

Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Rabbinical School in Partnership with the
International Rabbinic Fellowship & Maharat Present

MACHZOR COMPANION

תשפ"א 2020



This publication contains the name of God
and should be treated accordingly

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Introduction

Dear Friends,

As we approach a Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur unlike any other, we prepare to daven in circumstances we could not have imagined a year ago. Many of us will be davening in small minyanim, and many of us will be davening at home, with our families, or alone. Our rabbis, and rabbis of all communities, have been doing their utmost to ensure everyone's safety, and to carefully attend to all the relevant halakhot, so that the communal prayer satisfies the demands of halakha, and so that everyone fulfills their obligation of hearing the shofar.

And yet, with a shortened tefilah and in the absence of a packed shul and the familiar niggunim, these Yamim Noraim will be a true challenge for us all, emotionally and spiritually. It was because of this perceived need that Yeshivat Chovevei Torah spearheaded this Machzor Companion together with our partners, the International Rabbinic Fellowship, and Maharat.

This Companion is a practical guide—it focuses on the core components of the tefilah, and provides parameters for davening without a minyan.

It is also a spiritual guide. Short Torah thoughts and kavanot appear alongside each prayer and the Torah readings to help focus us spiritually on the energy and power of the day and of that tefilah.

The Companion opens with a small number of reflection prompts, each one followed by a blank page. We invite you to use this section before Yom Tov to write your personal thoughts in response to the prompts. Alternatively, you can use it on Yom Tov—either at the time of davening, before, after, or during some of the unfilled time of the day—and to see the blank page as an open space, an invitation for reflection and getting in touch with your deeper, and often unarticulated, thoughts and feelings.

The shofar is connected to the idea of prayer—a reaching out to God, a desire to be close, even without the right words, even with no words. Alongside the silent prayer of the shofar, we recite in Musaf many verses of Malchuyot, Zichronot and Shofarot—of Kingship, Remembrance and Shofar Blasts—with the hope that one of those verses will allow us to connect to a meaning that resonates with us, one that we can fuse with the wordless sounds of the shofar. It is our sincere hope that during this challenging time, when the desire to reach and connect is felt even more powerfully, that these different components of our Companion will help you find the meanings, inner thoughts, and reflections that resonate with you and that can be fused with the Yom Tov, to help make these days ones of spiritual depth and meaning.

Thanks to Rabbi Yonah Berman for his tireless work in overseeing this project and working with our rabbis in the field who have contributed the Torah pieces and reflections for this Companion. Thanks to the many rabbis and religious leaders of YCT, the IRF and Maharat for their contributions, and our graphic designer, Rachel Jackson for the beautiful cover and aesthetic layout of this entire work. Thanks to David Selis for his assistance in the coordination and compilation effort and to Rabbi Aryeh Leifert for his copy editing. Special thanks to Rabbis Saul Strosberg and Jason Herman of the IRF and Rabba Sara Hurwitz and Rabbi Jeffrey Fox of Maharat for their backing and financial support and ongoing partnership throughout this project.

With wishes for a meaningful Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, may the coming year bring with it much blessing, and a return to normalcy for us all.

Ketivah va'Hatimah Tovah,

Rabbi Dov Linzer

President & Rosh HaYeshiva, Norman & Tova Bulow Chair, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Rabbinical School

Poems



Many of us find the Machzor intimidating. It is long, and while prayers can be said in any language, it is often easy to find the Hebrew language daunting. This Companion contains a number of models alongside the traditional text, allowing each of us to consider our own personal prayers, and to even consider writing those prayers or finding other ways to express them. The following poems, written by Maya Bernstein, designer and teacher of Maharat's leadership curriculum, are meant to inspire each of us to consider the power of individual prayer and connection to God all year long.

ELUL INSOMNIA

It is late. The night is damp.
You are in the field.

I, somehow, am also in the field. But
We are each in the field alone.

You're sitting, thinking, studying
The secrets of each human soul, and of the world,
Deciphering the destiny of it all and

I'm circling, my insides churning,
Aimlessly wandering, striving
To find a way out, to escape - Yet

I cannot find a perch on which to rest
Nor stone nor ladder
No place to lay my heavy head
Nor rungs to reach the heavens;
No angels, not ascending not descending.

So I sit a short distance from You.
You, of course, know I'm here,
And I, of course, want You to become Her, Mother.

Not the world's but mine,
Who doesn't think about truth and lies,
Judgement and the judged, good and evil,
The righteous and the damned. Only about me.

Mother who rises with a smile
And open arms and an eternal embrace,
And You will kiss me on the forehead,
And sing me a lullaby, and mark me for life.

And maybe I will even fall asleep there,
With You,
There, in the field.

YOU me YOU

me: dust. destiny, dust.

likened to:
a shattered shard
a shadow glimpsed
grassy meadows
breath of wind
fallen petals
clouds dispersed
a dream, a shimmer, burst.

flying dust.

You: in your enduring
kayak, gliding, *kayam*.

THIS TIME, THE ANGEL'S

not at my side,
not right or left
front or behind
and I'm alone

beneath the relentless weight
of Your Presence.

Where has she gone
how dare she leave
me, now?

What pressing duty
What amorous pursuit
What illusion of independence

has wrenched her from
my side at this
time of all times,
my angel?

Doesn't she know that I will find her?

Pursue her to the ship
and rage the waters rough
and send a mammoth fish
to swallow her whole up
entire,

and she'll show me the gourd,
or castor oil plant,
in withering and bloom
and I'll hold her
tight this time, that
angel, my
passing cloud my
fleeting shadow.

LIKE THE WIND BLOWING THROUGH DAVID'S HARP

and his lyre, waking him mid-night, so that he could immerse
himself in the study of the Divine, so that he could sing to God,
in fact before bed each night he positioned the harp and the lyre
by the window which he left ajar for that very purpose, so as to
beckon the wind, so as to be woken,

strangely so with me who wants nothing but a deep long sleep,
nothing, but a long deep sleep
who has hung no such instruments
and yet, still
this past night the moon shone so through the
bolted window it startled me awake.

Then morning's sun so early struck so bright
burning through the blackout shades
I had to shield my eyes and wonder,

what luminous light wishes to usher me from what slumber?
for what purpose? for what purpose?

TRUE, YOU ARE FIRST

True—You are first
And yes, also last
But I'm in between

You may take life
Yea even give life
But look - I live life

You are the redeemer.
You are the savior.

I glean wheat at the edge of the fields.



SHARDS, OR FRAGMENTS

(per Coleridge)

While emptying the dishwasher
I felled a wine glass into shards
Immediately thought of God
Creator of this broken world
Who deals us each our cards.

What pieces will remain of us?
You hold us in Your mighty hands
Contracting You put us in place
With bangs and stars abandoned space
We're fragments in the sands.

With holy dread I swept the glass
And asked the birds and wing'ed sky
Which ones of us get wiped away?
And who decides who gets to stay?
Does prayer lift any high?

Searching searching for your scent
Have you left us any clue
Hourly orisons are spent
Striving to uncover You
Your disappearance opens seams of light
The shining shattered pieces of our plight.

My fingers bled despite my care
With glass which once held honey wine
Such emptiness our Paradise
You circle round us once and twice
When will we re-align?

TOTAFOT

My observance
An attempt
To observe
You.

Moons, months, melodies
Breads abashed in braids
Salt and spices, stars we count and
Mornings marked with praise.

Separations: of fluids of flesh of space;
Immersion: in waters in study in pain;

The precise moment of sunset,
Fire-lit.

My careful meaning,
Your fearless order;
Your careful order,
My fearless meaning.

The Totafot
Between my eyes
A devotion
Of noticing.



Reflections

One of the possibilities of this High Holiday season is the chance for more time to reflect, converse (if we are able to be with others in our household or appropriately distance outside) and engage in some of the personal work of this season. Please feel free to use these prompts for reflective writing before or after Yom Tov (with thanks to our teacher and mentor Merle Feld, who has taught us the power of writing as a spiritual tool), or as conversation prompts with others or with ourselves over the days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The prompts are divided into three sections, but we invite you to use them however and whenever they work for you. Following each set of prompts, there is a blank page. See this page as an invitation, an opening to allow yourself the time and space to breathe, reflect, and get in touch with your thoughts and feelings.

THE JOURNEY TO OURSELVES:

INVITATIONS TO REFLECTION FOR ROSH HASHANAH AND YOM KIPPUR AND THIS SEASON

Rabbi Steven Exler, YCT '09. Senior Rabbi, Hebrew Institute of Riverdale – The Bayit, Riverdale, NY.

ELUL/TISHREI GENERAL REFLECTION

- » Open up Psalm 27, the psalm we read twice daily during this season. Its first half expresses a bold confidence in God's presence with us; its second half puts forth a deep vulnerability and fear of Divine hiddenness. Does one half or another resonate for you more, and why? Select a moment from the last year in which you felt God's immanence or God's hiddenness. What happened? What did you take away from that experience?
- » Take an accounting of the places you have been this year. Construe this broadly: not just countries, cities, or special locations, but even grocery stores, rooms in houses, types of transportation. Think through the year and unearth locations you may have forgotten about. If locations that you remember evoke a feeling, jot that down in a sentence or two and keep moving. Follow-up—Now that you have made that list, pick a place in which you felt like your best self. Why, and how? Or: in which places did you spend less time than you wanted to? Why?
- » Think about the past year and recall something you did that gave you deep pleasure or satisfaction, something that felt nourishing for you—what was it? Describe it in detail, in all its richness. Now that you have written it down, reflect on why/how this activity or situation was so full, joyous or meaningful for you. How can you incorporate this deep nourishing pleasure into your new year?



Rosh Hashanah Reflections

- » Rosh Hashanah is the day of coronating God as King. Of the many metaphors for our relationship with God, king and subject can evoke feelings of all kinds. Write a letter to, or have a conversation with, the King. Do not get caught up in conceptualizing—just go with the image and let your words come forth. What do you want to express— ask for, thank for, challenge?
- » The other side of the coin of the coronation of God as King is the celebration of the creation of humans on Rosh Hashanah. The Alei Shur, R' Shlomo Wolbe, emphasizes that Rosh Hashanah is a day to emphasize our individuality, to embrace the fact that there is not, never was, and never will be anyone in the universe like each one of us. What makes you you? What are your central qualities, characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses? Select one. What makes it feel so “you?” How do you want to use it, apply it, highlight it, work with it in the year ahead?
- » The mitzvah centerpiece of the day today is the shofar. Close your eyes and picture yourself hearing the shofar. What is the setting? Are you a child, young adult, middle-aged, or older adult at this moment? Who is around you? What do you feel? What does the shofar’s call awaken in you? Is it one type of blast as opposed to another? How can this memory help you in these challenging times?



Yom Kippur Reflections

- » Teshuvah is alternately defined as returning to some best version of ourselves, and rebirth as someone new—some better person we have never been yet. Capture either an image of a part of yourself you want to return to, or imagine a new self you want to be. Describe that self. If it is an old self, what has moved you away from it, and how do you get back to it? If it is a new self, what is holding you back?
- » Review the *Al Het* liturgy. Does one item on the list particularly speak to you? In what way does it challenge you? What makes you vulnerable in transgressing it? What is one concrete step you could take to doing it less in the coming year? Be specific, and be gentle with yourself.
- » One of the resonant terms to describe Yom Kippur is *itzumo shel yom*—the very power of the day itself. How do you feel that today? Even without things the way they usually are, what makes today Yom Kippur for you? What are the essential ingredients?



Home Tefilah Guide



The High Holidays typically represent a time of gathering for families and communities to pray, learn, celebrate, and sing together. We are well aware of the fact that for many, if not all, this year's experiences will be quite different.

For those who are unable to attend a minyan, we have included this Home Tefilah Guide to help individuals understand which prayers are recited and in what order, when not in the context of a minyan. We thank Abe Rosenberg for his authorship, and Rabbi Yosef Kanefsky, Rabbanit Alissa Thomas-Newborn, and Executive Director Adynna Swarz of Congregation B'nai David-Judea in Los Angeles for sharing this document with us.

1ST NIGHT OF ROSH HASHANAH | FRIDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 18

| | ArtScroll | Birnbaum | Koren |
|---|------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| We begin with WEEKDAY Mincha. | 20 | 3 | 13 |
| Because it is also Erev Shabbat, we recite 2 Psalms from Kabbalat Shabbat before beginning Ma'ariv. | 46-48 | 21 | 49 |
| We then proceed to Ma'ariv for Rosh Hashanah. | 50 | 23 | 53 |
| Just before the Amidah we add the special Shabbat paragraph (V'Shamru) before reciting Tiku BaChodesh Shofar. | 60 | 29 | 65 |
| Amidah: Remember to include the Shabbat additions | 62-74 | 31-39 | 67-83 |
| After the Amidah we may say Vayechulu, even alone. Preferably it should be said with another person, because we are bearing witness. We do not say the subsequent blessing or Magen Avot. | 76 | 39 | 83 |
| At this point it is our custom to recite L'David Mizmor. | 78 | 91 | 85 |
| We conclude with Aleinu, L'David Hashem Ori, and Yigdal. | 84-88 | 43-47; 55 | 91-95; 99 |

1ST DAY OF ROSH HASHANAH | SHABBAT MORNING, SEPTEMBER 19

| | ArtScroll | Birnbaum | Koren |
|---|------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| We precede Pesukei D'Zimrah with the Shir HaYichud for Shabbat | 162 | 123 | 243 |
| Shir HaKavod | 166 | 127 | 249 |
| Shir Shel Yom for Shabbat | 178 | 99 | 259 |
| L'David Hashem Ori | 178 | 45 | 261 |
| Adon Olam/Yigdal | 180 | 53-55 | 263-265 |
| Pesukei D'Zimrah | 184-264 | 59-89, 133-169 | 267-349 |
| We add the special psalm, Shir HaMa'alot Mi'ma'amakim | 264 | 171 | 349 |
| Shacharit: follow your Machzor's instructions for the Shabbat changes | 266 278-296 | 171 185-201 | 353 |

| | ArtScroll | Birbaum | Koren |
|---|------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Amidah: follow your Machzor's instructions to include the Shabbat additions | 296-304 | 201-209 | 381-395 |

Note: Although we do not repeat the Amidah when davening at home, you are welcome to recite the following piyyutim taken from there, which are traditionally chanted together:

| | | | |
|-------------------------|-----|-----|-----|
| Yimloch/Ata Hu Elokeinu | 314 | 217 | 411 |
| Hashem Melech | 328 | 225 | 431 |
| L'Kel Orech Din | 330 | 261 | 435 |

Note: Because it is also Shabbat we do not say Avinu Malkeinu today. Feel free to recite it tomorrow! The shofar is not sounded today, because of Shabbat.

When davening at home, we do not recite the tefillot associated with the Torah Reading. You are welcome at this point to spend a few moments reviewing the moving story of how God remembered Sarah, the birth of Isaac, and the banishment of Hagar and Ishmael (Bereishit 21).

| | | | |
|---|---------|---------|---------|
| Ashrei | 440 | 319 | 503 |
| Musaf: Amidah for the First Day. Follow your Machzor's instructions to include the Shabbat additions. | 448-468 | 327-347 | 515-549 |

Note: Although we do not repeat the Amidah when davening at home, you are welcome to recite the following piyyutim taken from there, which are traditionally chanted together:

| | | | |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Yimloch/Melech Elyon | 478 | 355 | 561 |
| U'netaneh Tokef | 480-484 | 361-363 | 565-575 |
| V'Khol Ma'aminim | 490 | 367 | 581 |
| V'Ye'etayu | 494 | 373 | 587 |
| Ochila La'Kel | 504 | 379 | 601 |
| Ha'yom TeAmtzeinu | 532 | 405 | 637 |
| Musaf concludes with Ein Kelokeinu/Aleinu/Adon Olam | 586, 590, 180 | 409, 415, 419 | 643, 649, 263 |

2ND NIGHT OF ROSH HASHANAH | SHABBAT EVENING, SEPTEMBER 19

| | ArtScroll | Birbaum | Koren |
|--|------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Mincha – Ashrei/Uva L'Tzion | 598 | 425 | 893 |
| Amidah—follow your Machzor's instructions to include the Shabbat additions | 612-620 | 439-449 | 911-925 |

We do not recite Avinu Malkeinu on Shabbat

| | | | |
|---|-----|-----|-----|
| Aleinu | 626 | 455 | 931 |
| Ma'ariv | 50 | 23 | 53 |
| It is no longer Shabbat, so before the Amidah we no longer say "V'Shomru" but go directly to Tiku BaChodesh Shofar. | 60 | 29 | 65 |

| | | | |
|--|-------|----------|-------|
| Amidah | 62-74 | 31-39 | 67-83 |
| L'David Mizmor | 78 | 91 | 85 |
| We conclude with Aleinu, L'David Hashem Ori and Yigdal | 84-90 | 43-47/55 | 91-99 |

2ND DAY OF ROSH HASHANAH | SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 20

| | ArtScroll | Birbaum | Koren |
|---|------------------|------------------|--------------|
| We precede Pesukei D'Zimrah with the Shir HaYichud for Sunday | 140 | 101 | 209 |
| Shir HaKavod | 166 | 127 | 249 |
| Shir Shel Yom for Sunday | 170 | 91 | 255 |
| L'David Hashem Ori | 178 | 45 | 261 |
| Adon Olam/Yigdal | 180 | 53-55 | 263-265 |
| Pesukei D'Zimrah | 184-264 | 59-89 133-169 | 267-349 |
| We add the special psalm, Shir HaMa'alot Mi'ma'amakim. | 264 | 171 | 349 |
| Shacharit | 266 278-296 | 171 183-201 | 353 |
| Amidah | 296-304 | 201-209 | 381-395 |

Note: Although we do not repeat the Amidah when davening at home, you are welcome to recite the following piyyutim taken from there, which are traditionally chanted together:

| | | | |
|---|-----|-----|-----|
| Yimloch/Ata Hu Elokeinu | 352 | 239 | 675 |
| Melech Elyon | 366 | 251 | 693 |
| Hashem Melech | 370 | 255 | 699 |
| After the Amidah, we recite Avinu Malkeinu. | 384 | 271 | 719 |

Note: When davening at home, we do not recite the tefillot associated with the Torah reading. You are welcome at this point to spend a few moments reviewing the powerful story of the Binding of Isaac (Bereishit 22).

If you are blowing the shofar for yourself or if you will be hearing it somewhere in your neighborhood today, it is appropriate to recite the introductory pesukim beginning with Lam'natzei'ach Livnei Korach Mizmor at that time.

| | ArtScroll | Birbaum | Koren |
|----------------------------------|------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Ashrei | 440 | 319 | 763 |
| Musaf: Amidah for the Second Day | 448-468 | 327-347 | 771-803 |

Note: Although we do not repeat the Amidah when davening at home, you are welcome to recite the following piyyutim taken from there, which are traditionally chanted together:

| | | | |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| L'Kel Orech Din | 538 | 261 | 807 |
| U'netaneh Tokef | 538-542 | 361-363 | 809-817 |
| V'Khol Ma'aminim | 546 | 367 | 821 |
| V'Ye'etayu | 550 | 373 | 827 |

| | | | |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Ochila La'Kel | 558 | 379 | 837 |
| Ha'yom TeAmtzeinu | 582 | 405 | 871 |
| Musaf concludes with Ein Kelokeinu/Aleinu/Adon Olam | 586, 590, 180 | 409, 415, 419 | 877, 883, 263 |

CONCLUSION OF ROSH HASHANAH | SUNDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 20

| | ArtScroll | Bimbaum | Koren |
|--|------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Mincha – Ashrei/Uva L'Tzion | 598 | 425 | 893 |
| Amidah | 612-620 | 439-449 | 911-925 |
| Avinu Malkeinu | 622 | 449 | 925 |
| Aleinu | 626 | 455 | 931 |
| WEEKDAY Ma'ariv | 646 | * | 949 |
| Amidah: Remember to recite the post Shabbat/Yom Tov "Atah Chonantanu," as well as the additions/changes for Aseret Yemei Teshuvah as per the Machzor's instructions. | 654 | * | 961-977 |
| Aleinu | 666 | * | 981 |
| L'David Hashem Ori | 670 | * | 985 |
| Recite an abbreviated Havdalah. We do not light a candle, we do not use spices. We just say the Borei Pri Ha'gafen blessing, followed by H'amavdil. | 670 | 1041 | 979 |

Note: The Birnbaum Machzor does NOT contain Ma'ariv for the end of Rosh Hashanah. We suggest you switch back to your regular Siddur for Ma'ariv and remember to add the post-Shabbat/Yom Tov "Atah Honantanu," as well as the extra lines & changes for Aseret Yemei Teshuvah in the Amidah.

YOM KIPPUR EVE | SUNDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 27

| | ArtScroll | Bimbaum | Koren |
|---|------------------|----------------|--------------|
| <i>Note: Kol Nidrei is a public declaration, so we do not say it when davening in private. Everyone should, however, recite the Shehechyanu blessing.</i> | 60 | 491 | 75 |
| Ma'ariv | 66-76 | 495-501 | 81-93 |
| Amidah | 78-98 | 503-517 | 95-119 |

Note: When davening at home we do not repeat the Amidah. However, you are welcome to recite the Selichot from that section. We do not recite the "13 Middot" (from "El Melech" through "U'nechaltanu") between each of the Selichot because it requires a minyan.

| | | | |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Ya'aleh | 102 | 521 | 125 |
| Shom'eah Tefilah | 104-106 | 523-527 | 127-133 |
| Selach Na | 112 | 531 | 139 |
| Omnam Ken | 116 | 533 | 145 |
| Ki Hinei | 120 | 537 | 151 |
| Z'chor | 122-126 | 539-543 | 153-159 |
| Shema Koleinu | 126 | 545 | 161 |

| | | | |
|---|---------|---------|---------|
| Ki Anu Amecha | 128 | 545 | 163 |
| <i>We do not repeat the Viduy (Ashamnu, Al Het, etc.), which we already recited in the Silent Amidah.</i> | | | |
| Aseh L'ma'an Sh'mechah | 138 | 559 | 183 |
| Aneinu | 140 | 561 | 185 |
| Mi She'anah | 140 | 563 | 187 |
| We conclude with: Avinu Malkeinu | 144-148 | 565-569 | 189-193 |
| L'David Mizmor | 148 | 91 | 195 |
| Aleinu | 152 | 571 | 199 |
| L'David Hashem Ori | 156 | 573 | 205 |
| Yigdal | 158 | 55 | 209 |

YOM KIPPUR DAY, SHACHARIT & MUSAF | MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28

| | ArtScroll | Bimbaum | Koren |
|---|----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|
| We precede Pesukei D'Zimrah with the Shir HaYichud for Monday | 166 | 104 | 219 |
| Shir HaKavod | 188 | 127 | 253 |
| Shir Shel Yom for Monday | 236 | 91 | 461 |
| L'David Hashem Ori | 244 | 45 | 467 |
| Adon Olam/Yigdal | 246 | 53-55 | 471-473 |
| Pesukei D'Zimrah | 250-322 | 59-87 133-169 | 475-557 |
| We add the special psalm, Shir HaMa'alot Mi'ma'amakim | 324 | 583 | 557 |
| Shacharit | 326, 330-336 342-350 | 583, 589-593, 597-605 | 561-587 |
| Amidah | 350-364 | 605-621 | 589-611 |

Note: Although we do not repeat the Amidah when davening at home, you are welcome to recite the following piyyutim & Selichot taken from there, which are traditionally chanted together:

| | | | |
|-------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Yimloch/Ata Hu Elokeinu | 374-376 | 633 | 629-631 |
| Imru L'ei'lokim | 390-394 | 645-651 | 639-647 |
| Ma'aseh Elokeinu | 396 | 651-653 | 649-651 |
| Asher Ometz | 398 | 653 | 653 |
| Al Yisrael | 400 | 655 | 655 |
| Ha'aderet V'ha'emunah | 402 | 657 | 655-657 |
| L'Kel Orech Din | 404 | 661 | 659 |
| Z'chor/Shema Koleinu | 412-416 | 669-673 | 671-679 |
| Ki Anu Amecha | 418 | 675 | 681 |

| | | | |
|----------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Avinu Malkeinu | 436-438 | 695-699 | 711-715 |
|----------------|---------|---------|---------|

When davening at home we do not recite the tefillot associated with the Torah Reading. You are welcome at this point to spend a few moments reviewing the intricate description of the Yom Kippur Avodah, performed by Aaron, the Kohen Gadol (Vayikra 16:1-34).

| | | | |
|--|---------|---------|---------|
| If it is your custom to recite Yizkor, you may do so here. Yizkor does NOT require a minyan. | 470-476 | 729-733 | 757-763 |
|--|---------|---------|---------|

| | | | |
|--------|-----|-----|-----|
| Ashrei | 478 | 737 | 765 |
|--------|-----|-----|-----|

| | | | |
|--------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Musaf Amidah | 486-500 | 745-763 | 777-801 |
|--------------|---------|---------|---------|

Note: Although we do not repeat the Amidah when davening at home, you are welcome to recite the following piyyutim & Selichot taken from there, which are traditionally chanted together:

| | | | |
|----------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Imru Lei'lokim | 522-524 | 781-785 | 825-829 |
|----------------|---------|---------|---------|

| | | | |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Ma'aseh Elokeinu | 524-526 | 785-787 | 829-831 |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|

| | | | |
|-----------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Asher Eimatecha | 526-528 | 787-789 | 833-835 |
|-----------------|---------|---------|---------|

| | | | |
|-----------------|---------|---------|---------|
| U'netaneh Tokef | 530-534 | 789-793 | 843-853 |
|-----------------|---------|---------|---------|

| | | | |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| V'Khol Ma'aminim | 538-542 | 797-801 | 859-863 |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|

| | | | |
|------------|-----|-----|-----|
| V'ye'etayu | 544 | 801 | 865 |
|------------|-----|-----|-----|

| | | | |
|---------------|-----|-----|-----|
| Ochila La'Kel | 554 | 809 | 877 |
|---------------|-----|-----|-----|

| | | | |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|
| Avodah | 554-572 | 811-827 | 879-901 |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|

| | | | |
|--|---------|---------|---------|
| Selichot (includes the wrenching story of the Ten Martyrs, Asarah Harugei Malchut) | 584-596 | 837-849 | 927-947 |
|--|---------|---------|---------|

| | | | |
|--------------------|-----|-----|-----|
| Ha'yom Te'amtzeinu | 622 | 875 | 983 |
|--------------------|-----|-----|-----|

YOM KIPPUR DAY, MINCHA | MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28

| | ArtScroll | Bimbaum | Koren |
|--|------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Torah Reading: Mincha for Yom Kippur begins with the Torah reading, which requires a minyan. However, especially if you are taking a break at this point, it would be an excellent time to review the Haftarah containing the touching story of Yonah and the people of Nineveh. Also take note of the sweet coda provided by the prophet Micah. | 634-646 | 889-895 | 999-1009 |
| Amidah | 650-664 | 899-915 | 1015-1039 |

Note: Although we do not repeat the Amidah when davening at home, you are welcome to recite the following Selichot taken from there, which are traditionally chanted together:

| | | | |
|--------|-----------------|---------|--------------------|
| Z'chor | 676, 680-682 | 927-931 | 1059, 1063-1067 |
|--------|-----------------|---------|--------------------|

| | | | |
|---------------|-----|---------|------|
| Shema Koleinu | 682 | 931-933 | 1069 |
|---------------|-----|---------|------|

| | | | |
|---------------|-----|-----|------|
| Ki Anu Amecha | 682 | 933 | 1071 |
|---------------|-----|-----|------|

| | | | |
|----------------|-----|-----|------|
| Mi Kel Kamocha | 694 | 947 | 1089 |
|----------------|-----|-----|------|

| | | | |
|----------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Avinu Malkeinu | 700-704 | 695-699 | 1097-1101 |
|----------------|---------|---------|-----------|

YOM KIPPUR DAY, NE'ILAH | MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28

| | ArtScroll | Bimbaum | Koren |
|----------------------|------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Ashrei/U'va Le'Tzion | 706-710 | 957-961 | 1105-1111 |
| Amidah | 712-724 | 963-975 | 1113-1135 |

Note: When davening at home we do not repeat the Amidah. However, you are invited to recite the special Ne'ilah Selichot from that section. We do not recite the "13 Middot" (from "Kel Melech" through "U'nechaltanu") between each of the Selichot because it requires a minyan.

| | | | |
|--|-----|---------|-----------|
| P'tach Lanu (introduction to Selichot) | 736 | 987 | 1153 |
| Umi Ya'amod | 738 | 989-991 | 1157-1159 |
| Shilum Parim | 740 | 991 | 1161 |
| Merubim Tzorchai Amcha | 742 | 991 | 1163 |

| | ArtScroll | Bimbaum | Koren |
|--|------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Yadcha P'shote (short, 2 lines!) | 744 | 993 | 1165 |
| Z'chor Brit | 744 | 995 | 1167 |
| Enkat M'saldecha | 746 | 997 | 1169 |
| Ezkerah Elokim | 746 | 997-999 | 1169 |
| Rachem Na | 748 | 999 | 1175 |
| Ki Anu Amecha | 750 | 1001 | 1177 |
| Avinu Malkeinu | 758-762 | 1011-1015 | 1191-1195 |
| Shema/Baruch Shem/Hashem... | 762 | 1017 | 1197-1199 |
| MAARIV for the end of Yom Kippur | 766-782 | 1019-1035 | 1205-1233 |
| Aleinu/L'David Hashem Ori | 790-794 | 1037-1039, 45 | 1243-1249 |
| For Havdalah we start with Borei Pri Hagafen for the wine, (NO spices!) then Borei Me'orei Ha'esh for the candle – an EXISTING flame!—and conclude with Ha'mavdil... | 800-802 | 1041 | 1259 |

rosh hashanah



Torah Reading, Day 1

Koren, p. 467
Artsroll, p. 402

As we move through the Machzor, wherever we find ourselves this year, we are offered countless opportunities to connect with God, with community and with ourselves. The pieces in this section, including excerpted highlights from the Machzor, provide a chance to consider the meaning of the Machzor text, and challenge us to consider how our prayers connect to a larger spiritual framework. We thank Sefaria for the majority of the translations used, and Rabbi Ben Greenfield, YCT '17, Rabbi of Congregation Ahavas Israel, The Greenpoint Shul in Brooklyn, NY for his work on the guiding questions at the end of each section.

Today's Torah reading focuses on the joyous birth of Isaac and the tumultuous events that follow in the home of Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael and Isaac.

וַיְהִי כִּשְׁנֵי עָשָׂר חֹדֶשׁ וַיֵּלֶד אֶת־יִצְחָק לְאַבְרָהָם בְּנֵי לֵיקָנִיּוֹ לְמוֹעֵד אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהִים וַיִּקְרָא אַבְרָהָם אֶת־שֵׁם־בְּנוֹ הַנּוֹלָד־לוֹ אֲשֶׁר־יָלְדָה־לוֹ שָׂרָה יִצְחָק׃ וַיִּמַּל אַבְרָהָם אֶת־יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ בְּיָמֵי שְׁמֹנֶת יָמִים כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֱלֹהִים׃ בְּרֵאשִׁית כַּאֲ-א-ד

And Adonoy considered Sarah as He had said; and Adonoy did for Sarah as He had spoken. Sarah conceived and gave birth to Abraham's son in his old age, at the designated time that God had declared. And Abraham named the son that was born to him, to which Sarah had given birth, Isaac. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Genesis 21:1-4

INFINITE MEMORY

Rabbi Menashe East, YCT '05. Rabbi, Mt. Freedom Jewish Center, Randolph, NJ.

The Torah reading on the first day of the Rosh Hashanah balances two feelings about memory. 'God remembered Sarah,' opens the reading from Genesis 21. The promise from a year prior, in Genesis 18, that Sarah will mother a child—comes true. The dream of a future for Abraham and Sarah to build a family on the promised land—promises that God made to Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 12—comes true. God's memory is long and absolute. Memory is a prominent theme on Rosh

Hashanah we want to try to channel divine memory toward our own merit. Maybe if we could help God recall the grace of our grandparents and the faith of the forefathers, we will be signed and sealed in the good books.

God's memory is so completely reliable, though, that it can terrify us. That God remembers everything, means that God remembers everything. The second major theme in the portion tempers the terror of dispassionate, clinical recall – the cry of Ishmael. God sees a child,

parched and desperate. The angels beseech God to look to the future, to see the trauma Ishmael's offspring would visit upon Isaac's offspring, and let the boy die. God sees only right now—a weeping child and a defeated mother. A well appears, the water revives and Ishmael's line endures.

To the incontrovertible facts of the past, standing as exhibits of our character before the Supreme Judge, we are also witnessed as we are, right at this moment. In the heavenly court, who I am can conquer who I was.

» You are not the same person now as you were last Rosh Hashana. What are elements of self-change, over this year, that you can celebrate today?



TESHUVA: LOOKING FOR THE GOOD WITHIN

Rabba Claudia Marbach, YM '18. Director, Teen Beit Midrash, Hebrew College, Newton, MA.

Our Torah reading gives us a starting place to think about *teshuva*. Sarah and Hagar each see their situations only from their own perspectives and seem unable to see another perspective. As a result, they find it hard to compromise or accommodate each other, to find *chesed* for each other and themselves—the essence of *teshuva*.

Sarah characterizes herself as the victim, the one who is laughed at by others. She interprets the innocent playing of two boys together negatively. Hagar is also focused on her own misery, and cannot see the life-saving well right in front of her.

Neither takes responsibility for her part in their relationship. Each is stuck, and cannot see how to move on.

In Douglas Stone's book, *Difficult Conversations*, he says that people "are more likely to change if they think we understand them and if they feel heard and respected." In order to help others change, we need to listen and feel heard. The Kedushat Levi tells us that when we behave towards others with *chesed*, and give others the benefit of the doubt, we invite God to judge us and all Jews with mercy and *chesed*.

But that is only part of the process of *teshuva*—helping others change.

What is even harder is to look into ourselves, listen to our true thoughts and feelings and then forgive and change ourselves. Rav Yehuda Amital wrote, "Thinking about *teshuva*... to change a personal trait, to chart a different course—one must hew deeply into oneself." (*When God Is Near*). Sometimes God helps by saying "Look! The well is over there!" At other times, we have to find that voice within ourselves. Rosh Hashanah is the time to go deep inside ourselves, listen, and find our own good voices, and act with generosity to ourselves.

- » Consider a harmful trait or behavior in yourself that you hope to change over these weeks.
- » What in that harmful trait or behavior is nonetheless reasonable, understandable, and coming from a good place?



Haftarah, Day 1

Koren, p. 477
Artscroll, p. 416

Today's Haftarah echoes the sadness of Sarah in the voice of Hannah, who also experienced the pain of childlessness. Like Sarah, Hannah's prayers are answered, and her son becomes a great prophet and leader of the Jewish people.

וְחִנָּה הָיָא מְדַבֵּרַת עַל־לִבָּהּ רַק שִׁפְתֶיהָ נִעוּת
וְקוֹלָהּ לֹא יִשְׁמָע וַיַּחְשְׁבָה עָלֶיהָ לְשִׁכְרָה:

Now Hannah was praying in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice could not be heard. So Eli thought she was drunk.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ עַל־יְדֵמֶתִי תִשְׁתַּכְרִין הֲסִירִי אֶת־
יַיִנְךָ מֵעַלֶיךָ:

Eli said to her, "How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Sober up!"

וַיַּעַן חִנָּה וַתֹּאמֶר לֹא אֲדָנִי אֲשֶׁה קִשְׁת־רוּחַ אֲנֹכִי
וַיַּיִן וְשִׁכָר לֹא שָׁתִיתִי וְאֲשִׁפֶּה אֶת־נַפְשִׁי לִפְנֵי
יְהוָה:

And Hannah replied, "Oh no, my lord! I am a very unhappy woman. I have drunk no wine or other strong drink, but I have been pouring out my heart to the Lord.

אַל־תִּתֵּן אֶת־אֲמָתְךָ לִפְנֵי בַת־בְּלִיעַל כִּי־מֵרֹב שִׁיחִי
וְכַעֲסִי דִבַּרְתִּי עַד־הֵנָּה:

Do not take your maidservant for a worthless woman; I have only been speaking all this time out of my great anguish and distress."

וַיֵּעַן עָלֶיהָ וַיֹּאמֶר לָכִי לְשָׁלוֹם וְאֵלֶיהָ יִשְׂרָאֵל יִתֵּן
אֶת־שְׁלֹתֶךָ אֲשֶׁר שָׁאַלְתְּ מֵעִמוֹ:

"Then go in peace," said Eli, "and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of Him."

PRAYING LIKE OUR LIVES DEPEND ON IT

Rabbi Yonah Berman, YCT '07. Mashgiach, Director of Alumni Engagement, and Chair of Professional Rabbinics, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Rabbinical School.

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur represent a time of increased intensity in our spiritual focus in the context of increased communal engagement. We spend countless hours in our synagogues, filling the air with the machzor's words and the sounds of our voices, as we pray and sing together.

Yet these liturgical and physical structures, and the proscribed words that go along with them, often limit another mode of prayer—our own personal expression to God of what is actually in our hearts and on our minds as we enter the new year. Perhaps we feel as though our own needs are less important than those of the community, or perhaps we do not feel that we have the license to deviate from the words gifted to us by the authors of the machzor. Whatever the reason, though, it is too easy for us to arrive at the end of

Yom Kippur without having actually taken the time to say the words that can truly bring us closest to God—the words that actually represent that which we are thinking and feeling and need to be saying at this time.

Hannah's prayer reminds us not to be embarrassed as we approach God. In her experience of wanting a child, described in our Haftarah, she opens up to God in her own way—quietly, yet with emotion and meaning, composing her own personal prayer with her own words. And while those around her are confused by this, it is obvious that she catches the attention of God, for not only are her prayers answered, but her quiet, deliberate tone becomes the model of private tefilah that we continue to emulate thousands of years later.

As we contemplate our own journey of prayer during these High and Holy Days, let us continue to

focus on that which only we know that we need to pray for, and let us find the time and the words to express those thoughts to God, even as we continue to sing and pray with those around us.

As we do, let us contemplate and find inspiration now in the words that will help us usher out Yom Kippur nine days from now:

יְהִי רְצוֹן לְפָנֶיךָ שׁוֹמֵעַ קוֹל
בְּכִיּוֹת. שְׁתַּשִּׁים דְּמֵעוֹתֵינוּ
בְּנֹאדְךָ לַיהוָה. וְתַצִּילֵנוּ
מִכָּל גְּזֵרוֹת אֲכַזְרִיוֹת. כִּי
לָךְ לְבַד עֵינֵינוּ תִּלְוִיּוֹת.

May it be Your will, You Who hears the voice of weeping, that You place our tears in Your skin-flask [of tears] for preservation; and save us from all cruel decrees, for to You alone do our eyes focus.

» What are you most wishful for today?

Torah Reading, Day 2

Koren, p. 737
Artscroll, p. 402

Following on yesterday's reading, we continue to follow the story of Isaac, as he becomes the inheritor of the legacy of Abraham and Sarah.

וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וְהָאֱלֹהִים נִסָּה אֶת אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הִנְנִי וַיֹּאמֶר קַח־נָא אֶת־בְּנֶךָ אֶת־יִחִידְךָ אֲשֶׁר־אָהַבְתָּ אֶת־יִצְחָק וְלֶךְ־לְךָ אֶל־אֶרֶץ הַמֹּרְיָה וְהַעֲלֵהוּ שָׁם לְעֹלָה עַל אֶחָד הַהָרִים אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֵלֶיךָ: וַיִּשְׁכַּם אַבְרָהָם בַּבֹּקֶר וַיַּחְבֵּשׁ אֶת־חֲמֹרוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־שְׁנֵי נַעֲרָיו אֹתוֹ וְאֵת יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ וַיִּבְקַע עֵצִי עָלָה וַיִּקֶּם וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־אָמַר־לּוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים: בְּרֵאשִׁית כַּב:א-ג

Some time afterward, God put Abraham to the test. He said to him, "Abraham," and he answered, "Here I am." And He said, "Take your son, your favored one, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the heights that I will point out to you." So early next morning, Abraham saddled his ass and took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. He split the wood for the burnt offering, and he set out for the place of which God had told him. Genesis 22:1-3

THE BEAUTY IS IN THE DETAILS

Rabbanit Bracha Jaffe, YM '17. Associate Rabba, Hebrew Institute of Riverdale—The Bayit, Riverdale, NY.

The Torah portion for the second day of Rosh Hashanah is among the most famous and perplexing passages known as the Binding of Isaac. When a story is so well-known, it is easy to miss some of the smaller details.

This phrase appears at the very beginning of the passage in Genesis 22:1:

וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה
וְהָאֱלֹהִים נִסָּה אֶת־אַבְרָהָם...

"And it happened after these things that God tested Abraham..."

At the end of the passage, after Abraham has passed the test, the same phrase appears in Genesis 22:20 with one tiny difference:

וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה
וַיֵּיגַד לְאַבְרָהָם...

And it happened after these things that it was told to Abraham..."

The tiny letter Yud (י) is added to the word אַחֲרֵי—after—turning it into אַחֲרָיו which also means after. In fact, we would be hard-pressed to find a compelling difference between אַחֲרֵי and אַחֲרָיו. Yet the Torah found it important to add the Yud.

What can we learn from this tiny letter? I would like to suggest the following: perhaps the Yud represents God (Rashi, Bamidbar 13:16).

The Zohar teaches us that there was a transformation in Abraham. When the angel calls to him to stay

his hand, the angel says: אַבְרָהָם | אַבְרָהָם with a p'sik, a pause in between. This represents two versions of Abraham: before the test and after the test. The Zohar explains that the Abraham who passed God's test was now whole and complete.

Perhaps the Yud that was added to אַחֲרֵי to create אַחֲרָיו signifies that God was with Abraham more deeply after the test than before the test.

Wherever we begin our spiritual journeys this Rosh Hashanah, may we merit to feel God's presence more deeply in our lives.

» In what moments from this past year did you most feel God's absence?

» In what roles for this coming year do you most hope to feel God's presence?



FINDING FAITH

Rabbi Aryeh Leifert, YCT '06. Founder, Walking Israel Tours, Israel.

Abraham and Isaac have descended from Mt. Moriah, having undergone one of the most difficult tests anyone has ever been faced with. Abraham was ready to personally slay his beloved son on God's command, and Isaac was ready to sacrifice his life for the same reason. Their descent from the mountain would have been a fitting climactic end to the story.

Instead, the story ends with a genealogical list of his brother Nahor's descendants which, aside from mentioning the future Matriarch, Rebecca, has nothing to do with the previous story.

Or does it?

According to Rabbi Joseph B.

Soloveitchik, Abraham's being informed, right after the Binding of Isaac, that his brother, Nahor, had been blessed with twelve children, was an additional part of his test from God. For years, Abraham and Sarah had fastidiously clung to the God Who promised that they would have a child who would inherit the Land of Israel, and carry on their legacy. No doubt, they were subjected to mocking from neighbors (and possibly also from their relative, Lot), that they had placed all their eggs in the wrong basket. Yet they maintained their faith in God.

And then, after he was stopped at the last moment from personally slaughtering his beloved Isaac,

Abraham finds out that his idol-worshipping brother, Nahor, has been cranking out kids like they're going out of style! How frustrated Abraham must have been! "Why stay with this God?" he might have thought. "Nahor stuck with the traditional gods, and things are working out pretty well for him!"

Abraham could have easily lost his faith, says Rav Soloveitchik. But he clung to God, trusting Him that while life might be more challenging for him than for Nahor, in the end, it would be a more fulfilling life for him, and more consequential for mankind.

» As Jews, we are not promised an easy life, but we are mandated to live a righteous life. Though this will be a hard year for many, what is an area in your life that you can afford to have less ease, and create more righteousness?

Haftarah, Day 2

Koren, p. 745
Artscroll, p. 416

Today's Haftarah is one of hope as we contemplate both the destruction and the rebirth of the Jewish people and the Land of Israel.

הִבֵּן יִקִּיר לִי אֶפְרַיִם אִם יֶלֶד שֶׁשָּׂוִעִים כִּי־מִדֵּי
דְּבָרֵי בּוֹ זָכַר אֶזְכְּרֵנּוּ עוֹד עַל־כֵּן הָמוּ מֵעִי לוֹ רַחֵם
אֲרַחֲמֵנוּ נְאֻם־יְהוָה: ירמיהו לא:ט

Ephraim is a precious son to Me; a child in whom I delight. For when I speak of him, I remember him more; therefore I long for him and shall surely have compassion on him, said the Lord. Jeremiah 31:19

THE BEAUTY IS IN THE DETAILS

Rabbi Ezra Seligsohn, YCT '17. Associate Rabbi, Hebrew Institute of Riverdale—The Bayit, Riverdale, NY.

This year, one Hebrew root protrudes from the second day's Haftarah—רחק—far. In 31:2, Hashem appears to Jeremiah "מרחק" from afar. Later in verse 31:9, "The words of Hashem will be heard by the nations and spread to far-off islands." Distance so deeply characterizes our human condition this year—physically and socially distant from one another, the far-away solutions—perhaps in a few months, or perhaps in a few years, the gap between how we expected to live, and how we are living. The

distance from our communities, from our shuls. That it is likely for you to be reading this very paragraph in isolation, and not from a room packed with adults and children, garbed in white, standing shoulder to shoulder.

One who reads Jeremiah 31 will find solace and hope for this condition. If in verse 2, God is afar—distant, defamiliarized, needing to overcome a gap to interact with Jeremiah, by verse 9, God's word has proved traversing—reaching people in far-away lands—through ancient equivalents of

WhatsApp and Zoom. And with these bridges—to the word of God and to the words of one another, we can begin to come close. Through Jeremiah's metaphors: the shepherd's spread-out flock gathers again, the garden being prepared for sowing, a mother whose salty tears continue to drip down her cheeks —God signals that the love and connection between God and the Jewish people is ever-present, and this love's palpability will be felt once again, ever soon.

» To whom have you grown closer, in this time of distance?

» What in you made that possible?

Day 1, A Day Without Shofar

As we do not sound the shofar on Shabbat, we are given the opportunity to remember the blasts we have heard in the past as we look forward to tomorrow, when we will finally hear the first shofar sounds of 5781.

דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּאֶחָד
לַחֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם שַׁבָּתוֹן זָכוֹן תְּרוּעָה מִקְרָא
קֹדֶשׁ: וַיְקַרֵּא כַגִּיד

Speak to the Israelite people thus: In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe complete rest, a sacred occasion commemorated with loud blasts. Leviticus 23:24

MISSING THE SOUND

Rabbi Dr. Jon Kelsen, Dean, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Rabbinical School.

While in Bamidbar 29:1 the Torah refers to a "Yom Teruah," which we understand to mean a 'Day of Blowing [the shofar]; in Vayikra 23:24, the day is called 'Shabbaton, Zichron Teruah,'— A day of rest, Zichron Teruah! Zichron comes from the root meaning "memory"—but what does memory have to do with the teruah blast? According to one opinion (Talmud Rosh Hashanah 29b), Vayikra is referring to a day such as today—when Rosh Hashanah falls out on Shabbat. On such a day, we do not actually blow the shofar, but rather (as per the Sifra and Talmud Rosh Hashanah 32)

make mention of (remember) it through the recitation of the verses of Zichronot and Shofarot in our tefilot. Among other functions, these verses remind God of the Jewish people's commitment to God, and of God's covenant with the Jewish people.

Taking my cue from a comment by R' Samson Raphael Hirsch (ad locum), I would add that the shofar is meant to spark not just God's memory, but our own memory as well. It is a call to recall the covenant and our role in fulfilling it. It calls us to remember our highest ideals and possible selves, our vision for moral, spiritual, religious aspiration,

so easily forgotten in the winds of our pessimism, or anxieties, or guilt, or in the day to day responsibilities of our lives. Who has time to remember? To dream, and to believe?

This year, due to the pandemic, there are some who will not hear the shofar at all, even on the second day (Sunday); for them, the entire experience of shofar this year will be one of *zichron teruah*. Whether that is true of you or not, we are all challenged by the charge of *zichron teruah* to ask: What do I need to remember today, on Yom Ha'zickaron?

» You have nothing else to do today, except remember. It's booked, it's on your calendar. Start now.



ZICHRON TERUAH: FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION

Rabbi Gabe Kretzmer Seed, YCT '17. Jewish Chaplain, NYC Department of Corrections.

R. Levi bar Lahma said: One verse says, "a solemn rest, a remembrance of blast of horns" (zikhron teruah; Vayikra 23:24) while another verse says, "it is a day of blowing the horn unto you!" (Yom Teruah; Bamidbar 29:1). [Yet] there is no contradiction, as one refers to a festival which falls on Sabbath and the other to a festival which falls on a weekday.

—Talmud, Rosh Hashanah, 29b

On a strictly halakhic level, the gemara concludes that the reason that we do not blow the shofar on Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat is due to a concern that one might come to carry it in the public domain and thus violate the sanctity of Shabbat on a biblical level. Yet the above teaching, in finding a basis for not blowing shofar on Shabbat is the fact that the Torah describes Rosh Hashanah as *zikhron teruah*, still has deep meaning for us. It is all the more meaningful for us this year, when the first day of Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat and we find ourselves in the midst of a pandemic, as well as

social, economic, and climate crises.

This year, on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, we will describe the day as *zikhron teruah*, "a remembrance of blast of horns," perhaps a dozen times in kiddush and tefilah. But what does this really mean? In Bamidbar 10:9-10, the Torah describes the blowing of horns (in that case, trumpets) in times of war and celebration as a means to be remembered before God. Based on the teaching of Rabbi Levi bar Lahma, our invoking *zikhron teruah* on Shabbat is just as much a fulfillment of the core mitzvah of the holiday as our blowing the shofar on the second day will be. Rabbi Tamir Granot, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Orot Shaul, asks an important question: Why should we need to pray, both through *zikhron teruah* and blowing the shofar, that God remembers us? If God indeed knows all, then is this prayer and blowing not redundant? Rav Granot explains that while God knows all, asking God to remember us is asking God to take us and our deepest needs, hopes and prayers from the realm of latent awareness to active, covenantal remembrance.

Sadly, this pandemic has exposed

or worsened many preexisting crises in our society, including lack of access to affordable healthcare, poverty, homelessness, and racial and criminal justice. For many, it has become a wake-up call to take action on issues which have been plaguing our country for too long, to bring them from latent awareness to action. As a prison chaplain, I have learned over the past few years of the brokenness of our country's criminal justice and mental health systems, especially in the fact that the three largest treatment facilities are the Los Angeles, Chicago and New York City jails. And on this day of *zikhron teruah*, on the top of my mind will be the individuals I serve, many of whom have been incarcerated for months longer than expected due to courts being closed and trials put on hold due to COVID-19.

As we ask God to remember us by recalling the sounding of the shofar on this Shabbat and Rosh Hashanah, may we also be moved to act as God's partners and bring some of our society's crises from latent awareness to action.

» Take a political cause you find pressing in this time. What can you do this week to move it a small step forward?

Day 2, Shofar

Koren, p. 757
Artscroll, p. 432

Today, we finally have the opportunity to sound the shofar, an act which is a central mitzvah of Rosh Hashanah.

אַשְׁרֵי הָעַם יוֹדְעֵי תְרוּעָה. יְהוָה בְּאוֹר פְּנֵיהֶם
יְהַלְכוּ: Fortunate is the people that understand the call of teruah, Lord, in the light of Your Presence, they walk.

בְּשִׂמְךָ יִגִּילוּ כָּל הַיּוֹם, וּבְצַדִּיקְתְּךָ יִרְוּמוּ: In Your Name they exult all the day and through Your righteousness, they are uplifted.

כִּי תִפְאֶרֶת עֲזָמוֹ אַתָּה, וּבְרָצוֹנְךָ תְרוּם קַרְנֵנוּ: For the glory of their might is You, and through Your favor, our horn is exalted.

אַשְׁרֵי יוֹשְׁבֵי בֵיתְךָ עוֹד יְהַלְלוּךָ סְלָה: Fortunate are those who dwell in Your house; may they continue to praise You, Selah.

MEANING OF A MASKED SHOFAR

Rabbi Uri Topolosky, YCT'05. Rabbi, Kehilat Pardes – The Rock Creek Synagogue, Rockville, MD. Rav HaKehilah, Melvin J. Berman Hebrew Academy, Rockville, MD.

A picture went viral recently of our dear friend, Rabbi Jason Weiner, holding a shofar banded with a mask. Rabbi Weiner serves as the Director of Spiritual Care at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, and has written many important works on Jewish law and medicine, and now, his holy masked shofar has touched a deep chord.

Some have cautioned that the shofar blast could pose a risk of spreading germs, and thus suggestions have been made to cover the opening with a mask—I've even heard to try a coffee filter! Our synagogue's own *ba'al tokei'ah*, Jamie, tested it out by securing a mask to his shofar with a rubber band. He reported the shofar's pitch being raised just by a few steps,

and that he would definitely need more breath support, but that it still sounded like a shofar. This is in line with what one leading rabbi ruled, that there is no halakha forbidding a *hefsek* (interruption) of the sound, nor making the sound quieter. The only concern would be if something really changes the sound, and in his opinion, masks do not change the sound.

So now we know that we can blow a masked shofar, but such a shofar is a stark image of our new normal.

My dear friend Gedalia, who is deaf, delivered a moving *derasha* this summer on the subject of masks. While many in the deaf community have faced increased communication challenges due to COVID guidelines, Gedalia also chose to highlight the benefits of mask wearing. He taught,

“When we see people wearing masks, we see that the masks are actually just superficial. We see that we need to take the masks off to see that person for who they really are. To see them for their truth. We need not be led by falsehoods that we might believe about people, but instead learn about what is behind their many masks—to learn more about the individual, their identity, and their background.”

The image of a masked shofar reminds us that its sound comes from a far deeper place, and that those sounds—when they come, should stir us to see beyond the masks of superficiality, and help us realize the beauty that connects us all.

» This has been a year of putting on many masks. What is a mask that, this year, you are ready to take off?



U'netaneh Tokef

Koren, p. 809
Artscroll, p. 538

A relatively modern addition to the repetition of the Musaf Amidah, this piece reflects the profound emotions we feel as we contemplate the gravity of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה יִכְתְּבוּן וּבְיוֹם צוֹם כְּפוּר יִחְתְּמוּן.
כְּמָה יַעֲבְרוּן. וְכְמָה יִבְרָאוּן. מִי יַחֲיֶה. וּמִי יָמוּת.
מִי בְּקֶצֶו. וּמִי לֹא בְּקֶצֶו. מִי בְּמַיִם. וּמִי בְּאֵשׁ. מִי
בְּחָרֶב. וּמִי בַחֲיָה. מִי בְרֶעֶב. וּמִי בְצָמָא. מִי בְרֵעַשׁ.
וּמִי בַמַּגָּפָה. מִי בַחֲנִיקָה וּמִי בְסָקִילָה. מִי יָנוּחַ.
וּמִי יָנוּעַ. מִי יִשְׁקֵט. וּמִי יִטְרֹף. מִי יִשְׁלֹו. וּמִי
יִתְיַסֵּר. מִי יִעֲנִי. וּמִי יַעֲשֶׂר. מִי יִשְׁפֹּל. וּמִי יָרוּם:

On Rosh Hashanah their decree is inscribed, and on Yom Kippur it is sealed, how many will pass away and how many will be created, who will live and who will die; who will come to his timely end, and who to an untimely end; who will perish by fire and who by water; who by the sword and who by beast; who by hunger and who by thirst; who by earthquake and who by the plague; who by strangling and who by stoning; who will be at rest and who will wander about; who will have serenity and who will be confused; who will be tranquil and who will be tormented; who will become poor and who will become wealthy; who will be brought to a low state and who will be uplifted.

וּתְשׁוּבָה וּתְפִלָּה וְצְדָקָה מְעַבְרִין אֶת רוּעַ הַגְּזֵרָה:

But repentance, and prayer and charity annul the evil decree.

SEEKING PERSPECTIVE IN MOMENTS OF PAIN

Rabbi Hyim Shafner, Rabbi, Keshet Israel Synagogue, Washington, DC.

Many of us assume that, “who will live and who will die,” is the main theme of the Yamim Noraim. But it is incorrect to see the High Holidays and its liturgy through this lens. The vast majority of the High Holiday liturgy focuses on God’s malchut (the Divine Sovereignty), and our teshuvah (repentance), of which the long viduy (confession), is an integral part. Nevertheless, the U’netaneh Tokef prayer looms so large that for many people it colors all of the liturgy in its theological palette.

We do not live in the world which

U’netaneh Tokef depicts many wicked people who do not pray, repent, or give charity, live to see another year, and many righteous people suffer and die each year; in fact, the Talmud states that the reward for mitzvot is not in this world. U’netaneh Tokef provides the fantasy that if only we pray hard enough this Yom Kippur, we will have a good year, but I think making it central does Judaism and ourselves a disservice by erasing the chiaroscuro of life, and oversimplifying our thoughtful religion.

This year, when we are surrounded

by so much unnecessary suffering from the virus, I would encourage us to take U’netaneh Tokef for what it is, one early medieval prayer. Let us focus on the true central themes of Yom Kippur, God’s sovereignty and doing teshuvah. Instead of selfishly crying out during U’netaneh Tokef in the hopes for an easy, healthy, and prosperous year, let us focus on how we can do teshuvah and a better job of helping others and the world during this crisis. This will make for a much more genuine and faithful High Holiday experience.

» If you knew this year would go well—nothing to fear, no anxiety holding you back, no financial or medical pressure—how would you resolve to live this year?

Malchuyot

Koren, p. 521
Artsroll, p. 450

In Malchuyot, the first of the three middle sections of Musaf, we establish that God is King of the Universe, and resides above the corporeal limitations of time and space.

אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ. מְלוֹךְ עַל כָּל הָעוֹלָם כְּלוּ
בְּכַבֹּדְךָ וְהַנְּשָׂא עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ בִּיקְרָךְ וְהוֹפֵעַ בְּהַדָּר
גָּאוֹן עֶזְךָ עַל כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֶל אֶרֶץ. וַיֵּדַע כָּל פֶּעִיל
כִּי אַתָּה פְּעַלְתּוֹ וַיִּבִין כָּל יֶצֶר כִּי אַתָּה יִצְרְתּוּ
וַיֹּאמֶר כָּל אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁמָה בְּאִפּוֹ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
מֶלֶךְ וּמַלְכוּתוֹ בְּכֹל מְשָׁלָה.

Our God and God of our fathers, reign over the entire world with Your glory, and be uplifted over all the earth with Your honor, and appear in the splendor of Your majestic might over all who dwell in the inhabited world of Your earth; so everything that has been made will know that You have made it, and it will be understood by everything that was formed that You have formed it. And they will say everyone who has breath in his nostrils, "Adonoy, God of Yisrael is King and His Kingship rules over all!"

THE MEANINGS OF KINGSHIP

Rabbanit Gloria Nusbacher, YM '20.

The three central blessings of the Rosh Hashanah Musaf Amidah reflect the three key themes of the holiday. These blessings share a common structure—an introduction, a set of ten verses and a concluding blessing. In each of these blessings, the ten verses also share a common structure—the first three are from the Torah, the next three are from the Ketuvim, specifically Psalms, followed by three from the Nevi'im with a concluding verse from the Torah.

The first of these three central blessings is that of Malchuyot, God's kingship. The introduction to the blessing is the prayer of Aleinu, which was originally recited only on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and was later incorporated into our daily prayers. The prayer begins by acknowledging our belief in God as Master of all and Creator of the world, and concludes with the hope and prayer that in the future all people will recognize God as King.

The last line of Aleinu as presented in the machzor serves as the first of the three verses from the Torah.

It is the statement from the end of the Song of the Sea, that "the Lord will reign for ever and ever" (Shemot 15:18), which was the first proclamation of God's kingship by the Israelite nation. The second verse (Bamidbar 23:21) comes from one of the blessings delivered by Bilaam, in which he refers to God as King of the Jewish people. The third verse (Devarim 33:5) comes from V'Zot Habrachah, in which Moses says that "He [God] became King in Yeshurun [Israel] when the heads of the people were assembled, the tribes of Israel together"—presumably a reference to the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. All three of these verses relate to God as king of the Jewish people.

By contrast, the verses chosen from the Psalms all speak of God as King from a universalist point of view:

"Kingship is the Lord's, and He rules the nations." —Psalms 22:29

"The Lord is King; He is robed in grandeur; The Lord is robed;

He is girded with strength; The world stands firm; it cannot be shaken." —Psalms 93:1

"O gates, lift up your heads! Lift them up, you everlasting doors, So the King of glory may come in! Who is the King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory!" —Psalms 24:9

Of the verses quoted from the Nevi'im, the first two (Yeshayahu 44:6 and Ovadiah 1:21) refer to God as King of Israel, while the third verse (Zecharia 14:9), which is the verse with which we conclude the daily Aleinu prayer, expressly refers to a future time in which God will be King over all the earth. The tenth and final verse is the verse of Shema Yisrael (Devarim 6:4), which is the fundamental statement of our acceptance of God's kingship. The conclusion of the blessing of Malchuyot longs for a time when God rules over the world and all living things acknowledge God as king.

» If the rest of the world understood God the way the Jewish people do, this year would be more _____.

» If you understood God the way the Jewish people do, this year would be more _____.



MALCHUYOT: UPROOTING THE FOUNDATIONS OF SIN

Rabbi Dr. Eli Yoggev, YCT '17. Associate Rabbi, Beth Tfiloh Congregation, Baltimore, MD.

The High Holy Days are all about mending our ways and atoning for our sins. To be sure, this is the central theme of the Yom Kippur service. We recite viduy (the confession), from morning until evening. That is why it is so fascinating that on Rosh Hashanah we make no mention of sin. We actually distance ourselves from it—to the point that we do not eat walnuts on this day because they share the same Hebrew numerical value as sin (און)! Instead, we focus on Hashem's kingship. We chant Avinu Malkeinu, our Father our King; we coronate the King with our shofars; we recite the central prayer section

before us: Malchuyot, "kingship."

How do we make sense of all of this? Rabbi Avigdor Nebenzal explains that there are two ways to go about demolishing a building in order to rebuild it once more. The first is to go floor by floor until the building is razed to the ground. The second is to begin from the foundations. Once they are uprooted, the rest of the building follows suit. The second method takes more work initially, but makes it easier, down the road, to bring down the upper floors.

The same goes, Rabbi Neventzhal explains, for the process of removing sin. On Rosh Hashanah, we take the

second path. Instead of focusing on each "floor," each individual sin, we go straight to the "foundations" of sin. Why do we commit transgressions? Because we forget there is a supreme God who knows what is best for us. We forget the King! This is why we omit the mention of sin during Rosh Hashanah. We want to uproot sin on a foundational level by coronating Hashem as King. Through this, we pave the way for us to knock on our hearts on Yom Kippur and witness the rest of the "building" come tumbling down! We then begin to rebuild from an even higher spiritual place!

- » Call to mind a sin, mistake, or regret from this past year.
- » Where in you or your story is it's deeper foundation?
- » What is the difficult trait or pattern behind it?



Zichronot

Koren, p. 533
Artscroll, p. 458

The middle of the three middle sections of Musaf, Zichronot speaks to the unique qualities of God's memory, and how that memory now relates to our hope for a good year ahead.

אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו זכרנו בזכרון טוב לפניך
 ופקדנו בפקדת ישועה ורחמים משמי שמי קדם
 וזכר לנו יהוה אלהינו את הברית ואת החסד
 ואת השבועה אשר נשבעת לאברהם אבינו בהר
 המוריה ותראה לפניך עקדה שעקד אברהם
 אבינו את יצחק בנו על גבי המזבח וכבש רחמי
 לעשות רצונך בלבב שלם כן יכבשו רחמיך את
 כעסך מעלינו ובטובך הגדול ישוב חרון אפך
 מעמך ומעריך ומארצך ומנחלתך. וקיים לנו יהוה
 אלהינו את הדבר שהבטחתנו בתורתך על ידי
 משה עבדך מפי כבודך כאמור: וזכרתי להם
 ברית ראשנים אשר הוצאתי אותם מארץ מצרים
 לעיני הגוים להיות להם לאלהים אני יהוה: כי
 זוכר כל הנשכחות אתה הוא מעולם ואין שכחה
 לפני כסא כבודך. ועקדת יצחק לזרעו (של
 יעקב) היום ברחמים תזכור: ברוך אתה יהוה זוכר
 הברית:

Our God and God of our fathers remember us favorably before You and be mindful of us for deliverance and compassion from the eternal high heavens. Remember in our behalf, Adonoy, our God, the covenant, the kindness and the oath which You swore to our father Abraham on Mount Moriah, and let there appear before You the binding with which our father Abraham bound his son Isaac upon the altar, and how he suppressed his compassion to do Your will with a whole heart; so may Your compassion suppress Your anger against us, and in Your great goodness turn Your fierce anger away from Your people, and from Your city, from Your land, and from Your territorial heritage. And fulfill for us Lord, our God the promise You made in Your Torah, through Your servant, Moses, from the mouth of Your glory, as it is said: "I will remember for them the covenant with their forefathers whom I took out of the land of Egypt, before the eyes of the nations, to be their God; I am the Lord." For He Who remembers all forgotten things from eternity, are You, and there is no forgetfulness before the Throne of Your Glory; and the binding of Isaac—on behalf of his descendants— may You remember it today with compassion. Blessed are You Lord, Who remembers the covenant.



GOD, THE UNIQUE REMEMBERER

Rabbi Nissan Antine, YCT '06. Senior Rabbi, Beth Sholom Congregation and Talmud Torah, Potomac, MD.

The second major theme of Rosh Hashanah Musaf is Zichronot, remembrances. This section of the Musaf speaks to the idea that Rosh Hashanah is Yom HaDin—Judgment Day. The introductory paragraph of this section is nothing short of frightening. God is not a judge of flesh and blood who does not really know what happened. “God remembers everything...all secrets are known to God... Every deed, accomplishment and thought are brought before God to be judged.”

In a court with judges of flesh and blood, lawyers spend most of their time making sure that any incriminating evidence is deemed inadmissible, and thus not brought forth. Yet on Rosh Hashanah, God already knows everything. How scary!

So after reading the introductory

paragraph, the reader is scared and full of despair, for how will they be judged favorably when the Judge on Rosh Hashanah knows everything?

But then we turn to the verses quoted to demonstrate the concept of Zichronot. We talk about how God remembered Noah. We remember that after the flood, the all-knowing (and remembering) God saw the rainbow and said, “I know people so well, and I know that they were created with bad inside of them” (לב האדם רע מנעוריו). All of a sudden, this all-knowing God isn't as scary, because God not only knows our sins, but what causes us to be sinful. We also learn about how God remembers the covenant with our Patriarchs and Matriarchs and how we, as a young lover of God, followed Him into the wilderness. And this all-knowing God

becomes yet softer and more loving.

So the Zichronot section starts with a terrifying image of an all-knowing and remembering God who is our judge. A judge who knows every one of our sinful actions and thoughts. But by the end of the section, we realize that this kind of all-knowing God is the best possible judge, because it is a judge who knows our struggles and challenges and also remembers when we tried to do the right thing.

I like to think about this all-knowing judge when I think about the process of judging ourselves. True, we cannot “forget” what we have done wrong. But we also know the larger context, where we have succeeded and what we can do to become better. Let us all use the next section of the Musaf to begin this process.

- » Consider a moment from this year for which you seek forgiveness and closure.
- » What do you wish others would finally forgot about it?
- » What do you wish others understood and knew about you in that moment?

Shofarot

Koren, p. 539
Artsroll, p. 462

The final of the three middle sections of Musaf, Shofarot focuses on the many meanings of the shofar by bringing numerous textual references from the Bible.

אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ תִקַּע בְּשׁוֹפָר גָּדוֹל
לְחִירוֹתֵנוּ וְשֵׂא נֵס לְקִבְץ גְּלוּיֹתֵינוּ וְקִרְב פְּזוּרֵינוּ
מִבֵּין הַגּוֹיִם וְנִפְּוֹצוֹתֵינוּ כְּנֵס מִיְרֵכְתִי אֶרֶץ וְהִבֵּאתֵנוּ
לְצִיּוֹן עִירְךָ בְּרִנָּה וְלִירוּשָׁלַם בֵּית מִקְדָּשְׁךָ בְּשִׂמְחַת
עוֹלָם וְשֵׁם נַעֲשֶׂה לְפָנֶיךָ אֶת קַרְבָּנוֹת חוּבוֹתֵינוּ
כַּמִּצְוָה עָלֵינוּ בְּתוֹרָתְךָ עַל יְדֵי מֹשֶׁה עַבְדְּךָ מִפִּי
כְּבוֹדְךָ כְּאָמֹר: וּבְיוֹם שִׂמְחַתְכֶם וּבְמוֹעֲדֵיכֶם
וּבְרָאשֵׁי חֲדָשֵׁיכֶם וּתְקַעְתֶּם בַּחֲצָצְרֹת עַל עַלְתֵיכֶם
וְעַל זְבַחֵי שְׁלָמֵיכֶם וְהָיוּ לָכֶם לְזִכְרוֹן לְפָנַי
אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: כִּי אִתָּה שׁוֹמֵעַ קוֹל
שׁוֹפָר וּמֵאֲזִין תְּרוּעָה וְאִין דּוֹמָה לָךְ: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה
יְהוָה שׁוֹמֵעַ קוֹל תְּרוּעַת עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרַחֲמִים:

Our God and God of our fathers, sound a great shofar for our liberty and raise a banner to gather our exiles. And bring near our scattered people from among the nations, and gather our dispersed from the ends of [the] earth. Bring us to Zion, Your city, with joyous song—to Jerusalem, House of Your Sanctuary, with eternal joy. And there we will offer before You our obligatory sacrifices, as we were commanded in Your Torah, through the hands of Moses, Your servant, from the mouth of Your glory, as it is said: "And on the day of your rejoicing, and on your appointed festivals, and on your Rosh Chodesh days, you will sound the trumpets over your burnt-offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings, and they will be a memorial for you before your God; I am the Lord, your God." For You hear the sound of shofar, and listen to the teruah; and there is none like You. Blessed are You, Lord, Who hears the sound of the teruah of His people, Israel, with compassion.



TO BE MOVED BY A SOUND

Rabbi Joel Dinin, YCT '15. Rabbi, The Lake Park Synagogue, Milwaukee, WI.

The piercing cry of the shofar startles us with its intensity. But in that moment, as the shofar's blast fills us with awe, it can also inspire us and awaken our souls. It can even make us become more aware of Hashem, and drive us to improve ourselves for the year ahead. The very notion of a "trumpet" carrying so much meaning might seem odd, but only to those unfamiliar with its powerful sound. To those who have experienced or know the meaning of the shofar's "tekiah", it is clear that this cry holds great power. But how can it be that a ram's horn can accomplish so much, just by our listening to it?

Memory.

The sound of the shofar evokes in us the images, feelings, and emotions of Rosh Hashanah in years past. But how can a series of sounds bring back such vivid memories? The answer is that we are just wired that way!

Sights, sounds and smells can all evoke emotionally charged memories. A new study in rats suggests why: The same part of the brain that is in charge of processing our senses is also responsible, at least in part, for storing emotional memories.

The sticky sweetness of honey, the

crunch of the crisp apples, the cries of the chazzan chanting "U'netaneh Tokef" all connect us back to every Rosh Hashanah we have experienced. And each time we smell, taste, or hear one of these ritual symbols we can create our own new meanings.

But the mitzvah of blowing the shofar goes back long before any of us can remember. What imagery did Hashem want to bring to mind when He commanded us to hear its cries? As with all questions in our tradition, there are multiple answers, but I wanted to explore one brought up in Rosh Hashanah 16a.

"The Holy One, Blessed be He, said: Sound a blast before Me with a shofar made from a ram's horn, so that I will remember for you the binding of Isaac, son of Abraham, in whose stead a ram was sacrificed, and I will ascribe it to you as if you had bound yourselves before Me."

This selection from the Talmud doesn't say that we will be reminded of the story of Abraham being asked to sacrifice Isaac, it says that Hashem Himself will be reminded of the incident, and then He will focus not on his faithful servant Abraham, but on his even more loyal son Isaac who

willingly went to the slaughter, knife at his throat. Just as Hashem had mercy on Isaac on that day, so too should Hashem have mercy on us.

This idea finds its full voice in a Midrash where Rabbi Yochanan imagines Abraham standing in prayer before Hashem. Abraham reminds Hashem that when He asked him to sacrifice his son, rather than arguing, Abraham was silent, accepting his fate, "Like a deaf one will I listen, like a mute one who does not open his mouth" (Tehillim 38:14). Just as Abraham was silent before Hashem when he saw a great injustice, so, too, when Hashem sees the descendants of Isaac, us, sinning, committing injustice, Hashem will remember Abraham's deed, turn away from judgment and sit on the throne of mercy.

The moment the shofar is blown, it becomes a focal point of shared memory. We remember Hashem's mercy and Hashem is reminded that we are deserving of His mercy. This is what the brit, the covenant, is all about. Every day we remember that Hashem asked us to keep His Torah, but in turn Hashem promised to keep and protect us.

» What are your earliest memories of Rosh Hashanah?

» Who else knows about this memory?

Ha'yom Harat Olam

Koren, p. 607
Artsroll, p. 508

The middle sections of Musaf contain repeated references to the birth of the world and the judgment that begins on Rosh Hashanah and lasts through Yom Kippur.

הַיּוֹם הָרַת עוֹלָם. הַיּוֹם יַעֲמִיד בְּמִשְׁפָּט כָּל יְצוּרֵי
עוֹלָמִים. אִם כְּבָנִים. אִם כְּעֶבְדִּים. אִם כְּבָנִים
רַחֲמֵנוּ כְּרַחֵם אָב עַל בְּנָיִם. וְאִם כְּעֶבְדִּים עֵינֵינוּ לָךְ
תְּלוּיֹת. עַד שֶׁתְּחַנְּנֵנוּ וְתוֹצִיא כְּאוֹר מִשְׁפָּטֵנוּ אֲיוֹם
קְדוֹשׁ:

On this day, the world came into being; On this day, He makes stand in judgment— all the creatures of the world— whether as children, or as servants; if as children, have compassion on us as a father has compassion on his children! If as servants, our eyes are fixed on You until You favor us, and bring forth our judgment as the light, Revered and Holy One!

MAKING THE MOST OF TODAY—EVERY DAY

Rabbi Barry Dolinger, Rabbi, Congregation Beth Shalom, Providence, RI.

“For he is our God and we are the people He tends and the flock of his hand, if only today (הַיּוֹם) you would heed his voice” (Psalm 95:7). Rebbe Nachman of Breslov solves two significant spiritual problems with a practice of today/הַיּוֹם, of the radical present. First off, the magnitude of the burden of change, whatever the specifics, intimidates most of us to the point of inaction, apathy, or even depression. The task is simply unachievable, we tell ourselves. Too many setbacks, and a likelihood of failure. To this, Rabbi Nachman exhorts, “you need to not think about one day and then the next day . . . do not dare place in front of your eyes anything but

today and this moment now.”

And secondly, there is a related set of problems including busyness, exhaustion, and procrastination. “Tomorrow I will pray with intention and proper vigor.” To this, Rebbe Nachman again responds by noting that “the next day is a completely different universe. Today is mentioned specifically [in the verse in Psalm 95]. Contemplate this.”

The crucial question is how. It is tempting to hear, in the traditional repetition of the word *ha'yom* over and over, in the tune of the *piyyut*, an intuitive echo of Rebbe Nachman's teaching. Let yourself get caught up in the potency of this moment, concluding the communal Amidah,

and inhabit it fully, settling in and repeating *ha'yom* again and again with increasing strength. It is also helpful to train with a mindful practice of any sort, one that allows us to practice locating ourselves in the present. For this present moment, mixed with historic anxiety and infinite distraction, is more elusive than those that have come before. Here, there is redefinition. Presence itself is how we hear the Divine voice (Based on Likutei Moharan 272).

» Tomorrow, the day after Rosh Hashanah, you will live as a הַיּוֹם. In it you will finally_____.

Modim

Koren, p. 627
Artsroll, p. 466



Modim, a central component of every Amidah prayer, expresses our gratitude to God, who both created and continues to create us and the entirety of the universe.

מוֹדִים אֲנַחְנוּ לָךְ. שְׂאֵתָהּ הוּא ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֵלֵהי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. צוּר חַיֵּינוּ. מִגֵּן יִשְׁעֵנוּ אֵתָהּ הוּא לְדוֹר וָדוֹר: נוֹדָה לָךְ וְנִסְפָּר תְּהִלָּתְךָ עַל חַיֵּינוּ הַמְּסוּרִים בְּיָדְךָ. וְעַל נַשְׁמוֹתֵינוּ הַפְּקוּדוֹת לָךְ. וְעַל נִסֶּיךָ שֶׁבְּכָל יוֹם עִמָּנוּ. וְעַל נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ וְטוֹבוֹתֶיךָ שֶׁבְּכָל עֵת. עָרַב וּבִקֵּר וְצַהֲרִים: הַטּוֹב כִּי לֹא כָלוּ רַחֲמֶיךָ. וְהַמְּרַחֵם כִּי לֹא תָמוּ חַסְדֶּיךָ. מֵעוֹלָם קוֹיֵנוּ לָךְ:

We gratefully thank You, for You, O Lord our God, are our fathers' God for all eternity, our Rock, our Shield of salvation generation to generation. We thank You and recount Your praise for our lives. We trust our lives into Your loving hand. Our souls are in Your custody and Your miracles are with us every day and Your wonders and goodness are with us at all times: evening, morning and noon. You are good, for Your mercies never fail us, and the Compassionate One, for Your loving kindness never ceases; forever we have placed our hope in You.

FROM GRATITUDE TO GROWTH

Rabbi Tyson Herberger, former Chief Rabbi of Wrocław and Lower Silesia, Researcher in religious education at Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences.

Saying *modim anachnu lach* and meaning what you say can be a challenge. Often translated as 'we are thankful to you' (Hashem), it and the rest of its paragraph seemingly read as a celebration of the wondrous roles Hashem serves for us. But, the word *modeh* not only references gratitude. Modern Hebrew can use *modeh* to mean to admit or confess. Perhaps we ought to confess that we had our own visions of what should be. The Talmud (e.g., Bava Kama 29a) uses the word to mean deferring to a greater opinion. In saying *modim anachnu lach*, we are deferring to Hashem's will, granting

Hashem royal prerogative, which makes saying those three words akin to crowning Hashem our sovereign.

Once we can be grateful for and accept our lot, then we get to encounter Hashem as laid out in the rest of *Modim*—as the rock of our lives, whose miracles are constantly with us and who abounds in never-ending kindness. As Ben Zoma says (Pirkei Avot 4:1) "Who is rich? He who rejoices in his lot." But the sages want to make sure that even as we accept our lots, that we do not settle or give up. In Pirkei Avot, Ben Zoma's teaching is clarified with

a verse from Psalms (128:2): "you shall enjoy the fruit of your labors, be happy, and prosper!" Even as we defer to Hashem and accept our lot, Pirkei Avot is telling us we still need to do our share of the labor—of the dreaming, the striving, and the daily grind. We must be *modeh* to Hashem—grateful for what we have, and accepting of the wisdom in our lot. But we must also put in our effort to improve the world, because our lives are committed to Hashem's hand.

» What is something you are grateful to have been wrong about?

yom kippur



Kol Nidrei

Koren, p. 75
Artscroll, p. 60



Kol Nidrei is the opening prayer of Yom Kippur night. Traditionally recited by the congregation three times in a row, it reminds us to consider our words in the past, the present and the future, and to remember that Yom Kippur is a day of judgment as God convenes the heavenly court.

כָּל נִדְרֵי וְאֶסְרֵי וְשׁוּבְעֵי וְחֻרְמֵי וְקוֹנְמֵי וְכַנְיֵי. וְקוֹנְסֵי
דְּנִדְרָנָא. וְדִאֲשַׁתְּבַעְנָא. וְדִאֲחֲרִימָנָא. וְדִאֲסָרְנָא עַל
נַפְשֵׁתָנָא. מִיּוֹם כְּפוּרִים זֶה עַד יוֹם כְּפוּרִים הַבָּא
עָלֵינוּ לְטוֹבָה. בְּכֻלָּהוֹן אַחֲרֵטְנָא בְּהוֹן. כְּלָהוֹן יְהוֹן
שְׁרֹן. שְׁבִיקוֹן, שְׁבִיתוֹן, בְּטָלִין וּמְבַטְלִין, לֹא שְׁרִירִין
וְלֹא קְיָמִין: נִדְרָנָא לֹא נִדְרֵי. וְאֶסְרָנָא לֹא אֶסְרֵי.
וְשׁוּבְעָתָנָא לֹא שׁוּבְעוֹת:

Every Vow and bind, oath, ban, restriction, penalty, and every term that sets things out of bounds; all that we vow or swear, ban or bar from ourselves, (from last Yom Kippur to this, and) from this Yom Kippur until that which is to come- let it be for the good- each one, we regret. Let each be released, forgotten, halted, null and void, without power and without hold. What we vow is not vowed, what we bind is not bound, and what we swear is not sworn.

KOL NIDRE: FINDING OUR INNER FREEDOM

Rabba Sara Hurwitz, Co-Founder and President of Maharat.

This year, with quarantine, isolation, and restrictions on the forefront of our minds, more than ever, we must free ourselves from our self imposed cages.

In the 1960's, President Eisenhower received the gift of a rare, white tiger named Mohini. For years, Mohini lived in the Washington Zoo and spent her days pacing back and forth in a 12 by 12 foot cage. Finally the zoo decided to build her a larger cage so Mohini could run, climb and explore. But when Mohini arrived at her new home, she didn't rush out, eagerly adapting to her new habitat. Rather, she marked off a 12 by 12 foot square for herself, and paced there until her death, never enjoying the new opportunities in front of her.

We are all exactly the same as

Mohini. Based on our conditioning, we have created invisible cages for ourselves, limiting our lives within their boundaries. Yom Kippur gives us the opportunity to break free.

Rabbeinu Yonah, in his book Shaarei Teshuva (Gates of Repentance, First Gate:2) tells a story about a group of bandits who were imprisoned by the king. After a few days, the prisoners dug a tunnel in order to escape. But there was one prisoner who was immobile. He could not crawl through the tunnel to freedom. He remained imprisoned, plagued by his transgression.

The Kol Nidrei prayer is that tunnel. The opportunity to break free from our transgression as well as our self imposed cages, and begin life anew. The prayer beseeches us to cancel

the oaths and vows that have bound us this past year. Perhaps you vowed never to talk to a particular friend again. Perhaps you took an oath to ignore a particular social justice cause. Perhaps you were just silent. Through Kol Nidrei, we make these oaths null and void. We let go of that which enslaved us by making new oaths and vows. Promises which will allow us to become better, more fulfilled individuals. Promises of giving more *tzedakah*. Of visiting the sick, of being a better parent, child, sibling or friend. We take oaths that do not keep us bound up in a two-by-four cage. Let Kol Nidrei be the opportunity to free the Mohini inside of each of us.

» What is an "oath" or habit that held you back this year?

» What is a new "oath" you can adopt, to move past the restraints of last year?



KOL NIDREI: THE POWER AND LIMIT OF WORDS

Rabbi Chai Posner, YCT '10. Associate Rabbi, Beth Tfiloh Congregation, Baltimore, MD.

Kol Nidrei is perhaps the most enigmatic prayer in the machzor. While regarded by the masses as the most important prayer of the year, it is not halachically mandated. If one missed it, they would not have to make it up. It doesn't offer words of praise, petition or thanks. In fact, it isn't really a prayer at all. It is a proclamation about oaths, one which is likely not even legally binding. And yet, while all of this may be technically true, one only has to say the words "Kol Nidrei night" to conjure up the sentiments connected with this special and holy night; sentiments

which cannot be expressed in words, but are felt in the heart.

These are the two sides of Kol Nidrei. On the one hand, Kol Nidrei is specifically about the power of words, as expressed through oaths and promises. On the other hand, Kol Nidrei is not about words at all. It is about melody, emotion, passion and faith.

We begin the 25-hour journey of Yom Kippur by reminding ourselves that words are powerful, and by remembering that connection to God is also about more than words. We know that we will promise God

many things over the next day, and we know that we will likely fall short of many of them. We also acknowledge that the yearning we feel to be close to God cannot be adequately expressed in words.

When we approach God in honesty and vulnerability on Yom Kippur, God promises forgiveness. The Mishna teaches that Yom Kippur is one of the happiest days on the Jewish calendar. It is an opportunity for renewal and drawing closer. God, as a parent, is looking down on us with love. May we feel that embrace this Yom Kippur and every day of our lives.

- » What is something you want to say to God that you do not have the words to express?
- » How are you going to express that idea or feeling this Yom Kippur?



Thirteen Middot

Koren, p. 135
Artsroll, p. 108

Recited numerous times over the month of Elul and the high holiday period, the 13 Attributes of God's Mercy remind us of our potential to get closer to God and to one another.

אל מלך. יושב על כסא רחמים. מתנהג בחסידות.
מוחל עונות עמו. מעביר ראשון ראשון. מרבה
מחילה לחטאים וסליחה לפושעים. עושה
צדקות עם כל בשר ורוח. לא כרעתם תגמול: אל
הורית לנו לומר שלש עשרה. וזכר לנו היום ברית
שלש עשרה. כמו שהודעת לענו מקדם. כמו
שכתוב וירד יהוה בענן ויתיצב עמו ויקרא
בשם יהוה:

Almighty! King! Who sits on the throne of mercy, forgives the iniquities of His people. He removes their sins one by one, increasing forgiveness to sinners, and pardon to transgressors. Acting righteously with all who are of flesh and spirit; not according to their wickedness does He repay them. Almighty! You instructed us to recite the thirteen Divine attributes; and remember unto us this day the covenant of thirteen Divine attributes, as You made them known to the humble Moses of old, as it is written, "And Adonai descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the Name, Adonai.

ויעבר יהוה על פניו ויקרא:
יהוה יהוה אל רחום וחנון ארך אפים ורב חסד
ואמת: נצר חסד לאלפים נשא עון ופשע וחטאה
ונקה: וסלחת לעווננו ולחטאתנו ונחלתנו:
סלח לנו אבינו כי חטאנו. מחל לנו מלכנו כי
פשענו: כי אתה אדני טוב וסלח ורב חסד לכל
קראיך:

And Adonai passed before him, and proclaimed:
Adonai, Adonia, Almighty, Merciful, Gracious, Slow to Anger, and Abundant in Kindness, and Truth. Keeper of kindness for thousands of generations, Endurer of iniquity, and transgression, and sin; and Acquitter of those who repent.
Pardon us our Father, for we have sinned, forgive us our King, for we have transgressed. For You, my Master, are good and forgiving, and abounding in kindness to all who call upon You.

CONJURING THE COVENANT

Rabbanit Leah Sarna, YM '18. Associate Director of Education and Director of High School Programs, Drisha Institute for Jewish Education.

The Thirteen Middot are the backbone of Selihot, recited by some at every tefilah of Yom Kippur and by others just at Kol Nidrei and Ne'ilah. The Talmud tells us in Rosh Hashanah 17b that there is a covenant between the Jewish people and Hashem regarding the Thirteen Middot: Rav Yehudah says that they will not return "empty." We are promised that recitation of the Thirteen Middot will bring about heavenly forgiveness. The Talmud here draws on the language from Shemot 34:10, immediately after

the Thirteen Middot are recited for the first time ever, when Hashem says, "I hereby make a covenant."

To understand the nature of this covenant, we must turn briefly to the context in Shemot 33:1, Hashem threatens after the sin of the Golden Calf, "I will not go in your midst, since you are a stiffnecked people, lest I destroy you on the way." When Moses prays for forgiveness on behalf of the people, it comes with a concrete request: Stay. Do not leave us.

When we turn to Hashem today,

as we recite those very same words which carry that very same covenantal promise of forgiveness—what is our concrete request? What do we want to see or experience when Hashem forgives us? What should healing look like in the context of our relationship with Hashem? What could be different going forward? Try bringing the answers to these questions into your recitation of the Thirteen Middot this year.

- » How do you feel God's covenant on Yom Kippur?
- » How do you take that with you to what lies beyond?



TESHUVAH: GOD'S LEADERSHIP BY EXAMPLE

Rabbi Phil Kaplan, YCT '19. Assistant Rabbi, The Great Synagogue, Sydney, Australia.

The Talmud in Rosh Hashanah 17b sets the scene in which Hashem teaches Moses the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy.

ויעבור ה' על פניו ויקרא
א"ר יוחנן אלמלא מקרא
כתוב אי אפשר לאומר
מלמד שנתעטף הקב"ה
כשליח צבור והראה לו למשה
סדר תפלה אמר לו כל זמן
שישראל חוטאין יעשו לפני
כסדר הזה ואני מוחל להם

"And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed" (Exodus 34:6). Rabbi Yochanan said: Were it not explicitly written in the verse, it would be impossible to say this. The verse teaches that the Holy One, Blessed be He, wrapped Himself [in a tallit] like a prayer leader and showed Moses the order of the prayer. He said to him: Whenever the Jewish people sin, let them act before Me in accordance with this order and I will forgive them.

So much can be gleaned from these few lines. When seeking to teach the Jewish people about mercy, righteousness and compassion, God didn't think words alone would suffice.

He physically demonstrated the best way to embody a disposition of forgiveness, to both give and receive forgiveness.

The Thirteen Middot which we recite during Selihot and the High Holidays describe the qualities of Hashem. He is: merciful; compassionate; gracious; slow to anger; abundant in kindness and truth; forgiving of iniquity, transgression and sin; and pardons those who err.

The Shaliah Tzibbur, the prayer leader, should ideally possess humility, and a profound sense of responsibility in representing his community before God. That is why the Shaliah Tzibbur is the perfect metaphor for how we should approach seeking forgiveness and granting forgiveness, and why God uses this as a model with Moses. In this passage from the Talmud, Hashem is not saying that when the Jewish people sin,

they simply need to say the words of the Thirteen Middot. That is merely a start. Rather, they need to live out the words.

When we forgive others with mercy and grace, God is likely to provide the same to us. When we bring humility, mutual responsibility, and compassion to our relationships, whether with Hashem or with our fellow man, Hashem will treat us in kind.

- » What is the mercy you need to show others?
- » What is the mercy you need to show yourself?

Viduy

Koren, p. 167
Artsroll, p. 130

A fundamental part of the Teshuva process, Viduy gives us the chance to “talk out” our actions before God. Hopefully with honesty and self-awareness, we open ourselves to growth as we consider our actions over the past year.

אֶשְׁמְנוּ. בְּגַדְנוּ. גָּזַלְנוּ. דִּבַּרְנוּ דְּפִי. הִטּוּיָנוּ. וְהִרְשַׁעְנוּ.
זָדְנוּ. חָמְסְנוּ. טָפְלְנוּ שָׂקָר. יַעֲצֵנוּ רָע. כָּזַבְנוּ. לָצְנוּ.
מְרַדְנוּ. נֶאֱצְנוּ. סָרְרְנוּ. טָוִינוּ. פָּשַׁעְנוּ. צָרְרְנוּ. קִשְׁיֵנוּ
עָרְפָּה. רָשַׁעְנוּ. שָׁחַתְנוּ. תַּעֲבָנוּ. תַּעֲיִינוּ. תַּתְּעַנּוּ:

We have sinned, we have acted treacherously, we have robbed, we have spoken slander. We have acted perversely, we have acted wickedly, we have acted presumptuously, we have been violent, we have framed lies. We have given bad advice, we have deceived, we have scorned, we have rebelled, we have provoked, we have turned away, we have committed iniquity, we have transgressed, we have persecuted, we have been obstinate. We have acted wickedly, we have corrupted, we have acted abominably, we have strayed, we have led others astray.

VIDUY: AN INVITATION TO RETURN TO OURSELVES

Jonah Weiner, YCT '22.

In his beautiful work Orot HaTeshuvah, Rav Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook teaches us a fundamental lesson about the nature of spiritual work. He explains that the mistakes we make in life are a necessary byproduct of living limited, human, lives. He cautions us that despite this working to uproot our own essential nature is itself the ultimate mistake and a “sin against life” (Bamidbar 6:11). He teaches that “Teshuvah is that which repairs the damage caused by our mistakes and attempts to be someone other than

our true selves...” Every Yom Kippur it is tempting to see ourselves as walking a linear journey of progress from the people we are now to the people we aspire to become. In Viduy, with each “Al Het” we instinctively think to discard a piece of our past selves. Rav Kook challenges this impulse, teaching that there is no better person for us to become; we can only work to be more like ourselves. That is the essence of teshuvah. When we see something wrong with who we are and try to “change,” we alienate our

own true natures and inevitably deny pieces of our God-given uniqueness. When we see Viduy as rejecting parts of ourselves, we mistakenly commit what Rav Kook implied was a “sin against life.” The path of return to Hashem is not forward or outward, but inward. Teshuvah depends on trusting in Hashem and ourselves enough to believe that our best selves are the ones at the root of our souls. The people we need to become are who we already are in our heart of hearts. No change needed, just return.

» What is the change you want to see as you return to your true self in 5781?



The traditional viduy/confessional text provides us with a list of categories of transgressions, which encourages us to contemplate how we need to improve our actions as we look forward to the new year. This Positive Viduy, composed by Rabbi Avi Weiss, Founder of YCT, the IRF, and Maharat, is also alphabetical, but has a modern take—focusing on the good we've done in the past year, and the opportunities to further that good in the year ahead.

אָהַבְנוּ, We have loved,
 בְּרַכְנוּ, We have blessed,
 גָּדַלְנוּ, We have grown,
 דְּבַרְנוּ יְפִי We have spoken positively.

הֶעֱלִינוּ, We have raised up,
 וַחֲסָנוּ, We have shown compassion,
 זָרְזָנוּ, We have acted enthusiastically,
 חָמַלְנוּ, We have been empathetic,
 טִפַּחְנוּ אֱמֶת We have cultivated truth.

יִטְעָנוּ טוֹב, We have given good advice,
 כִּבְדָנוּ, We have respected,
 לִמְדָנוּ, We have learned,
 מָחַלְנוּ, We have forgiven,
 נִחַמְנוּ, We have comforted,
 סָלַלְנוּ, We have been creative,
 עוֹרָרְנוּ, We have stirred,
 פְּעַלְנוּ, We have been spiritual activists,
 צַדִּיקְנוּ, We have been just,
 קוִיָנוּ לְאֶרֶץ We have longed for Israel.

רַחַמְנוּ, We have been merciful,
 שָׁקַדְנוּ, We have given full effort,
 תָּמַכְנוּ, We have supported,
 תָּרַמְנוּ, We have contributed,
 תִּקְנָנוּ, We have repaired.



Avinu Malkeinu

Koren, p. 711
Artscroll, p. 436

With its powerful tune and repetitive set of petitions, Avinu Malkeinu gives each person the chance to find a moment of personal connection in an ancient prayer. Avinu Malkeinu focuses on our human needs and acknowledges the power of prayer to affect our lives.

אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ חָטְאָנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ:
אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ אֵין לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ אֶלָּא אַתָּה:
אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ מְנַע מִגִּזְפָּה מִנְחַלְתֵךְ:

Our Father, our King! we have sinned before You.
Our Father our King! we have no King except You.
Our Father, our King! withhold the plague from Your inheritance.

אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ חֲנֻנוּ וְעֲנֵנוּ כִּי אֵין בָּנוּ מַעֲשִׂים עֲשֵׂה
עֲמָנוּ צְדָקָה וְחֶסֶד וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ:

Our Father, our King! favor us and answer us for we have no accomplishments; deal with us charitably and kindly and deliver us.

A PRAYER OF PARTNERSHIP

Talia Weisberg, YM '24.

The phrase “*Avinu Malkeinu*—our Father, our King” is powerful in its contrast of dualities, invoking Hashem as both benevolent parent and just ruler, ready to judge His children/subjects with compassion as well as with integrity. This year, it is especially relevant to note the line in which we beseech Hashem, “withhold plague from Your inheritance.”

As we see from this ancient prayer, today’s pandemic is far from the first for the Jewish people. Tanach speaks of several magesot, including ones that struck the spies and after Korach’s rebellion. The past millennium of Jewish history was marked by

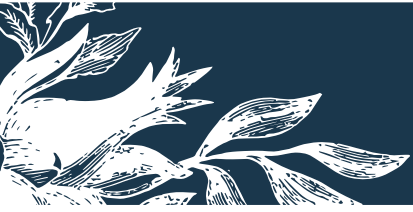
various outbreaks of numerous different contagions, most famously the Black Plague and influenza. It is both painful and comforting that our contemporary struggles with disease were also relevant for our ancestors. With this in mind, we can glean insights from our holy texts and time-honored liturgy on how to respond to the COVID-19 crisis.

When we pray for Hashem to withhold plague from our community, we appoint Him as our Doctor as well as our Father and King. We show our faith that Hashem will heal us from this magefa both by engaging in intensive prayer and by strictly

adhering to the guidelines with which public health experts and medical professionals, Hashem’s mortal *shlichim*, provide us. It is crucial that we do not forfeit our *hishtadlut*, our personal effort, at this time. Rather, we must invest in our personal and communal health and take the recommended precautions to ensure that we are partnering with Hashem in our protection from the coronavirus.

Once we have done our *hishtadlut*, we can then only place our trust in Hashem, our Father, our King, who looks upon us as children and subjects, judging us with love.

» How have you partnered with God this year? How should you partner with God in the year ahead?



A KING, YET A PARENT

Rabbanit Michal Kohane, YM '20. Community Educator, Haifa, Israel.

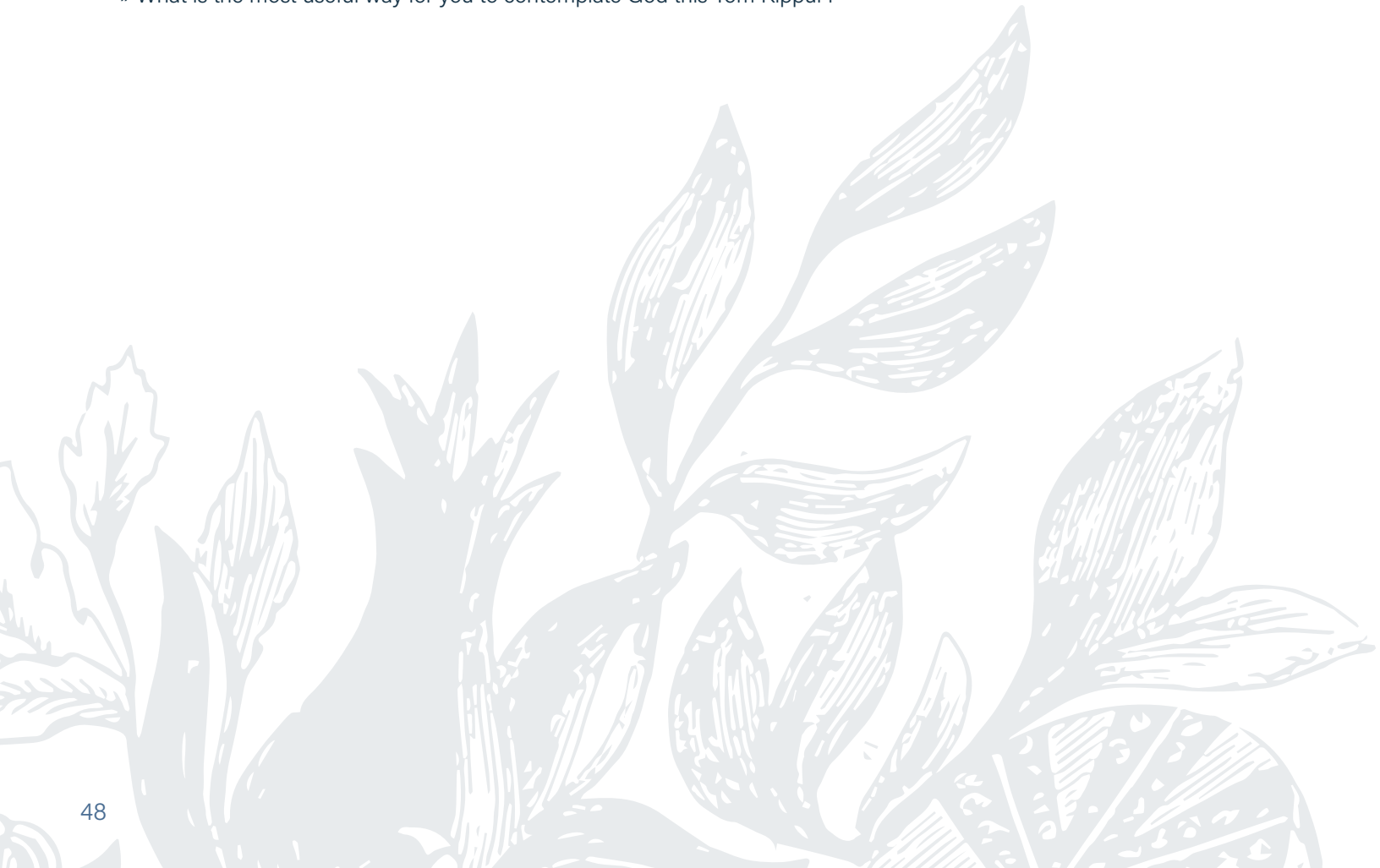
When the Days of Awe approach, I start feeling like someone trying to go through an airport metal detector with a pocket knife, a can of pepper spray, and a loaded handgun, hoping security somehow won't notice... I know there is no chance, and yet, I pray—to the same One who made the rules against this, to spare me just this time, please, because I really, really—really—want to get on the flight. There is no way to do it in "real" life and yet, we do it—all the time. Maybe because our "Guard" also happens to be our Parent, and suddenly the

picture changes completely. We are no longer a high-risk criminal with repeated offenses, traveling with master weapons and a crazy plot, but a little child, who sheepishly sneaks up to his mother's apron with a chocolate-smear smile on his blushed face and chocolate smeared fingers; who when asked sternly, "What happened here?" can get away with shrugging an "I do not know," and an "I'm sorry, Mommy" mumble, and who might even receive a hug and kiss.

The duality of our complex relationship with God is a constant

in Jewish life and can be found everywhere, but maybe it is best expressed in the High Holy Days liturgy of *Avinu Malkeinu*. Which way is it? Is God our loving, forgiving, kind Parent or our all-knowing/doing/being exacting Almighty King? The answer is, a wholehearted "yes"! And by seeing God's deep and inherent complexity, we are perhaps invited to see – and celebrate—our own complexity, as well.

» What is the most useful way for you to contemplate God this Yom Kippur?



Torah Reading

Koren, p. 727
Artsroll, p. 452

The Torah reading of Yom Kippur morning reminds us of this day's special nature—specifically with regards to the access that the High Priest has to the Holy of Holies, and the opportunity that access brings to the entire Jewish people.

וְכִפֹּר עַל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִטְּמֵאת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִפְּשָׁעֵיהֶם
לְכָל־חַטָּאתָם וְכֵן יַעֲשֶׂה לְאַהֲלֵ מוֹעֵד הַשְּׁכָן אִתָּם
בְּתוֹךְ טְמֵאתָם:

Thus he shall purge the Shrine of the uncleanness and transgression of the Israelites, whatever their sins; and he shall do the same for the Tent of Meeting, which abides with them in the midst of their uncleanness.

וְכִלְאָדָם לֹא־יְהִיֶּה בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד בְּבָאוֹ לְכַפֹּר
בְּקֹדֶשׁ עַד־צֵאתוֹ וְכִפֹּר בְּעַדוֹ וּבְעַד בֵּיתוֹ וּבְעַד כָּל־
קְהַל יִשְׂרָאֵל: וַיִּקְרָא טו:טז-טז

When he goes in to make expiation in the Shrine, nobody else shall be in the Tent of Meeting until he comes out. When he has made expiation for himself and his household, and for the whole congregation of Israel. Leviticus 16:16-17

KAPPARAH IN ALL OF ITS MEANINGS

Rabbi Eitan Cooper, YCT '19. Assistant Rabbi, Beth Sholom Congregation and Talmud Torah, Potomac, MD.

Today we revisit what is perhaps one of the more painful and problematic passages of our Torah. We read of the aftermath of the death of Aaron's sons, who were taken by God because they "came too close." Most of our reading today recounts a procedure imparted to Aaron that, ostensibly, is designed to prevent him from suffering the same fate as his sons. They did not follow the correct protocols about how to draw close to God in the Mishkan, and so here the protocol is clarified and reiterated. The procedure is elaborate, and, to the modern reader, foreign. Somehow, perhaps metaphysically, the process allows Aaron to safely encounter God, and to achieve *kapparah* for himself, for his family and for the Jewish people, and even for the physical space of the Mishkan which has been contaminated

as a result of the people's sins.

At the end of our reading we begin to understand that this procedure is meant to be performed once every year, on this day, Yom Kippur, in order to atone for our sins. This procedure is to be enshrined in our collective memories as the safe, "guaranteed" method for expiation of sins.

It is worth considering, though, what this "expiation," this *kapparah*, actually is. Try and count the number of times the root *k.p.r*/כ.פ.ר appears in our parasha... you will soon lose track of both the number of occurrences as well as a precise definition. Does the elaborate Temple procedure literally "clean" us and our physical spaces, as we will read in the third aliyah? Or, is *kapparah* something more metaphysical and magical... a "cover up" for our sins, as we read in the first aliyah? Or, as Rashi comments on

the phrase *וְכִפֹּר בְּעַדוֹ וּבְעַד בֵּיתוֹ* in 16:6, does *kapparah* involve some type of verbal confession of wrongdoing?

Whatever the definition of *kapparah* might be, and as elusive as it may be, it seems clear that it involves a feeling to which we can all relate: We have done wrong, and we have experienced the pain that comes with falling short of our goals for this year. We yearn for a system, a procedure, a process by which we can restore our souls and renew our lives. While the system described in today's Torah reading is no longer in use, we can perhaps feel comforted by the fact that as we proceed through the rest of the day, our machzor—literally, our book of "cycles" and processes—can guide us, with prayer and introspection, through the winding path towards renewal—in the spirit of the service of Aaron and his descendants.

» What is something you forgive yourself for as you turn from the year that was to the year that will be?

Haftarah

Koren, p. 739
Artsroll, p. 462

The Haftarah of Yom Kippur morning challenges our assumptions of Yom Kippur, and challenges us to reassess our goals for the day.

הָלוֹא זֶה צוֹם אֲבַחְרֶהוּ פֶתַח חֲרָצוֹת רְשָׁע הַתֵּר
אֲגִדּוֹת מוֹטָה וְשִׁלַּח רְצוּצִים חֲפָשִׁים וְכַל-מוֹטָה
תִּנְתְּקוּ:

No, this is the fast I desire: To unlock fetters of wickedness, And untie the cords of the yoke; to let the oppressed go free; to break off every yoke.

הָלוֹא פָרַס לָרֵעַב לַחֲמֶךָ וְעֲנִיִּים מְרוּדִים תָּבִיא בֵּית
כִּי-תִרְאֶה עָרֹם וְכִסִּיתוֹ וּמְבֹשָׁרָךְ לֹא תִתְעַלֵּם:

It is to share your bread with the hungry, and to take the wretched poor into your home; when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to ignore your own kin.

אִזּ יִבְקַע כְּשֹׁחַר אוֹרֶךְ וְאֶרְכָתְךָ מִהֵרָה תִצְמַח וְהִלֵּךְ
לְפָנֶיךָ צִדְקָךְ כְּבוֹד יְהוָה יֵאֲסֹף: יִשְׁעֵיהוּ נַח-וּחַ

Then shall your light burst through like the dawn, and your healing spring up quickly; your Vindicator shall march before you, the Presence of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Isaiah 58:6-8

FASTING: A GREAT BEGINNING TO AN EVEN GREATER END

Emile Ackermann, YCT '23.

Fasting is a central component of Yom Kippur to the point where the Torah prescribes serious penalties for one who can safely fast yet chooses not to.

It may therefore be surprising that the Sages incorporated the verses of our Haftarah into the liturgy of Yom Kippur. During the most sacred and most solemn day of the year, when fasting is so central to our experience of the day, why are we told that fasting should not be our focus?

Perhaps the Sages are trying to

teach us a sense of hierarchy: that the fast is the first step on Yom Kippur, but not the last. To deprive oneself of food and drink for one day is a way to break from one's egoistic way of thinking, to be able to see and feel what is happening in the world beyond oneself by removing a sense of connection to one's personal physical needs. But the goal is to see and grow beyond, and ultimately to consider how we one must change one's actions in an effort to better the world.

Isaiah's message is that the

messages of Judaism and of Yom Kippur are meant to profoundly change us, and impact the way we relate to the world. Our relationships with other people and with God are bettered by our working to better understand our relationship with ourselves, and by fasting, we challenge that most basic relationship as well.

» What is the fast that God wants from you this year?



THE FAST THAT GOD DESIRES

David Selis, YCT Staff. MA Candidate, Bernard Revel Graduate School of Judaic Studies.

On Yom Kippur, our primary religious obligation as codified by Rambam (Hilkhhot Teshuva ch.1) is viduy, the confession of sins and the process of repentance which both wipes away past sins and transforms us into a new person.

However, the Haftarah of Yom Kippur morning, from Yeshayahu 57:14-58:14 challenges our most basic assumption about the very nature of Yom Kippur and its spiritual task. There is another Haftarah which is one of teshuvah, Dirshu, the fast day Haftarah (Isaiah 55:6-56:8). Yet the Haftarah chosen for Yom Kippur morning focuses not on teshuvah but on individual and societal change. The fast which God desires is one in which we look beyond ourselves, to break the chains of oppression and in so doing, change our personal and communal behavior to create a Godly society.

The Talmud (Megillah 31) powerfully expresses this notion, noting several examples of Biblical verses in which Divine might is juxtaposed with Divine care and compassion for the most

vulnerable members of society.

אמר ר' יוחנן כל מקום
שאתה מוצא גבורתו של
הקב"ה אתה מוצא ענוותנותו
דבר זה כתוב בתורה ושנוי
בנביאים ומשולש בכתובים

כתוב בתורה (דברים י, יז) כי
ה' אלהיכם הוא אלהי האלהים
ואדוני האדונים וכתוב בתורה
עושה משפט יתום ואלמנה

Rabbi Yohanan said: Wherever you find a reference in the Bible to the might of the Holy One, Blessed be He, you also find a reference to His humility adjacent to it. Evidence of this fact is written in the Torah, repeated in the Nevi'im, and stated a third time in the Ketuvim.

שנוי בנביאים (ישעיהו נז,
טו) כה אמר רם ונשא שוכן
עד וקדוש וגו' וכתוב בתורה
ואת דכא ושפל רוח

It is repeated in the Prophets: "For thus says the High and Lofty One that inhabits eternity..." (Isaiah 57:15), and it is written immediately afterward: "I dwell with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit." (Isaiah 57:15).

We hope on Yom Kippur to become angelic, almost reaching the point of God. While fasting and other restrictions are one path to this goal, it is clear from the Haftarah that there is another, perhaps more pressing, option.

» What is the fast that you want from yourself this year?

Yizkor

Koren, p. 757
Artscroll, p. 470

Originally recited on Yom Kippur alone, and today recited toward the conclusion of Sukkot, Pesach, and Shavuot as well, Yizkor provides us with the opportunity to remember those who have passed away, and to contemplate their impact on our lives, and the legacies they leave behind. While Yizkor is normally recited in a congregational setting, it may be recited at home as well.

יְהוָה מַה־אָדָם וַיִּתְדַעְהוּ בְּרֹאנוֹשׁ
וַיִּתְשַׁבְּהוּ:

O Lord, what is man that You should care about him, mortal man, that You should think of him?

אָדָם לְהֵבֵל דָּמָה יָמָיו כְּצֵל עוֹבֵר:

Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow.

בְּבֹקֶר יִצְיָץ וְחֶלֶף לְעֶרֶב יִמּוּלֵל וַיִּבֹשׁ:

at daybreak it flourishes anew; by dusk it withers and dries up.

לְמִנּוֹת יָמֵינוּ כֵּן הוֹדַע וְנִבְּא לִבְבֵּךְ חֲכָמָה:

Teach us to count our days rightly, that we may obtain a wise heart.

שְׁמַרְתֶּם וְרָאָה יֵשֶׁר כִּי־אֲחֵרִית לְאִישׁ שְׁלוֹם:

Mark the blameless, note the upright, for there is a future for the man of integrity.

אֲדַאֲלֵהֵם יִפְדֶּה נַפְשִׁי מִיַּד־שְׂאוּל כִּי יִקְחֵנִי סֶלְהָ:

But God will redeem my life from the clutches of Sheol, for He will take me. Selah.

MEMORIES THAT INSPIRE

Rabbi David Wolkenfeld, YCT '08. Rabbi, Anshe Sholom B'nai Israel Congregation, Chicago, IL.

There are two primary functions of Yizkor on Yom Kippur, and they exist in some tension with one another. Reciting Yizkor on Yom Kippur forces us to acknowledge our own mortality, and to take stock of what legacy we are creating which will survive after we are no longer alive. Our possessions do not follow us once we are dead. Our wealth is dispersed, our fame and importance is fleeting—cemeteries are filled with men and women who considered themselves to be indispensable.

Reciting Yizkor on Yom Kippur reminds us that even after we are no longer alive, our enduring legacy can be shaped by those who live on after us and do good in the world in our honor and through our influence.

Reciting Yizkor on Yom Kippur
» Whom do you most remember this Yom Kippur? How do you keep their memory alive through the actions of your own life?

also reminds us that it is up to us—the living—to shape the legacy of those who are no longer alive. There is great power in declaring that we are doing good in the world, that we are pledging donations to tzedakah, that we are doubling down on our commitment to mitzvot, all in honor of someone who is no longer alive.

If they can continue to inspire us to do good in their name, then we can continue to shape their legacy even many years after they lived.

Yom Kippur is understood to be the pinnacle of the season of judgment. And through our actions, we not only affect our own destinies, but even those of the deceased who are already in the World of Truth, since we are showing that their impact

in this world continues to be felt.

The worth of a human life cannot be measured in money or in fame. The potential for a human life cannot be measured in any of the physical pleasures that we give up on Yom Kippur. As we abstain, for one day, from food and drink and separate from our bodies, we contemplate the enduring legacy that will remain after we are no longer alive. As we connect, through prayer, to the memories of those we have loved who are no longer alive, we show how they are very much a real presence here among us; as treasured memories, and as inspiring examples who can continue to inspire us to do good in the world.

Seder Ha'avodah

Koren, p. 879
Artscroll, p. 554



An often-ignored part of the Yom Kippur liturgy is the Seder Ha'avodah, which recounts the actions of the Kohen Gadol in the Beit Hamikdash on this unique and most holy day.

וְהַכֹּהֲנִים וְהָעָם הָעוֹמְדִים בְּעֶזְרָה. כָּשָׁהִיו שׁוֹמְעִים
אֶת הַשֵּׁם הַנִּכְבָּד וְהַנּוֹרָא מִפִּי כֹהֵן
גָּדוֹל בְּקִדְשָׁהּ וּבְטָהָרָה. הָיוּ כּוֹרְעִים וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִים
וְמוֹדִים וְנוֹפְלִים עַל פְּנֵיהֶם. וְאוֹמְרִים בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם
כְּבוֹד מְלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:

And the priests and the people who were standing in the Temple Courtyard when they heard the glorious and awesome Name [of God] explicitly pronounced from the mouth of the High Priest with holiness and with purity, they bowed, prostrated themselves, offered thanks, and fell upon their faces and said, "Blessed [is His] Name, His glorious Kingdom is forever and ever."

YOM KIPPUR WITHOUT THE TEMPLE

Rabbanit Leah Sarna, YM '18. Associate Director of Education and Director of High School Programs, Drisha Institute for Jewish Education.

Every year in preparing to recite the Avodah, I return to the words of Prof. Michael Wyschogrod in his masterpiece, *The Body of Faith*: There are those for whom prayer and repentance as the basis for forgiveness of sin is a great advance over reliance on bloody sacrifices.

Those who hold this view—it is not our purpose now to examine it on its merits—cannot possibly understand what was involved in Judaism's shifting to prayer and repentance as

the center of its religious existence. The shift from cult to prayer is so difficult as to seem almost impossible. Cult is concrete and incarnated. In it, the holy appears with predictability, and there is therefore a security in God's dwelling with Israel in the Temple. That Jews who survived the destruction of the Temple could be made to believe that on the Day of Atonement their sins would be forgiven, even though there was no Temple and no sacrifices,

borders on the miraculous. It was possible...because the ancient Jew felt God's love for him and could therefore come to believe that his sins would be forgiven without the Temple and its sacrifices (p. 17).

Like "the ancient Jew," today we put our faith in God's love for us. Without a Temple, without sacrifices, without even a typical synagogue service, we believe that our sins will be forgiven, with love.

» How do you feel God's love in your life?

THE PRIEST SITS ALONE

Rabbi Ben Shefter, YCT '16. Senior Jewish Educator, Hillels of Ontario, Canada.

How does Sam sit solitarily, in a hallowed room usually teeming with people? Sam, the High Priest, wakes up confused about what lays ahead. The sheep and the goats are bleating, but the masses are silent.

For the past five years Sam has been the master of ceremonies for the elaborate production of Yom Kippur filled with audience participation and after parties. But this year is different— this year, the throngs are home. Not because they want to be, but because they have to be. What does it all mean without the masses?

The only people to see Sam's work are his children Tal, who will prevent the blood from coagulating, and Lior, who will lead the scapegoat out into the invested world, stopping at various temperature checks and sanitation stations to avoid becoming contaminated by the sins of the year.

Sam knows that the show must go on, but how can Sam bring the people closer to Hashem when everyone has been distant for so long? How can Sam carry the

collective load of such a dispersed people? What is Sam atoning for that has brought this on the world?

Sam stands with their bull between the Temple and the alter and starts to confess. עויתי, פשעתי, and my family have sinned before You. We have been distant from You and our community for too long and now we can not come closer. Please forgive us and cleanse us as Moses said (Vayikra 16:30) כי ביום הזה יכפר עליכם לטהר אתכם מכל חטאתיכם לפני ה'

And Sam paused, only hearing Tal and Lior recite שם כבוד מלכותו ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו ועד תטהרו before finishing with טהרו Sam, filled with grief over friends who are no longer here, those that have passed on during the pandemic, the friends they have lost touch with because of the distance, takes the bull again to confess the sins of the Kohanim. Without the crowd, Sam almost whispers the viduy, hoping that it will be enough to get through the day. When Sam gets to the name of Hashem, Sam hears a voice joining Tal and Lior, it is the voice of Jordan

who lives just outside the temple walls. Even so far away, Jordan had been listening and waiting to be part of the Yom Kippur production. In this performance, everyone is an actor; there is no audience.

After the sacrifice, Sam takes the blood to sprinkle on the curtain, and counts. With each sprinkling more voices join the count. Jill, then Jonathan, then Reuben, then Dinah, all join with Jordan as they strive to show that they are connected to what is happening in the Temple. As the voices started to swell, Sam knew that everyone was present, just in an unexpected way.

With each viduy and each sprinkle more and more voices could be heard. The once lonely High Priest now is reconnected with the people. Sam realized the confusion of presence and connectedness. When Sam finally emerged from the Holy of Holies, the city that had been silent, desolate, alone for so many months was now filled with the song of Ma'reh Kohen reverberating around the city.

» What are the moments when you feel most alone, and how do you connect to God in those moments?

Ten Martyrs

Koren, p. 929
Artscroll, p. 586



With its parallels in the Tisha b'Av Kinot, our liturgy's mention of the Ten Martyrs reminds us of the sacrifices made by so many for the sake of our people and our tradition.

וְנִפְשֵׁי עָלֵי אֲשַׁפְּכָה. כִּי בָלְעוּנוּ זָדִים כְּעֵגֶה בְּלִי
הַפּוֹכָה. כִּי בַיּוֹם הַשֶּׁר לֹא עָלְתָה אַרוֹכָה. לַעֲשֶׂרָה
הַרוּגֵי מְלוּכָה...

These [martyrs] I will remember and pour out my soul within me. For wicked people have swallowed us, like a cake, unturned, not fully baked for during the days of Caesar there was no reprieve for the ten martyrs, doomed to death by the Roman government...

...חֲנוּן הַבֵּיטָה מִמְרוֹמִים. תִּשְׁפֹּכֶת דָּם הַצְּדִיקִים
וְתִצְמִית דָּמִים. תִּרְאֶה בְּפָרוּךְ וְהַעֲבֵר כְּתָמִים.
אֵל מֶלֶךְ יוֹשֵׁב עַל כִּסֵּא רַחֲמִים:

...Gracious One! Look down from Heaven at the spilled blood of the righteous, [even] their life blood. Look from the place of Your holy Presence and remove all stains [of guilt]. Almighty, King Who sits upon a throne of mercy.

TESHUVAH THAT MATTERS

Rabbi Eli Finkelstein, YCT '20. Rabbinic Fellow, Hebrew Institute of Riverdale—The Bayit, Riverdale, NY.

Eleh Ezkerah is a painful reminder of the limitations of our tefillot and teshuvah. As opposed to the joy and optimism of the Avodah, in which we remember how the Kohen Gadol can perform a service which wipes away our sins, this piyyut tells us of the ten rabbis who were martyred in the period following the destruction of the Second Temple. Despite their righteousness, they nevertheless were punished by God, at least in the liturgical imagination. The sin they committed? Ostensibly, nothing. But the Caesar frames their punishment as due to the brothers selling Joseph. On one hand, this is clearly an excuse. The Caesar didn't need a justification to murder these

righteous men, leaders of the Jews. But our piyyut explains to us that there was a justification, and the punishment meted out was according to Jewish law, not Roman law. The Caesar explicitly states:

וְאִם הָיוּ בְחַיִּים הָיִיתִי
דָּנָם לְפָנֶיכֶם. וְאַתֶּם
תִּשְׂאוּ עוֹן אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם:

*For if they were still living, I
would judge them before you,
but now, you must bear the
guilt of the sin of your fathers.*

The ten rabbis were killed not simply as Jewish leaders, but as

representatives of the ten brothers who sold Joseph. This sin between person and person, one which cannot be atoned for simply through the Yom Kippur liturgy, reminds us of the limitations of this holy day. We do not gain atonement for our sins against other people. For atonement of these sins, we must ask forgiveness directly. And our piyyut reminds us of the great tragedy that can result if we do not truly seek full teshuvah from God and humanity.

» What have you been called upon to sacrifice this year?

Sefer Yonah

Koren, p. 999
Artsroll, p. 634

The Haftarah of Yom Kippur afternoon takes on a journey along with the Prophet Yonah, as he travels the world and encounters his own spiritual challenges, ultimately experiencing profound growth, just as we hope to achieve today.

וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל יוֹנָה אֶל־יְהוָה אֱלֹהָיו מִמְעֵי הַדָּגָה: Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish.
וַיֹּאמֶר קְרָאתִי מִצָּרָה לִי אֶל־יְהוָה וַיַּעֲנֵנִי מִבֶּטֶן שָׂאוֹל שְׁמַעְתִּי שְׁמַעַתְּ קוֹלִי: He said: In my trouble I called to the Lord, And He answered me; From the belly of Sheol I cried out, and You heard my voice.

יונה ב:ב-ג Jonah 2:2-3

BASKING IN THE SHADE

Rabbi Avi Katz Orlow, YCT '04. Vice President, Innovation and Education, Foundation for Jewish Camp.

From the start, Yonah evades God's command to prophesy in Nineveh. When he finally does his job, Yonah seems disappointed by his success. The people actually do the work of repenting, but where is Yonah? We read:

וַיֵּצֵא יוֹנָה מִן־הָעִיר וַיֹּשֶׁב
מִקֶּדֶם לְעִיר וַיַּעַשׂ לּוֹ שֵׁם
סֻכָּה וַיֹּשֶׁב תַּחְתֶּיהָ בְּצֶל עֵד
אֲשֶׁר יֵרְאֶה מֵהַיְהוּדָה בְּעִיר:

Now Jonah had left the city and found a place east of the city. He made a booth there and sat under it in the shade, until he should see what happened to the city (Jonah 4:5)

Yonah thinks or hopes that they will fail and he will experience schadenfreude. Yonah is incredulous that repentance could work.

Like Yonah, in a few days we too will find ourselves sitting in a sukkah. We might also conclude that people cannot change. Then, in Kohelet, we will read, "There is nothing new under the sun!" (Kohelet 1:9). After spending all day thinking about our sins, what makes us think that we could be anything other than sinners?

We learn, "A disorderly sukkah which casts more shade than sunlight is kosher" (Mishnah Sukkah 2:2). Our lives are messy and it is still true that nothing might change under the sun, but if we can bask in the shade of the sukkah, we might imagine a new reality.

Albert Einstein said, "Logic will get you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere." We cannot evade the will of God. We cannot hide in the bottom of a boat or in the gullet of a whale. But under the shade of a sukkah, we are invited to think past the harsh logic of sin and punishment. We need to find refuge from the relentless sun. We need to open ourselves to the possibility of change. Because imagination is the prerequisite for redemption, and it will take us everywhere.

» How do you hope to change in 5781? How do you hope to change the world in 5781?



FROM FEAR OF SELF TO FEAR OF GOD

Rabba Melissa Scholten-Gutierrez, YM '18. Manager, Jewish Camp Initiative, Jewish Federation of Atlanta, GA.

As we reach the late afternoon on Yom Kippur it can be difficult to find depth and meaning in the story of Yonah. Yet, the story of Yonah is one which begs us to ask questions which are critical to our everyday relationship with God and life. The story challenges us: What does it mean to be called by God to do something which you deeply fear? What is it like to have to keep confronting that something no matter how hard you try to run away from it?

Yonah is so overwhelmed by his fear that he runs away, trying to avoid his calling. In his commentary on Sefer Yonah, the recently deceased Rav Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz, of blessed memory, notes that while the core themes of the book are

about repentance as demonstrated by the people of Nineveh, Yonah never actually changes. He remains steadfast in his reluctance to engage with his destiny and to use his *yirat shamayim* (fear of heaven) for good.

In contrast, the sailors each initially cry out to their own gods, but ultimately unite in their shared "fear of heaven." And the people of Nineveh take action to change their ways, actively repenting in a public expression of *yirat shamayim*. In both of these instances, the repentance helps people grow, and ultimately saves their lives. When we face the things we fear for God's sake, we ultimately unite in a common vision towards good,

and become better as a result.

This is the lesson—every calling, every interaction and every bit of angst we face is there to help us move forward to be our best selves. *Yirat shamayim* ought to fuel us to be better than we were, not drive us further away from the possibility of who we can become. Sefer Yonah teaches us how to continue our confrontation with fear, and how that confrontation allows us to become better individuals.

May this Yom Kippur bring us all an opportunity to atone and start anew, feeling *yirat shamayim* in our hearts and knowing that God is rooting for us to succeed.

» How do you experience the notion of awe in your relationship with the Divine?

El Nora Alilah

A powerful expression of awe and faith originally composed by Moshe ibn Ezra in the 12th century, this poem has been adopted by many Mizrahi communities as an introduction to the Ne'ilah service.

אל נורא עלילה, אל נורא עלילה,
המציא לנו מחילה, בשעת הנעילה.

God of awe, God of might, Grant us pardon in this hour,
as Your gates are closed this night.

מתי מספר קרואים, לך עין נושאים,
ומסלדים בחילה, בשעת הנעילה.

We, who are few, raise our eyes to heaven's height, trembling, fearful in
our prayer, as Your gates are closed this night.

שופכים לך נפשם, מחה פשעם וכחשם,
והמציאם מחילה, בשעת הנעילה.

Pouring out our soul we pray that the sentence You will write shall be
one of pardoned sin, as Your gates are closed this night.

יהיה להם לסתרה, והצילם ממארה,
וחתמם להוד ולגילה, בשעת הנעילה.

Our refuge strong and sure rescue us from dreadful plight seal our
destiny for joy, as Your gates are closed this night.

חון אותם ורחם, וכל לוחץ ולוחם,
עשה בהם פלילה, בשעת הנעילה.

Grant us favor, show us grace; but those who deny our right and
oppress, be You be the judge, as Your gates are closed this night.

זכר צדקת אביהם, וחדש את ימיהם,
נקדם ותחלה, בשעת הנעילה.

Generations of our sires strong in faith walked in Your light, as of old,
renew our days, as Your gates are closed this night.

קרא נא שנת רצון, והשב שאר הצאן,
לאהליבה ואהלה, בשעת הנעילה.

Gather Judah's scattered flock unto Zion's rebuilt site, bless this year
with grace divine, as Your gates are closed this night.

תזכנו לשנים רבות, הבנים והאבות,
בדיצה ובצהלה, בשעת הנעילה.

May we all, both old and young, look for gladness and delight in the
many years to come, as Your gates are closed this night.

מיכאל שר ישראל, אליהו וגבריאל,
בשרו נא הגאלה, בשעת הנעילה.

Michael, prince of Israel, Gabriel, Your angels bright with Elijah, come,
redeem, as Your gates are closed this night.





EL NORA ALILAH

Rabba Rachel Kohl Finegold, YM '13. Director of Education and Spiritual Enrichment, Congregation Shaar Hashomayim, Westmount, Québec, Canada.

The day is dwindling. The crowd slowly trickles into the room for *Ne'ilah*.

As the sun sinks low, the tone becomes somber. This final hour is our last chance to pour out our hearts, to feel cleansed and renewed, to ready ourselves to greet the year ahead.

Several years ago, I introduced *El Nora Alilah* into the *Ne'ilah* liturgy at our Shaar Hashomayim Parallel Service. At an Ashkenazi synagogue in a city with a sizable Sephardic population, it felt important to give voice to the diversity within our congregation, by including a Sephardic *piyyut* (liturgical poem) on Yom Kippur. I welcome the *mitpalelim* back to shul after naps or study sessions, and distribute the sheets—the *piyyut* is not in our Ashkenazi machzor, though it has become part of our *Ne'ilah* ritual over the years.

We invite all the Sephardim to step forward in the men's and women's sections, and to lead the room. As we begin, the song

is jarring to our ears. The musical mode is different from what we have been hearing and singing for the last many hours. The tune is energizing. It awakens us, lifts us.

El Nora Alilah...

Each four-line stanza ends "*Bish'at ha'Ne'ilah*," at the moment of the closing of the gates.

We plead before God: grant us forgiveness, be our refuge, show us grace, recall the merits of those who came before us, in this hour of the closing of the gates of heaven.

The music is lilting. The pace quickens as we sing. It is as if we are getting more frantic, rushing to offer our final prayers as the day comes to an end.

El Nora Alilah, El Nora Alilah...

God is described here as "*Nora*," a God of awe. Throughout the holiday liturgy, we sometimes speak of our relationship with God as a close connection. But in this moment, God is a God of distance, of loftiness. From a distance, indeed, we all look the

same. God's grandeur is beyond our cultural identities or diverse histories.

During *Ne'ilah*, we are no longer Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Mizrahi, converts to Judaism, or born into the community. We are simply and deeply human. We have spent Yom Kippur stripping away the usual trappings and indulgences of the world, shedding our labels and ethnic backgrounds.

Almost exactly twenty-four hours ago, when we entered this room for Kol Nidrei, we declared that we were praying together with the *avaryanim*, the transgressors. As Yom Kippur began, we were inviting those we might consider "other" into our midst. Now, after a full day of enumerating our own transgressions, we realize that there is no "other." The illusions of "us" and "them" have fallen away. We feel united in our imperfections and our fragility. On Yom Kippur, we may feel inadequate, but at least with this tune, which is both foreign and now familiar, we are here together.

» As you imagine the gates closing, what are you grateful for and faithful for this Yom Kippur afternoon?



Ne'ilah

Koren, p. 1105
Artscroll, p. 706

As we conclude Yom Kippur, we often wish we had more time to think about our words, and more—or perhaps better—words with which to express our feelings to God. Here are three short prayers to open our hearts and allow us to truly connect to God in the final moments of Yom Kippur.

שְׁמַע נָא סִלַּח נָא הַיּוֹם. עֲבוּר כִּי פָנָה יוֹם. וְנִהְלַךְ
נִרְאָ וְאִיּוֹם. קְדוֹשׁ:

Hear us, we beseech You, please pardon us this day, even now as the day declines; and we will praise You, Awesome and Mighty One, Holy are You.

פָּתַח לָנוּ שַׁעַר. בְּעֵת נִעְלֶת שַׁעַר. כִּי פָנָה יוֹם:

Open for us the gate of prayer at the time of closing the gate for the day has declined.

הַיּוֹם יִפְנֶה. הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ יֵבֵא וְיִפְנֶה. נְבוֹאָה שְׁעָרֶיךָ:

The day declines, the sun goes down and declines, let us yet enter Your gates.

אֲנָא אֵל נָא. שָׂא נָא. סִלַּח נָא. מַחֵל נָא. חֲמַל־נָא.
רְחַם־נָא. כַּפֵּר־נָא. נְבוֹשׁ חַטָּא וְעוֹן.

Please Almighty, we beseech You, please bear with us, please pardon us, please forgive us, please have pity, please have compassion, please atone, suppress our sin and iniquity.

A COLLECTION OF SHORT PRAYERS FOR NE'ILAH

Rabbi Abe Schacter-Gampel, YCT '17. Director of Spiritual Care, Memphis Jewish Home and Rehab, Memphis, TN.

A prayer to find one more moment to pray

God, why do I pray when You already know my thoughts? I'm tired, exhausted, and hungry. I've been at this all day. I've focused on the words of the machzor and also made time to read commentary. Maybe even a moment to close my eyes and rest. And now I have no more words. "To You, silence is praise" (Psalms 65:2). Silence?! Slowing down and getting in touch with myself can be frightening. God, teach me that in a quiet moment I can find connection. Silence can be a portal inside and an opening to You. I may notice something. I may discover a new perspective. I may even find myself praying something that surprises me. The gates are about to close. I can only know when I take a chance. God, help me enter.

A prayer for questions that have no answers

"My whole being is stricken with terror, while You, Lord—O, how long!" (Psalms 6:4). God, I ask this question not because I believe there is a response that will help explain or provide satisfaction. But by asking, Lord, I give voice to experience confronting that which feels impossible. I ask, to allow the fullness of the question to be held before You. Right now there is no answer. "Lord, heed my plea, accept my prayer" (Psalms 6:10).

A prayer for when you have no words

God, I do not have the words to say to You. But even in the silence I know You are here. And I know I do not need any words, for You know me—but help me to express what I feel deep down. Let those feelings, those words, arise so that I do not have to hide from them. May the voice of my soul spring forth from my lips and bring me strength.

» If you had just one opportunity to say something to someone you love, what would it be?





NE'ILAH MEDITATION

Merle Feld, Author, Playwright and Founding Director of the Albin Rabbinic Writing Institute.

Imagine yourself in your kahal, with those who share community with you, those with whom you have built your religious life. For you are indeed still connected to them, whether you are present together or not. And so, we speak in the plural.

In this last hour, we are exhausted, filled with yearning. But also, strangely exhilarated, filled with gratitude, with hope. We say, I'm still here, some of us still able to stand.

Through Kol Nidrei, through the long morning and into the afternoon, we have searched our memories and heart— in what ways have I failed this year?—to care for others who need my care; to take some steps toward justice, peace, sustainability in the world; where, how, did I miss the mark? We have petitioned for forgiveness, for relief from guilt and sorrow.

We have fervently prayed for life, for health, for vigor, prayed for sustenance, for parnassah, prayed for ourselves and for our households—the family and friends we love. May all who are dear to us be given life and health, sustenance, success, happiness, joy, all manner of blessings in the new year. And we have prayed for people we do not

know—people in our town, people across our country, people around the world—please, an end to suffering.

In this last hour as we continue our work of teshuvah, of petition and turning, let me offer a brief thought to help deliver us well into the new year.

I invite you to ask yourself— for what am I grateful in the year which is closing?

[allow yourself time]

Who has shown me kindness this year—a word? an embrace? a sign of appreciation or support? Remember in this hour the goodness of others who have helped you through the year.

[allow yourself time]

And then, what is a vision of yourself you hold for the new year, some small change you'd like to strive for?

[allow yourself time]

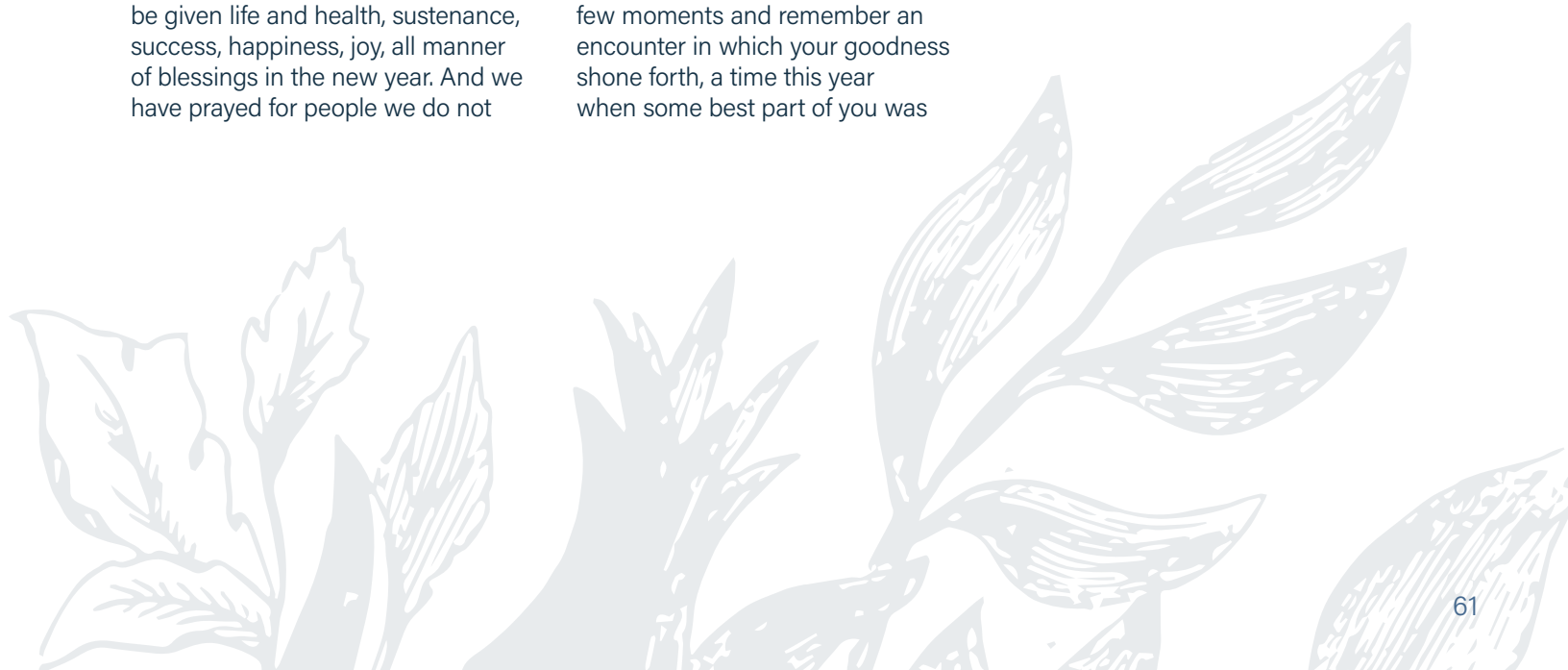
And finally, I invite you, take a few moments and remember an encounter in which your goodness shone forth, a time this year when some best part of you was

present—perhaps you welcomed a new neighbor; you supported a co-worker in distress; you visited a sick friend; you comforted someone in mourning; you were gentle with your child, your parent, your sibling, your partner; you stood strong, you shouted out for justice; you joined in alliance with others to do the daily work of building a new world.

What is the story of that best self coming forward? How did that happen? And how can you let that best part of you shine forth more often in the coming year?

[allow yourself time]

Let us sit quietly for a few minutes and remember it all—our gratitude; the goodness of others; a vision of ourselves to strive for; our own acts of kindness, of generosity, strong spirit. As the gates are closing, may you be inscribed and sealed for a good year.



To Build Our Homes Anew



Ne'ilah comes at the very end of the day of Yom Kippur, at the time of the closing of the gates in the Beit HaMikdash. Having spent the entire day with the Kohen Gadol in God's innermost sanctum, having felt an intimacy, having experienced moments of kedushah, we are not yet ready to leave. We go into the Sanctuary once again, we add this one extra prayer to reach out one last time, before our lives must return to normal.

At this moment we ask ourselves—how will I transition from Ne'ilah to Maariv, from Yom Kippur to my daily life? What perspective and realization can I take from this holy day to bring into the rest of the year?

We are told that immediately after Yom Kippur we should go out and build a succah. We are to throw ourselves into the first mitzvah that we encounter. But it goes deeper than that. We are to take the kedushah of this day, a day fully removed from our physical existence, and translate into action, into doing, into building.

The building of the succah is the building of a new home, a new environment. It is a building of a world as we would like to see it, with God's presence hovering overhead, and with ourselves taking ownership over how we construct it. We ask: How will we build our domestic homes and how will we build our societal homes? Will our home life be one conducive to Torah, mitzvot and serving God? And in our larger home, we ask: will our actions and choices make our society a better place to live, will they bring an awareness of God, a care for the health of the planet and for the wellbeing, safety and security of all its inhabitants?

The Temple Service on Yom Kippur did not only atone for sin. It's first and primary function was to cleanse the Temple of the impurities caused by sin. Our avodah, then, is to work to cleanse our environment and to bring into it a sense of kedushah.

We have been living this last half-year within a world that has turned upside down. To some degree this reality was created by forces beyond our control. But to some degree, it was created by choices, decisions, and actions that we as humans have taken. And in the course of these events, societal ills that had been just below surface have become uncovered and more obvious. How can we make a difference? What role will we play to help make things better going forward?

Our home environment has changed drastically as well. Many of our children are doing school partly or full online. We are around each other all the time. We are working from home. How have we built this succah, this home? Will we be able to make it one in which we listen actively, in which give our children, spouses and siblings our full attention, in which we act towards one another with a generosity of spirit?

Our communal realities have likewise been transformed. The ability to congregate and to create a sense of connection and community has been seriously curtailed. Shabbos is harder, and the Yamim Nora'im are so much harder. But rather than despair, we must build. We must create a succah and a home with the material at hand, and find ways, old and new, to bring kedushah into our communal life and into Shabbat and our most holy of days.

It is our hope that this Companion has made a contribution to that effort. There is, however, so much more work to be done. And there is also much opportunity to find new opportunities for kedushah, for Torah, for community and connection. Let us use these precious moments as the day of Yom Kippur draws to a close, to consider how we will bring the sanctity of Ne'ilah into the building of our succah and into our homes, large and small.

G'mar Hatimah Tovah and Shanah Tovah,

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