  
We have experienced pure joy  
We have yearned for a better future  
We have zestfully given our best

# INSPIRATIONAL READINGS FOR YOM KIPPUR

## GRATEFULNESS

Abraham Joshua Heschel, *I Asked for Wonder*

To pray is to regain a sense of the mystery that animates all beings, the divine margin in all attainments. Prayer is our humble answer to the inconceivable surprise of living. It is all we can offer in return for the mystery by which we live. Who is worthy to be present at the constant unfolding of time? Amidst the meditation of mountains, the humility of flowers - wiser than all alphabets - clouds that die constantly for the sake of His glory, we are hating, hunting, hurting. Suddenly we feel ashamed of our clashes and complaints in the face of the tacit glory in nature. It is so embarrassing to live! How strange we are in the world, and how presumptuous our doings! Only one response can maintain us: gratefulness for witnessing the wonder, for the gift of our unearned right to serve, to adore, and to fulfill. It is gratefulness which makes the soul great.

## THREE MEDITATIONS

*Mishkan Hanefesh - Machzor for the Days of Awe, Yom Kippur*

### 1. The Five Disciplines of Yom Kippur

Can I learn from deprivation? Can I grow from self-restraint? For this holy day, our Mishnah prescribes five disciplines: Refrain from food and drink, from bathing, from cosmetics, from wearing leather shoes, from sexual intimacy.

Withdrawing from physical nourishment,  
may I nourish my soul instead.  
Rejecting adornment, pampering, and vanity,  
may I turn my focus inward now.  
Stepping out of comfort and self-indulgence,  
may I stand this day more simply, in humility.  
Denied the body's pleasure and release,  
may my desire be for insight, self-improvement,  
and the courage to change.

### 2. For Those Who Must Eat During Yom Kippur

*Rofei chol basar*-Healer of all living creatures:

I thank You for the breath that is in me  
for the community of Israel that lives  
for the possibilities of today and tomorrow.

May my eating be as a fast;  
May it be dedicated to You, to *t'shuvah* -



to the renewal and restoration of my relationship  
to You, to others, and to myself.

### 3. The Fasts of Yom Kippur

The Sages of the Mishnah teach:

On the Day of Atonement, these are forbidden:  
eating and drinking; washing for pleasure; perfuming the body; sexual relations; and wearing  
leather shoes.

It shall be, says the Bible, a sabbath of sabbaths for you,  
and you shall practice self-denial;  
from evening to evening you shall observe this:  
your sabbath.

Abstention, affliction, self-denial:  
it is a sabbath - a full rest, a complete stop,  
a cessation from everyday pleasure.  
Some wish us an “easy fast” - thinking only of food;  
it is more than that.

Eating and drinking; washing, perfuming, and sex ...  
but leather shoes - why this?  
Of all these pleasant acts, wearing shoes is the most public,  
the one most seen by others.  
But perhaps it is because shoes are a symbol of the path our lives take, the choices we make  
along the way, the roads not taken -  
a symbol of our journey in the year to come.

## FEAR FOR THE HIGH HOLY DAYS

*Rabbi Ebn Leader in The Rabbinical School of Hebrew College High Holy Days Companion*

“And thus, Eternal One our God, instill your fear in all your works and your dread in all  
you created. That all creation shall be in awe and all creatures shall worship you.” (Rosh  
HaShanah liturgy, Renew Our Days machzor, Rabbi Ron Aigen)

With all my being I long for God. This sentence is not yet a description of my life; rather, it  
sets the parameters for a life of practice. It is the devotion expressed in the first paragraph  
of the Shema, encapsulating the ongoing process of trying to make every experience, every  
emotion I feel, and every thought I have draw me closer to God.

Fear, although it is not my favorite experience, is definitely part of the emotional spectrum I  
experience. As such, I cannot ask: Do I think it is a good idea to fear God? Rather I ask: How

is fear part of my relationship with God? How do I frame my fear so that it brings me closer to a God I truly believe in?

The Me'or Einayim (Rabbi Nahum of Chernobyl, an early Hasidic master) teaches that God has given us the emotions of fear and love in our lives so that we could learn how to fear and love God. God sends us small human fears-for life, for loved ones, for our property and honor-to orient us towards fear that will draw us closer to God. Of course, all the while we are trying to avoid getting caught up in the small fears themselves ... (Me'or Einayim on *Parashat Kedoshim*)

Here is a particular practice of re-orientating fear, based on a teaching for Rosh HaShanah by Rabbi Meshullam Feibush of Zbarazh, another Hasidic master of the same generation (*Yosher Divrei Emet* 2:53):

Every year on Rosh HaShanah, the world is created anew. But the first act of creation is not putting out something new. The first act of creation is *tzimzum*-drawing what already is, inward into God, into the source of all being, into the root that precedes differentiation, to make room for something new to come into being. God, as it were, breathes us all in together with the entire universe before a new world is breathed out.

But God is not a great dragon about to swallow you. And God does not sit somewhere watching you. You are of God, and because of this you are totally transparent. It is as if God knows you through God's self-awareness, not through external observation (Rabbi Moses Cordovero, *Pardes Rimonim* 8:13). To ride the in-breath of God to the source is to unravel every knot you have gotten tied up in, to work through every crooked brokenness that shapes who you are-to face all those difficulties and not turn away, to have them all be seen with nowhere to hide. The deeper you ride the breath into God, the closer you get to the possibility of re-creation, and even the most subtle mistakes stand out and can be faced, addressed, and resolved. The word for fear in Hebrew, *yir'ah*, has the same letters as the word "will see", *yir'eh*, and "will be seen," *yera'eh*. Fear of God is thus the experience of being seen within Divine consciousness rather than being seen by an other. How far will you dare go towards total transparency?

"At the mere sight of it they were stunned, they were terrified, they panicked; they were seized there with a trembling, like a woman in the throes of labor," (Psalms 48:6-7, JPS translation).

This is the path to re-creation in God, to the possibility of a new birth.

## VIDUI: CREATING A SPIRITUAL ACTION PLAN

Rabbi David Jaffe in *The Rabbinical School of Hebrew College: High Holy Days Companion*

The *vidui*, or confession, section punctuates the traditional Yom Kippur liturgy no less than five times over the course of this prayer-filled day. While the language of “confession” and its liturgy may sound foreign, even Christian, to the Jewish ear, here it is, a central feature of our Day of Atonement. The *vidui* includes two lists of alphabetically arranged, general admissions of wrongdoing ranging from theft to gossip. Written in the plural, these admissions communicate that we are not alone in our foibles and mistakes, but part of a community of imperfect people trying to do better. The plural language can be a double-edged sword, though, making these statements seem rote, ritualistic, and distant from our own reality. Adding a personal *vidui* can infuse this ritual with its intended, transformative power.

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov (d. 1810, Ukraine) urged his students to make a personal, verbal confession before every Rosh haShanah. I’ve adopted this practice, adding it to my Yom Kippur prayers, and invite you to try it as well. The word *vidui* comes from the Hebrew word for “acknowledge.” To make a personal *vidui* is to acknowledge clearly the reality of your life.

The first step is to take a good look at your life in the past year, and acknowledge one or two things that went very well, and one or two things you need to change. Then create a concrete, visual image in your mind of a goal for how things would look in each case if you could, indeed, change what needed to change. For something that went well, imagine what your life would look like if you could employ that strength on a more regular basis; for something that needs to change, imagine what it would look like if you made that change.

Do this visualization for each item. Write a few words that capture the changed, new reality. Then identify one or two soul traits that go along with each item. For example, if you acknowledge that you speak disrespectfully to your adolescent children and your goal is to speak with them like you would speak with an adult, the soul trait might be *savlanut*/patience or *kavod*/respect. Then think of one concrete action you could take on a regular basis to strengthen your patience or respect. Continue this with all the items you acknowledged. You now have a personal *vidui* and a spiritual action plan for the year!

I write all this down on an index card and bring it with me to Yom Kippur prayers. After reciting the set *vidui* in the prayer book, I take out my index card and say my own, personal *vidui*. I pray to God for forgiveness for where I missed the mark, and for help in growing the middot, the soul qualities, I need in order to make my vision a reality in the next year. After saying this *vidui* five times on Yom Kippur, I revisit it every Rosh Hodesh, noticing progress and renewing my commitment to keep growing.

If you are reading this for the first time during Yom Kippur services, you can make a personal *vidui* without the index card. Just follow the steps above and awaken the transformative power of this ancient Yom Kippur ritual.

## WE ARE BUT DUST

Dr. Erica Brown in *Naming God: Avinu Malkeinu, Our Father, Our King* (Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman, PhD., Editor)

Every year on our Days of Awe and the days in between, we open the ark multiple times to pour out our collective requests that God – our parent, our “authority figure” - remember us for good, treat us with abundant mercies, and erase our wrongdoings. All of this makes good seasonal sense. It is hard to start off the year without a slate wiped clean of transgression and readied - as a clean slate is - for new scribbles of possibility and redemption. But there is one line of *Avinu Malkeinu* that trips me up each year. It used to make no sense to me: “Our father, our king, remember that we are but dust” (line 33).

Do I need to remind God that I am dirt, nothing, a mere divine afterthought? In those darkest, most vulnerable moments of Yom Kippur, I want and maybe need to believe that God thinks more of me than I think of myself. We are infinitely small before our king. We are unworthy. We bow in humility. I understand. But dust? If I am but dust when I approach God, then I have no substance, no form, no shape worthy of praying and supplicating.

There are ample proof texts from our Hebrew Bible to support the use of “dust” as a metaphor of humility. In Genesis, God condemns the snake to be a lowly creature: “Upon your belly shall you go, and dust shall you eat all the days of your life” (3:14). When Abraham prays to God, he invokes his diminished status in the face of God, his covenantal partner: “Here I venture to speak to my lord, I who am but dust and ashes” (18:27).

Dust in the Bible also reminds us of our mortality (which need not imply lowliness). It is used in rituals of mourning, for instance. We hear that “Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of Adonai until the evening, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads” Joshua 7:6). In Job, the same context of mourning appears somewhat differently. Here dust is hurled into the air-perhaps as a further sign of righteous anger. As Job’s friends encounter Job while he is suffering from disease and mourning his lost family, “they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled *dust* upon their heads toward heaven” Job 2:12).

I am but dust, yet on the Days of Awe does that mean I am simply lowly? Instead I may use the imagery of dust as a way to signal my mortality. I will return to the earth one day, yet I can feel anger or injustice about the premature or painful death of others or express my own existential angst that all human life must end in death.

Dust also has a positive meaning in Tanakh, symbolic of a numeric future for the Israelites beyond count. “And I will make your seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall your seed also be numbered” (Genesis 13: 16). We may be subtly reminding God at the start of the year of this commitment: “God, do not forget the promise of dust. Continue to let this small people grow and become more numerous and

influential so that we have strength in numbers.” This would be a compelling prayer for a people marked by history for persecution yet able to regenerate and replenish its numbers with an alacrity that could only be regarded as divine intervention.

And yet, asking God on the Days of Awe to remember that we are dust must have a meaning more profound than a simple wish for expansion. I return, therefore, to dust as a sign of being human. That is how we find dust used for the very first time in our sacred texts-as an ingredient in our very composition. “The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7). With this polar opposite of ingredients did God design us-the dust of the earth and God’s own breath. We embody not only the simplest, most earthy material but also the stuff of transcendence. We house these potentially conflicting forces within us, aspiring to be worthy of our godliness while also acknowledging our earthly origins and nature. God reminds Adam of his “earthiness” when meting out punishment to him as the first mortal-with “dust” as the master metaphor: “By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:19). Much later, in Ecclesiastes - that biblical book of melancholia and of wisdom-we are told once again of our face: “The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it” (12:7).

Elsewhere too, Scripture details the recipe of human creation, telling us that dust is essential to our very composition. One verse, in particular, inches closer to the language of Avinu Malkeinu: “As a father shows compassion to his children, so Adonai shows compassion to those who fear him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust” (Psalm 103:13-14). God is a loving father who has compassion upon us because He made us. When we mention dust, it is as if we say to God, “This is what You made me of. Remember that whoever I am is directly a consequence of how You formed me. I am part of You. Remember me. Have mercy on me. Grant me grace. Grant me peace.”

Two other passages, one in Psalms and the other in Job, detail the delight we take in our physicality, an attitude that reflects well on its creator.

For You formed my inward parts; You knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. (Psalm 139:13-16)

God made each of us-so worthy of mention that God even made note of us in a book. The Psalms passage, however, omits reference to dust. A parallel conversation by Job, however, does add dust to the mixture, thereby agreeing with Psalms, albeit in a more somber and macabre way:

Your hands fashioned and made me, and now You have destroyed me altogether. Remember that You have made me like clay; and will You return me to the dust? Did You not pour me out like milk and curdle me like cheese? You clothed me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews. You have granted me life and steadfast love, and your care has preserved my spirit. (Job 10:8-12)

Job wishes to remind God that God is essentially a creator, not a destroyer. If God created us in love, God must continue to love us; rather than cause us suffering, God must raise us up so that our dust is overshadowed by God's breath.

"Our father, our king, remember that we are but dust."

So yes, we are dust, but not just lowly dust. We are the holy dust of humanity, dust mixed with the very breath of God; dust that God chose for us, in love. To say we are dust is not, therefore, to say that we are unworthy. It is to remind God of the love that God poured into that dust when we were formed and to pray that God, our creator, continue to love us still. We are the descendants of that magnificent creature, the first human being. Dust was the raw material that God gathered up from the ground and imbued with life. God, we implore You, we beg You, not to forget that it is You who made us. Please sustain us and let us live so that with our lives (dust that we are), we may honor our creator.

## BUT ON THIS DAY

*Mishkan Hanefesh – Machzor for the Days of Awe, Yom Kippur*

Throughout the year, our actions condemn us;  
throughout the year our deeds are open to blame.  
But on this day we rise above our human failings.  
Fasting, praying, wrapped in white tallitot,  
we stand like angels, reaching for the Divine.  
On this one day, we catch a glimpse of what we could be—  
we celebrate the better angels of our nature.

## FAITH

*Abraham Joshua Heschel, I Asked for Wonder*

Faith is not a feature of man's mentality: self-effacement of curiosity, asceticism of reason, some psychic quality that has bearing on man alone. Its essence is not disclosed in the way we utter it, but in the soul's being in accord with what is relevant to God; in the extension of our love to what God may approve, our being carried away by the tide of His thoughts, rising beyond the desolate ken of man's despair.

## ON THIS NIGHT

Rabbis Sidney Greenberg and Jonathan D. Levine in *Mishkan Hanefesh – Machzor for the Days of Awe, Yom Kippur*

On the night of Atonement, grant us, God,  
A sense of Your presence, as we call upon Your name.

Speak Your hopeful message to each yearning heart;  
And answer the worthy petitions of each searching soul.

Purify and strengthen our noble strivings;  
And cleanse us of all our unworthy desires.

Join us together in fellowship and in love;  
And grant us the joy which comes from enriching other lives.

Help us to be loyal to the heritage we share;  
Draw us near to Torah in wisdom and in faith.

Strengthen our devotion to our people everywhere;  
Keep alive our faith in righteousness and truth.

Bless us with hopes to uplift our daily lives;  
And keep steadfast our courage and our resolve at all times.

On this night of Atonement, help us, God,  
To be worthy of Your presence, as we call upon Your name.

## ISAIAH 1:18

“Come, let us find common ground,” -says Adonai. “Be your sins like crimson, they can turn white as snow; be they red as dyed wool, they can turn pure as fleece.”

## GOD, GOD

By Howard Thurman

God, God, open unto me:

Open unto me-  
light for my darkness  
Open unto me  
courage for my fear  
Open unto me-  
hope for my despair  
Open unto me-



peace for my turmoil  
Open unto me-  
joy for my sorrow  
Open unto me-  
strength for my weakness  
Open unto me-  
wisdom for my confusion  
Open unto me  
forgiveness for my sins  
Open unto me-  
tenderness for my toughness  
Open unto me-  
love for my hates  
Open unto me-  
Your Self for my self  
God, God, open unto me!

## IF IT BE YOUR WILL

Song by Leonard Cohen

If it be your will  
That I speak no more  
And my voice be still  
As it was before  
I will speak no more  
I shall abide until  
I am spoken for  
If it be your will  
If it be your will  
That a voice be true  
From this broken hill  
I will sing to you  
From this broken hill  
All your praises they shall ring  
If it be your will  
To let me sing

From this broken hill  
All your praises they shall ring  
If it be your will  
To let me sing  
If it be your will  
If there is a choice

Let the rivers fill  
Let the hills rejoice  
Let your mercy spill  
On all these burning hearts in hell  
If it be your will  
To make us well

And draw us near  
And bind us tight  
All your children here  
In their rags of light  
In our rags of light  
All dressed to kill  
And end this night  
If it be your will

## ANTHEM

Song by Leonard Cohen

The birds they sang  
At the break of day  
Start again  
I heard them say  
Don't dwell on what  
Has passed away  
Or what is yet to be  
Yeah the wars they will  
Be fought again  
The holy dove  
She will be caught again  
Bought and sold  
And bought again  
The dove is never free

Ring the bells (ring the bells) that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack in everything (there is a crack in everything)  
That's how the light gets in

We asked for signs  
The signs were sent  
The birth betrayed  
The marriage spent

Yeah the widowhood  
Of every government  
Signs for all to see

I can't run no more  
With that lawless crowd  
While the killers in high places  
Say their prayers out loud  
But they've summoned, they've summoned up  
A thundercloud  
And they're going to hear from me

Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack, a crack in everything (there is a crack in everything)  
That's how the light gets in

You can add up the parts  
You won't have the sum  
You can strike up the march  
There is no drum  
Every heart, every heart to love will come  
But like a refugee

Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack, a crack in everything (there is a crack in everything)  
That's how the light gets in  
Ring the bells that still can ring (ring the bells that still can ring)  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack, a crack in everything (there is a crack in everything)  
That's how the light gets in  
That's how the light gets in  
That's how the light gets in

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# CALENDAR

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
SEPT. 6 Elul *Live Zoom Discussion	7 Elul	8 Elul	9 Elul	10 Elul	11 Elul	12 Elul
13 Elul *Live Zoom Discussion	14 Elul	15 Elul	16 Elul	17 Elul *Rosh HaShanah services online	18 Erev Rosh HaShanah	19 1 <sup>st</sup> Day Rosh HaShanah
20 2 <sup>nd</sup> Day Rosh HaShanah *Live Zoom Discussion *Tashlich	21	22	23	24	25 *Yom Kippur services online	26
27 Erev Yom Kippur	28 Yom Kippur	29	30	OCT. 1	2 Erev Sukkot	3 1 <sup>st</sup> Day Sukkot
4 2 <sup>nd</sup> Day Sukkot	5 3 <sup>rd</sup> Day Sukkot	6 4 <sup>th</sup> Day Sukkot	7 5 <sup>th</sup> Day Sukkot	8 6 <sup>th</sup> Day Sukkot	9 7 <sup>th</sup> Day Sukkot/ Hoshana Rabbah	10 Shmini Atzeret
11 Simchat Torah	12	13	14	15	16	17

## CALENDAR NOTES

- **September 6  
@ 1:00pm** **“JOURNEYING WITH GOD: ELUL 1”**  
A live, interactive Elul discussion with Howard Brill will take place on Zoom.  
For more details, see page “Vayehi Erev vayehi voker, yom hashisi.” on page 19.  
The Zoom-link will be available on September 6, at: [www.TBDrochester.org/HH](http://www.TBDrochester.org/HH)
- **September 13  
@ 11:00am** **“JOURNEYING WITH GOD: ELUL 2”**  
A live, interactive Elul discussion with Howard Brill will take place on Zoom.  
For more details, see page “Journeying with God: Elul 2” on page 4.  
The Zoom-link will be available on September 13, at: [www.TBDrochester.org/HH](http://www.TBDrochester.org/HH)
- **September 17** **ROSH HASHANAH SERVICES**  
Prerecorded videos of a selection of prayers and sermons for Rosh haShanah services will be available on YouTube from September 17 and can be viewed anytime thereafter. The YouTube-links for Rosh haShanah services will be available on September 17 at: [www.TBDrochester.org/HH](http://www.TBDrochester.org/HH)
- **September 20  
@ 11:00am** **“BEING WITH GOD: ROSH HASHANAH”**  
A live, interactive Rosh haShanah discussion with Howard Brill will take place on Zoom.  
For more details, see page \_  
The Zoom-link will be available on September 20, at: [www.TBDrochester.org/HH](http://www.TBDrochester.org/HH)
- **September 20  
Afternoon** **OUTDOOR TASHLICH SERVICE**  
A Tashlich service will be held outdoors in an area that offers parking and enough space for people to spread out six feet apart from others.  
Facemasks will be required, covering both mouths and noses.  
Attendance is limited to the first 50 who RSVP to Temple Beth David at: (585) 266-3223 (address and time will be announced when you call to confirm)
- **September 25** **YOM KIPPUR SERVICES**  
Prerecorded videos of a selection of prayers and sermons for Yom Kippur services will be available on YouTube from September 25 and can be viewed anytime thereafter. The YouTube-links for Yom Kippur services will be available from September 25 at: [www.TBDrochester.org/HH](http://www.TBDrochester.org/HH)