



AHAVAT ACHIM

קהלת אהבת אחיכם

THE FAMILY SHUL

VAYEILECH | SEPT 10 - SEPT 17, 2021

| 4 TISHREI - 11 TISHREI |

CANDLE LIGHTING 6:56 PM

HAVDALAH 7:57 PM

SHABBAT

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 10

SHACHARIT	6:30 AM
EARLIEST CANDLE LIGHTING	5:54 PM
CANDLE LIGHTING	6:56 PM
MINCHA	7:00 PM

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 11

HASHKAMA	8:15 AM
SHACHARIT	9:00 AM
LAST KRIAT SHMA	9:43 AM
SHABBAT SHUVA DRASHA	5:45 PM
MINCHA	6:45 PM
MAARIV/HAVDALAH	7:57 PM

אב הרוחנים is recited at Mussaf
זכרתך זך is recited at Mincha

YOMIM NORAIM

As we have done in the past, we also plan to provide childcare during Yomim Noraim davening. Due to COVID-19 constraints, we expect the childcare to take place outdoors in the parking area. Childcare is free to all who daven with us. We have found that childcare works best when shul members take an active interest by spending time where groups take place.

Please note, there will not be assigned seating this year.

THIS SHABBAT

The COVID-19 committee met and made a few additions to existing COVID-19 protocols to hopefully help make the shul experience comfortable for everyone. These are (1) everyone at the bima during leining is required to wear a mask and (2) a few tables on the men's side of davening will be designated as "mask only" tables. It is important to reiterate that ALL unvaccinated individuals, including children two years and above, MUST wear a properly fitting mask at all times (no exceptions) while indoors on Shul premises.

The Hashkama minyan will be located in the main sanctuary starting at 8:15 am. Until the air conditioning is repaired, the main minyan will take place in the David Schwitzer ^{ר'ז} Social Hall.

Groups for children ages 0-5 and 6 and up are held in the parking lot from 10:15a-11:15a.

Going forward, Kiddush will be held outdoors. In order for this to work, everyone is asked to help setting up for and cleanup up from Kiddush.

Rabbi Shestack will be giving his Shabbat Shuva Drasha at 5:45pm on the subject of "Jewish Education is Life!".

Seuda Shlishit is sponsored by Elliot Greene in memory of the Yahrzeit of his father, Harold Greene (זכי הירש בן) Seuda Shlishit is co-sponsored by Hazkiel Kor to commemorate the Shloshim for his father Avraham Ben Yechezkiel z'l Due to the mask-wearing mandate for anyone not vaccinated, those who are not vaccinated should eat seudat shlishit prior to coming to shul.

THIS WEEK

Yom Kippur begins on Wednesday night and will end on Thursday night.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Please join the Youth Department for an exciting Sukkot craft and pizza party! Create a special decoration for your Sukkah! This fun event will be led by Sara Yehaskel on *Sunday, September 12th at 3:30 PM*. Debbie and Ben Lang have generously sponsored this event in honor of Debbie's father, Sam Jaeger z"l. The event is now free to attend. Thank you to the Langs for this beautiful gesture.
RSVP: kira.batist.msw@gmail.com

Children ages 2 and up are invited to a special Sukkot Edition Stay and Play on *September 22nd at 4 PM*. Thank you to Liz Jacob for hosting us! More details to follow.

ZEMANIM



Enhancing Jewish Life

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
	9/12	9/13	9/14	9/15	9/16	9/17
Shacharit	8:00 AM	6:00 AM	6:10 AM	6:20 AM		6:25 AM
Mincha/Maariv	6:58 PM	6:57 PM	6:55 PM			6:50 PM
Earliest Talit	5:39 AM	5:40 AM	5:41 AM	5:43 AM		5:45 AM
Gedolah	1:24 PM	1:23 PM	1:23 PM	1:22 PM		1:21 PM
Shkia	7:10 PM	7:09 PM	7:07 PM			
Tzait	7:50 PM	7:49 PM	7:47 PM			7:42 PM



IN OUR SHUL

We are looking for people to help us assemble the Shul Sukkah on Sunday morning, September 19 following morning minyan (approximately 9:00am). If you are available, please contact [Elliot Greene via email](#) or via text at 201-519-7951.

With Sukkot fast approaching, it is time to think about ordering your Lulav and Etrog set. Once again we will be working with Bnei Akiva of NY and NJ. The Arbat Haminim sale will be run as we did last year. Pre-order your Etrog and Lulav by [clicking on this link and completing the online form](#). If you haven't ordered your Lulov/Etrog sets yet, please note that Bnai Akiva has upgraded its online form so that you can save the \$10 shipping fee if you are planning to pick up your order from the shul. The deadline for the pre-order is *Friday, September 17 at 12:00pm*. Curbside pickup is scheduled for *Sunday, September 19 from 9:00am until 10:30am* in the Shul parking lot. Bnei Akiva will have a table with all the pre-orders. All you have to do is just "grab and go". Lulavim will be pre-tied and Etrogim will be labeled and set aside. If you have any questions, please contact [Elliot Greene via email](#) or at 201-519-7951.

IN OUR FAMILY

On the first day of Sukkot (Tuesday, September 21), we are scheduling a "Sukkah Hop" in the later afternoon. Please contact [Elliot Green via email](#) or phone (201-519-7951) if you would like to volunteer to host a stop.

Thank you to the Dworkis, Freund, Lang, Riskin and Spier families (apologies to anyone we inadvertently missed!) who donated school supplies to the Cheryl Wigod Z'L Tzedakah Fund school supplies drive. We contributed 24 backpacks and other school supplies to the Boys and Girls Club of Paterson and Passaic. We also contributed dozens of crayons, pencils, and notebooks for 200 kits distributed by Healing the Children.

To accommodate people who wish to drive to shul *before* Yom Kippur, then drive home *after* Yom Kippur, the borough of Fair Lawn has given us permission to park in the Saddle River Road Commuter Parking Lot located at 20-05 Saddle River Road, just 7 houses from the shul, at the entrance to the Recycling Center. This special permission remains available *only* for Yom Kippur, September 15 through the evening of Thursday, September 16. Some people who parked there over Rosh Hashana were erroneously given parking tickets. These have already been reversed and we have been assured that this will not happen over Yom Kippur. As this is a municipal lot, Ahavat Achim is not responsible for damages.

IN OUR FAMILY

Please contact David Garfunkel if you wish to sponsor a kiddush or seudat shlishit. To sponsor a celebration for your child's birthday at Shabbat groups email [kira.batist.msw@gmail.com!](mailto:kira.batist.msw@gmail.com) \$25 per family.

Have something to add to the bulletin? [Use our bulletin submission form!](#) (also available on our website)

YOM KIPPUR

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15		THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 16	
SHACHARIT	6:20 AM	SHACHARIT	8:00 AM
MINCHA	3:00 PM	LAST KRIAT SHMA	9:45 AM
FAST BEGINS	6:47 PM	YIZKOR	10:00 AM
CANDLE LIGHTING	6:47 PM	MINCHA	5:00 PM
KOL NIDRE / MAARIV	6:55 PM	NEILAH	6:30 PM
		MAARIV/HAVDALAH	7:48 PM

Outdoor Tot Shabbat & Groups

@ Congregation Ahavat Achim

Parents & children ages 0-5 are invited to Daven and play together!

Shabbat mornings from 10:15-11:15 AM

To learn more about drop off options, please email
kira.batist.msw@gmail.com

Masking required for children 2 and older.





Dear Ahavat Achim Family,

With the High Holiday season fast approaching, it is time to think about ordering your Lulav and Etrog set for Sukkot. Once again we will be working with Bnei Akiva of NY and NJ. The Arbat Haminim sale will be run as we did last year. Pre-order your Etrog and Lulav by clicking on this link and completing the online form:

<https://www.bneiakiva.org/mifalahavat/>

The deadline for the pre-order is Friday, September 17 at 12:00 noon. Curbside pickup is scheduled for Sunday, September 19 from 9:00am until 10:30am in the Shul parking lot. Bnei Akiva will have a table with all the pre-orders. All you have to do is just "grab and go". Lulavim will be pre-tied and Etrogim will be labeled and set aside.

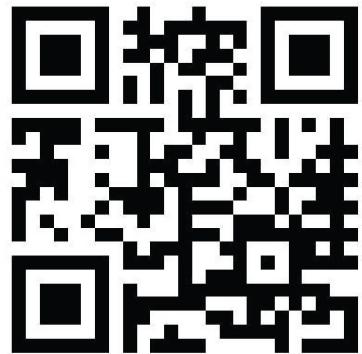
If you have any questions, contact Elliot Greene at egreene@acm.org or via cellphone at 201-519-7951.

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- Fairlawn and the surrounding areas
- Queens/Five Towns and surrounding areas
- Washington Heights

**Exact Time TBA but will be the week before Succot.
Pick-up and in-person sales information to follow.**

www.bneiakiva.org/mifalahavat

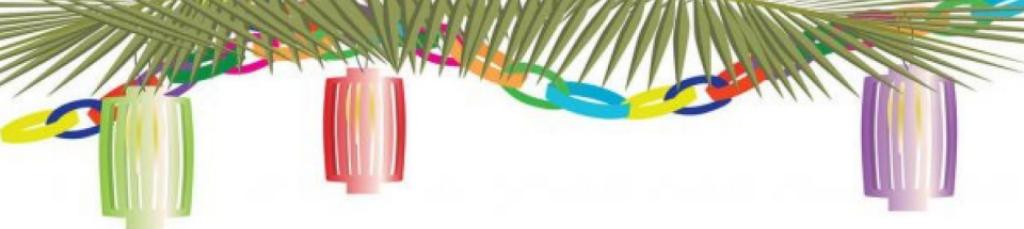
For more information, please contact: arbaminim@bneiakiva.org | 212-465-9536



To sponsor a celebration for your
child's birthday at Shabbat groups
email [kira.batist.msw@gmail.com!](mailto:kira.batist.msw@gmail.com)

\$25
per
family





Join us for Stay & Play: Sukkot Edition

September 22nd at 4 PM

Hosted by Liz Jacob
14 Fayette Place, Fair Lawn, NJ



AHAVAT ACHIM
ההַלְאָבָת אֲחִים
THE FAMILY SHUL

Sukkot Craft & Pizza Party



***Sponsored by the Langs in memory
of Debbie's father, Sam Jaeger z"l
Create a special sukkah decoration with
your friends!***

Led by Sara Yehaskel

***Sunday, September 12 at 3:30 PM
In the shul parking lot***

RSVP to kira.batist.msw@gmail.com by 9/10



AHAVAT ACHIM

קהילת אהבת אחיכם

THE FAMILY SHUL

COVENANT & CONVERSATION



LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP

WITH RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ז"ת



With thanks to **Wohl Legacy** for their generous sponsorship of Covenant & Conversation. Maurice was a visionary philanthropist. Vivienne was a woman of the deepest humility. Together, they were a unique partnership of dedication and grace, for whom living was giving.

Consensus vs. Command?

Vayelech 5782

What do you say to your successor? What advice do you give them? *Vayelech* is the place to look for the answer, because it is here that Moses finally hands the reins over to Joshua, and he and God both give him a blessing for the future. But they give different blessings.

Listen to them and they sound almost the same. Moses says “Be strong and of good courage, for you will come [*tavo*] with this people into the land” (Deut. 31:7). God says, “Be strong and of good courage, for you will bring [*tavi*] the Israelites into the land” (Deut. 31:23). *Tavo* or *tavi*, “come with” or “bring.” The words sound and seem similar. But the difference as understood by the Sages was total.

Here is how Rashi puts it:

Moses said to Joshua, “Make sure that the elders of the generation are with you. Always act according to their opinion and advice.” However, the Holy One blessed be He said to Joshua, “For you will *bring* the Israelites into the land I promised them” – meaning, “Bring them even against their will. It all depends on you. If necessary, take a stick and beat them over the head. There is only one leader for a generation, not two.”

These are the two extremes of leadership: consensus or command. Moses advised Joshua to pursue a policy of consultation and conciliation. What he was saying in effect was, “You don’t need to follow the people. You are the leader, not they. But you do need to work with the elders. They too are leaders. They constitute, in effect, your team. They need to feel that they are part of the decision-making process. They will not expect you always to agree with them. Often they will not agree with one another. But they do need to feel consulted.

“If they sense that you are not interested in their opinions, if the impression they have of you is of a person determined to do things his way regardless of everyone else because you know better, they will attempt to sabotage you. They will do you harm. They may not succeed. You may survive. But you will be

injured. You will limp. Your standing among the people will be diminished. They will say, how can we respect one who is not respected by the elders?

"I speak from experience. The Korach rebellion was serious. It was not just Korach; it was also the Reubenites, and other leaders from the various tribes. And though the rebellion was cut short in the most dramatic way possible, we were all diminished and nothing was quite the same ever again. So: make sure that the elders of the generation are with you. If they are, you will succeed."

God, according to the Sages, took the opposite approach. "The time has come to leave the wilderness, cross the Jordan, conquer the land and build the kind of society that honours the human beings I made in My image instead of enslaving and exploiting them. Don't look for consensus. You will never find it. People's interests are different. Their perspectives are not the same. Politics is an arena of conflict. I did not want it to be that way, but having given humanity the gift of freedom, I cannot take it back and impose My will by force. So you must show the people the way.

"Lead from the front. Be clear. Be consistent. Be strong. The last person who gave the people what they wanted was Aaron and what they wanted was a Golden Calf. That was nearly the end of the Jewish people. Consensus, in politics or business or even in pursuit of truth, is not leadership but the abdication of leadership. I chose you to be Moses' successor because I believe in you. Therefore, believe in yourself. Tell the people what they must do, and tell them why."

"Be respectful of them. By all means, listen to them. But at the end of the day the responsibility is yours. Leaders lead. They do not follow. And believe me, though they may criticise you now they will eventually admire you. People want their leaders to know the way, go the way and show the way. They want them to be decisive. Always treat people with the utmost courtesy and respect. But if they do not behave toward you as you do toward them, if they oppose and try to frustrate what you are doing, there may be no choice but to take a stick and hit them on the head. There is only one leader in a generation. If everyone is empowered, there is no music, only noise; no achievement, only an endless committee meeting at which everyone speaks and no one listens."

Those were, then and now, the two great options. But notice something odd. The person urging consensus is Moses. But Moses never acted by consensus. This is the man who almost had to drag the people out of Egypt, through the sea, and across a howling desert, the man who did things of his own initiative without even asking God.

This is the man who broke the Tablets of Stone hewn and engraved by God Himself. When did Moses ever lead by consensus? To be sure he had seventy elders, princes of tribes, and a devolved structure of administration with heads of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens, but though they helped him, they did not advise him nor did he seek their advice. What suddenly turned Moses into a peacenik, a lead-by-consensus man?

That is one problem. The other is the advice given by God Himself: lead from the front, even against their will. But that is not how God acted, as understood by the Sages. This is what they said on the words immediately prior to the creation of humanity, "Let us make man in our image" (Gen. 1:26):

"Let Us make man": From here we learn the humility of the Holy One, blessed be He. Since man was created in the likeness of the angels, and they would envy him, He consulted them...

Even though they [the angels] did not assist Him in His creation, and there is an opportunity for the heretics to rebel (to misconstrue the plural as a basis for their

**"Lead from the front.
Be clear. Be consistent.
Be strong."**

heresies), Scripture did not hesitate to teach proper conduct and the trait of humility, that a great person should consult with and receive permission from a smaller one.¹

The Sages, puzzled by the plural, “Let *us* make man,” interpreted it to mean that God consulted with the angels. Despite the fact that the use of the word “us” was dangerous – it could be read as compromising the pure monotheism of Judaism – nonetheless the principle of consultation is so important that the Torah takes the risk of being open to misinterpretation. God consults, according to the Sages. “God does not act tyrannically toward His creatures.” (Avoda Zara 3a)

To be sure, the Sages said that at Sinai God suspended the mountain above the Israelites and said, “If you say ‘No,’ this will be your grave.” (Shabbat 88a) But this is not the plain sense of the verse. To the contrary, before he gave the Torah to Israel he commanded Moses to explain to the people what was being proposed (Ex. 19:4-6). And it was only when the people – “*all the people together*” (Ex. 19:8) “*with one voice*” (Ex. 24:3) – that the covenant was made. That is the biblical basis for the idea, in the American Declaration of Independence, that governments gain their authority from “the consent of the governed.” The very act of giving humans freedom means that God never forces us against our will. As Eisenhower once said, “Hitting people over the head is not leadership: it is assault.” So why was God here, as it were, speaking out of character?

The answer, it seems to me, is this: Both God and Moses wanted Joshua to know that true leadership cannot be a one-sided affair, be it the pursuit of consensus or command-and-control. It must be a deft balance of both. They wanted Joshua to hear this in the most striking way, so each said what they were least expected to say.

Moses, whom everyone associated with strong, decisive leadership, in effect told Joshua, “Don’t forget to strive for consensus. Your task is not what mine was. I had to take people out of slavery. You have to lead them into a land of freedom. Freedom means taking people seriously. The leadership of a free people involves listening, respecting and striving for consensus wherever possible.”

God, who gave humans their freedom and never imposed Himself on people against their will, said, “Joshua, I am God; you are not. I have to respect people’s freedom. I have to let them go the way they are determined to go, even if it is wrong and self-destructive. But you are a human among humans and it is your task to show them the way that leads to justice, compassion and the good society. If the people do not agree with you, you have to teach them, persuade them, but ultimately you have to lead them, because if everyone does what is right in their own eyes, that is not freedom but chaos.”

In short, leadership is not simple. It is complex because it involves people and people are complex. You have to listen, and you have to lead. You have to strive for consensus but ultimately, if there is none, you must take the risk of deciding. Had they waited for consensus Lincoln, would never have ended slavery, Roosevelt and Churchill would never have led the free world to victory, and Ben Gurion would never have proclaimed the State of Israel.

It is not the job of leaders to give people what they want. It is the job of leaders to teach people what they ought to want. But at the same time they must involve people in the decision-making process. Key figures and constituencies must feel that they were consulted. Collaborative, consultative, listening leadership is essential in a free society. Otherwise, there is autocracy tempered by assassination.²

Leaders must be teachers but also learners. They must be visionaries and yet have time for the details. They must push people but never too far, too fast, or they will fail. They must speak to the better

¹ Rashi to Genesis 1:27; Genesis Rabbah, 8.

² A phrase attributed to Voltaire but actually from German diplomat Georg Herbert zu Munster (1820–1902).

**“Collaborative,
consultative, listening
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in a free society.”**

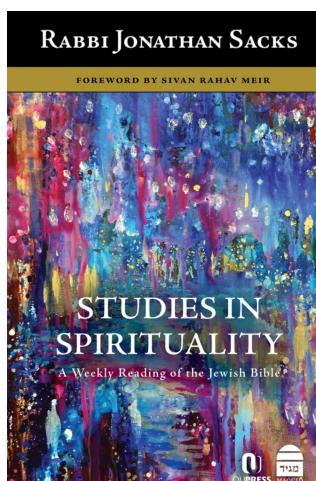
angels of our nature, teaching us to love not hate, forgive not seek revenge. They must always prefer the peaceful solution to the one that involves taking a stick and hitting people on the head, even though they are prepared to do so if there is no alternative. Leaders must be capable of more than one style of leadership. Otherwise, as Abraham Maslow said, “Those who only have a hammer treat every problem as if it were a nail.”³

Considering the effort, energy, stress and pain, why anyone should seek to be a leader would remain a mystery, were it not for this luminous truth: **there is no better way to flood life with meaning than to have lifted others and helped them to a greatness they never knew they had; to have together with others righted some of the wrongs of this injured earth and its creatures; to have acted rather than waited for others to act, and to have brought others with you, for the greatest leader on earth or in heaven cannot lead alone.**

These are what make leadership the greatest privilege by which any of us can be blessed. As Moses said to Joshua, “Happy are you to have merited leading the children of God.” (Rashi to Num. 27:18) The crown of leadership is invisible, yet you know who is wearing it and who is not. It is there, in front of you, waiting for you to put it on.⁴ Wear it with pride and may all you do be blessed.



1. What leadership advice did Moshe give to Yehoshua?
2. Why do you think it is important for a leader to make their followers feel heard (even when a consensus is unlikely)?
3. How is Moshe's model of leadership similar to a democratic system of government?



NEW BOOK ANNOUNCEMENT:

[Studies in Spirituality: A weekly reading of the Jewish Bible](#)

This is the newest volume collating a year of Rabbi Sacks' *Covenant & Conversation* essays. Each chapter on the weekly Torah portion contains an uplifting idea on finding spirituality within every sedra, and within ourselves.

With a Foreword by Sivan Rahav Meir.



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³ The Psychology of Science: A Reconnaissance (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 15–16.

⁴ Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Talmud Torah 3:1.

CEREMONY & CELEBRATION

FAMILY EDITION

THIS SERIES IS BASED ON THE TEACHINGS AND WRITINGS OF

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ל"ז



YOM KIPPUR

Educational content provided by Dr. Daniel Rose together with The Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust

Yom Kippur in a Nutshell

YOM KIPPUR is the holy of holies of Jewish time, when we give an account of our lives. We reflect on what has happened to us and what we plan to do in the coming year. The single most important lesson of Yom Kippur is that it's never too late to change, start again, and live differently from the way we've done in the past. God forgives every mistake we've made as long as we are honest in regretting it and doing our best to put it right. Even if there's nothing we regret, Yom Kippur makes us think about how to use the coming year in such a way as to bring blessings into the lives of others by way of thanking God for all He has given us.

In ancient times Yom Kippur was celebrated in the form of a massive public ceremony set in the Temple in Jerusalem. The holiest man in Israel, the High Priest, entered the most sacred space, the Holy of Holies, confessed the sins of the nation using God's holiest name, and secured atonement for all Israel. It was a moment of intense drama in the life of a people who believed that their fate depended on their relationship with God, who knew that there is no life, let alone a nation, without sin, and

who knew from their history that sin could be punished by catastrophe.

After the destruction of the Second Temple, everything changed. There was no longer a High Priest, no sacrifice, no Divine fire, no Levites singing praises or crowds thronging the precincts of Jerusalem and filling the Temple Mount. Above all, there was no Yom Kippur ritual through which the people could find forgiveness.

It was then that a transformation took place that must constitute one of the great creative responses to tragedy in history. Yom Kippur was transferred from the Temple in Jerusalem to every synagogue in the world. Instead of the High Priest acting as a representative, God Himself would purify His people without the need for an intermediary. Even ordinary Jews could, as it were, come face to face with the Shechinah, the Divine presence. They needed no one else to apologise for them. The drama that once took place in the Temple could now take place in the human heart. Yom Kippur was saved, and it is not too much to say that Jewish faith was also saved.



Points to Ponder

1 How does Yom Kippur help us focus on the future and on making a change?

2 How did Yom Kippur change after the *churban* (destruction of the Temple)? What are the advantages of each approach?

3 How did this transition "save Jewish faith"?

How Yom Kippur Changes Us

TO THOSE WHO fully open themselves to it, Yom Kippur is a life-transforming experience.

It tells us that God, who created the universe in love and forgiveness, reaches out to us in love and forgiveness, asking us to love and forgive others. God never asked us not to make mistakes. All He asks is that we acknowledge our mistakes, learn from them, grow through them and make amends where we can.

No religion has held such a high view of human possibility.

The God who created us in His image gave us freedom. We are not tainted by original sin, destined to fail, caught in the grip of an evil only Divine grace can defeat.

To the contrary, we have within us the power to choose life. Together we have the power to change the world.



Adapted from the introduction to the *Koren Yom Kippur Machzor* with commentary and translation by Rabbi Sacks

The following five concepts, all central to Yom Kippur, contain core Jewish values and ideas that mould us as Jews and human beings.

1. Shame and guilt

Judaism is the world's greatest example of a guilt-and-repentance culture as opposed to the shame-and-honour culture of the ancient Greeks.



In a shame culture such as that of Greek tragedy, evil attaches to the person. It is a kind of indelible stain. There is no way back for one who has done a shameful deed. They become a pariah and the best they can hope for is to die in a noble cause. Conversely,

in a guilt culture like that of Judaism, evil is an attribute of the act, not the agent. Even one who has done wrong has a sacred self that remains intact. They may have to undergo punishment. They certainly have to make amends. But there remains a core of worth that can never be lost. A guilt culture hates the sin, not the sinner. Repentance, rehabilitation and return are always possible.

A guilt culture is a culture of responsibility. We do not blame anyone else for the wrong we do. It is always tempting to blame others – it wasn't me, it was my parents, my upbringing, my friends, my genes, my social class, the media, the system, "them." That was what the first two humans did in the Garden of Eden. When challenged by God for eating the forbidden fruit, the man blamed the woman. The woman blamed the serpent. The result was paradise lost.

Blaming others for our failings is as old as humanity, but it is disastrous. It means that we define ourselves as victims. A culture of victimhood wins the compassion of others but at too high a cost. It incubates feelings of resentment, humiliation, grievance and grudge. It leads people to rage against the world instead of taking steps to mend it. Jews have suffered much, but Yom Kippur prevents us from ever defining ourselves as victims. As we confess our sins, we

blame no one and take full responsibility for our actions. Knowing God will forgive us, allows us to be completely honest with ourselves.

REFLECT: What do you want to change in yourself today to become a better you tomorrow?

2. The growth mindset

Yom Kippur also allows us to grow. We owe a debt to cognitive behavioural therapy for reminding us of a classic element of Jewish faith: that when we change the way we think, we change the way we feel. And when we feel differently, we live differently. What we believe shapes what we become.

At the heart of *teshuva* is the belief that we can change. We are not destined to be forever what we were. In the Torah we see Yehudah grow from an envious brother prepared to sell Yosef as a slave, to a man with the conscience and courage to offer himself as a slave so that his brother Binyamin can go free.

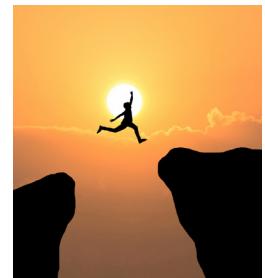
We know that some people relish a challenge and take risks, while others, no less gifted, play it safe and ultimately underachieve. Psychologists tell us that the crucial difference lies in whether you think of your ability as fixed or as something developed through effort and experience. *Teshuvah* is essentially about effort and experience. It assumes we can grow.

Teshuvah means I can take risks, knowing that I may fail but knowing that failure is not final. It means that if I get things wrong and make mistakes, God does not lose faith in me even though I may lose faith in myself. God believes in us, even if we do not. That alone is a life-changing fact if we fully open ourselves to its implications.

Teshuvah means that the past is not irredeemable. It means that from every mistake, I grow. There is no failure I experience that does not make me a deeper human being; no challenge I accept, however much I fall short, that does not develop in me strengths I would not otherwise have had.

That is the first transformation of Yom Kippur: a renewed relationship with myself.

REFLECT: What failure in your life have you grown from?



Teshuvah means I can take risks, knowing that I may fail but knowing that failure is not final. It means that if I get things wrong and make mistakes, God does not lose faith in me even though I may lose faith in myself.

3. Our relationships with others

The second transformation is a renewed relationship with others. We know that Yom Kippur atones only for sins between us and God, but that does not mean that these are the only sins for which we need to seek atonement. To the contrary: many, even most, of the sins we confess on Yom Kippur are about our relationships with other people. Throughout the prophetic and rabbinic literature, it is assumed that as we act to others, so God acts to us. Those who forgive are forgiven. Those who condemn are condemned.

The Ten Days of Repentance between Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur are a time when we try to mend relationships that have broken. It takes one kind of moral courage to apologise, another to forgive, but both may be necessary.

Failure to heal relationships can split families, destroy marriages, ruin friendships and divide communities. That is not where God wants us to be. We are taught that after Sarah died, Avraham took back Hagar and Yishmael into his family, mending the rift that had occurred many years before. Aharon, according to tradition, was loved by all the people because he was able to mend fractured friendships.

Without a designated day, would we ever get around to mending our broken relationships? Often we do not tell people how they have hurt us because we do not want to look vulnerable and small-minded. In the opposite direction, sometimes we are reluctant to apologise because we feel so guilty that we do not want to expose our guilt.

REFLECT: Which relationships do you need to mend this year?

4. Coming home

The third transformation is a renewed relationship with God. On Yom Kippur, God is close. Jewish life is full of signals of transcendence, intimations of eternity. We encounter God in three ways: through creation, revelation and redemption.

Through creation: the more we understand of cosmology, the more we realise how improbable the universe is. The universe is too finely tuned for the emergence of stars, planets and

life to have come into existence by chance. The more we understand of the sheer improbability of the existence of the universe, the emergence of life from inanimate matter, and the equally mysterious appearance of Homo sapiens, the only life-form capable of asking the question “Why?”, the more the line from Tehillim rings true: “How numerous are Your works, Lord; You made them all in wisdom” (Tehillim 104:24).

Through revelation: the words of God as recorded in the Torah. There is nothing in history to compare to the fact that Jews spent a thousand years (from Moshe to the last of the Prophets) compiling a commentary to the Torah in the form of the prophetic, historical and wisdom books of Tanach, then another thousand years (from Malachi to the Talmud Bavli) compiling a commentary to the commentary in the form of the vast literature of the Oral Torah (Midrash, Mishnah and Gemara), then another thousand years (from the Geonim to the Achronim, the later authorities) writing commentaries to the commentary to the commentary.

And through history: many great thinkers, including Blaise Pascal and Leo Tolstoy, believed that Jewish history was the most compelling evidence of the existence of God. Sometimes God comes to us not as the conclusion of a line of reasoning but as a feeling, an intuition, a sensed presence, as we stand in the synagogue on this holy day – listening to our people’s melodies, saying the words Jews have said from Barcelona to Bergen-Belsen to Bnei Brak, from Toledo to Treblinka to Tel Aviv – knowing that we are part of an immense story that has played itself out through the centuries and continents, the tempestuous yet ultimately hope-inspiring love story of a people in search of God, and God in search of a people.

There has never been a drama remotely like this in its ups and downs, triumphs and tragedies, its songs of praise and lamentation, and we are part of it. For most of us it is not something we chose but a fate we were born into.

REFLECT: Where do you connect to God the most: creation (science and nature), revelation (the Torah), or redemption (history)?



There has never been a drama remotely like this in its ups and downs, triumphs and tragedies, its songs of praise and lamentation, and we are part of it.

5. What chapter will we write in the Book of Life?

On this day of days we are brutally candid: "Before I was formed I was unworthy, and now that I have been formed it is as if I had not been formed. I am dust while alive, how much more so when I am dead." Yet the same faith that inspired those words also declared that we should see ourselves and the world as if equally poised between merit and guilt, and that our next act could tilt the balance, for my life and for the world (Rambam, *Laws of Repentance* 3:4). Judaism lives in this dialect between our smallness and our potential greatness. We may be dust, but within us are immortal longings.

Yom Kippur invites us to become better than we were, in the knowledge that we can be better than we are. That knowledge comes from God. If we are only self-made, we live within the prison of our own limitations. The truly great human beings are those who have opened themselves to the inspiration of something greater than themselves.

Yom Kippur is about the humility that leads to greatness: our ability to say, over and over again, "*Al cheit shechatanu*", "We have sinned," and yet know that this is not said in self-pity, but rather, the prelude to greater achievement in the future, the way a champion in any sport, a maestro in any field, reviews his or her past mistakes as part of the preparation for the next challenge, the next rung to climb.

The power of Yom Kippur is that it brings us face to face with these truths. Through its words, music and devotions, through the way it focuses energies by depriving us of all the physical pleasures we normally associate with a Jewish festival, through the sheer driving passion of the liturgy with its hundred ways of

saying sorry, it confronts us with the ultimate question: How will we live? Will we live a life that fully explores the capacity of the human mind to reach out to that which lies beyond it? Will we grow emotionally? Will we learn the arts of loyalty and love? Will we train our inner ear to hear the cry of the lonely and the poor? Will we live a life that makes a difference, bringing the world—that-is a little closer to the world—that-ought-to-be? Will we open our hearts and minds to God?

The most demanding day of the Jewish year, a day without food and drink, a day of prayer and penitence, confession and pleading, in which we accuse ourselves of every conceivable sin, still calls to Jews, touching us at the deepest level of our being. It is a day in which we run toward the open arms of God, weeping because we may have disappointed Him, or because sometimes we feel He has disappointed us, yet knowing that we need one another, for though God can create a universe, He cannot live within the human heart unless we let Him in.

It is a day not just of confession and forgiveness but of a profound liberation. Atonement means that we can begin again. We are not held captive by the past or by our failures. The Book of Life is open and God invites us – His hand guiding us the way a scribe guides the hand of those who write a letter in a Torah scroll – to write a new chapter in the story of our people, a chapter uniquely our own yet one that we cannot write on our own without being open to something vaster than we will ever fully understand. It is a day on which God invites us to greatness.

REFLECT: What have you achieved this past year with the help of God, and what would you like to achieve with His help next year?



The Book of Life is open and God invites us – His hand guiding us the way a scribe guides the hand of those who write a letter in a Torah scroll – to write a new chapter in the story of our people.

Deep Diving into the Tefillah of the Day: Viduy (Confession)

Tefillah text and commentary taken from the *Koren Sacks Yom Kippur Machzor*

אַשְׁמָנָנוּ
בְּגַדְנוּ, גַּזְלָנוּ, דִּבְרָנוּ דָּפֵי
הַעֲיָנוּ, וְהַרְשָׁעָנוּ, זָדָנוּ,
חַמְסָנוּ, טַפְלָנוּ שָׁכֵר
יַעֲצָנוּ רָע, בָּזָבָנוּ, לְעַזָּנוּ,
מוֹדָנוּ, נָאצָנוּ, סְרָרוּנוּ
עוֹנוּנוּ, פְּשָׁעָנוּ, צְרוּנוּ, קְשִׁינוּ עֹזֶר
רְשָׁעָנוּ, שְׁחַתָּנוּ, תְּעַבְּנוּ, תְּעִינָנוּ, תְּעַתְּעָנוּ.

אַשְׁמָנָנוּ We have been guilty, we have acted treacherously, we have robbed, we have spoken slander.
בְּגַדְנוּ We have acted perversely, we have acted wickedly, we have acted presumptuously, we have been violent, we have framed lies.
גַּזְלָנוּ 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.
דִּבְרָנוּ We have acted wickedly, we have corrupted, we have acted abominably, we have strayed, we have led others astray.

Background to the Tefillah

THIS IS THE first section of the *Viduy* (confession), said at every service over the day, from Minchah on Erev Yom Kippur until Ne'ilah at the conclusion of Yom Kippur. Confession is the primary expression of repentance, the central theme of Yom Kippur. According to Rambam, it is the biblical source of the command of *teshuva*: “Any man or woman who wrongs another in any way and so is unfaithful to the Lord, is guilty. They must confess the sin they have committed” (*Bamidbar* 5:6-7). It follows that “With regard to all the commandments of the Torah, positive or negative, if a person transgressed any of them, willfully or in error, and repents, turning away from his sin, he is under a duty to confess before God” (*Rambam, Laws of Repentance* 1:1). Although repentance is a matter of thought and emotion, it must be given verbal expression in the form of confession.

Confession is more than remorse, though this must also be part of the process. Remorse is a state of mind. Confession is a formal act. It is like the difference between feeling guilty at breaking the law and pleading guilty in a court of law. The former is an emotion, the latter a declaration. In the case of *teshuva* it is a declaration to God. As well as involving remorse, confession assumes there is a commitment not to repeat the sin.



Analysis

Originally the form of confession was simple: “Please, Lord, I have sinned, I have done wrong, I have rebelled before You.” It then specified the particular act you were confessing. Over time, there developed the broader form of confession that we say ten times on Yom Kippur.

This is different from the original in three respects. First it is said in the plural: not “I have sinned” but “We have sinned.” This is because on Yom Kippur we stand before God not only as individuals but as members of a people, and because we hold that *kol Yisrael arevim zeh bazez*, “all Israel are responsible for one another”. As Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai put it: if a person drills a hole under his seat in a boat, when the water enters, not only he but everyone is in danger. We accept collective responsibility, especially for the wrongs we could have protested but did not.

The second difference is that we do not publicly specify particular sins. Instead we read an alphabetical list. This is to avoid public humiliation and to make it easier to confess. It prompts us systematically to examine our conscience and reflect on whether we have done wrong, and if so how and to whom. It is a way of saying that we have sinned with all the letters, as if the alphabet itself were testifying against us.

The third difference is that we now have two forms of confession, one brief (reproduced at the bottom of the previous page, “We have sinned, we have acted treacherously...”), the other longer (“For the sin we have sinned before You”). The former is closer to the original biblical form of confession and is more general: it articulates the general defects of character that lead us to do wrong. The latter goes deeper into specifics.

Confession is said standing, bowed in a gesture of humility. The custom is to beat one’s breast lightly at each mentioned sin in the spirit of Yirmiyahu (31:18), “After I strayed, I repented; after I came to understand, I beat my breast”.

Public confession, however, is not enough. As we recite the long checklist of sins, we must be asking ourselves: Did I commit a sin of this kind? Did I do something similar? If so, we must acknowledge that sin inwardly to God and resolve to put it right. Public confession is a mere prelude to the private admission which is the real act of *teshuva*, in which we examine our consciences, abandoning our usual defences in the knowledge that God forgives those who truly admit their wrongs, and that *teshuva* is the single greatest act of self-transformation any of us can undertake.



Points to Ponder

1 Why dwell on our sins? Why not just focus on being better in the future?

2 Why do you think the *viduy* is written in alphabetic order (see the story on the next page for a connected idea)?

3 If this public *viduy* is more symbolic rather than an actual confession of our sins, when do we consider our actual sins and mistakes on Yom Kippur?

Yom Kippur for the Young (and Young at Heart!)

Top Ten Yom Kippur Facts

1. There is a *mitzvah* to eat a festive meal before Yom Kippur starts.

2. There is a special custom to bless one's children on the eve of Yom Kippur before the fast begins.

3. Yom Kippur begins with one of the most famous Jewish prayers – Kol Nidrei. Except it isn't a prayer at all, rather it is a declaration to annul our vows.

4. Fasting is not the only prohibition on Yom Kippur – there are five prohibitions in total:

- Eating and drinking
- Washing/bathing
- Anointing
- Marital relations
- Wearing leather shoes

5. If it is dangerous for a person to fast, then not only can they eat, but they *must* eat, to preserve their health (individuals must ask rabbinic and medical experts before making this decision).

6. Many have the custom to wear white on Yom Kippur. This reminds us of the shrouds we will

one day be buried in, calling to mind the fragility of all human life, and it also reminds us that today we aspire to be pure like the angels.

7. Yom Kippur is the only day of the year when there are five prayer services:

- Ma'ariv (evening service)
- Shacharit (morning service)
- Musaf (additional service)
- Minchah (afternoon service)
- Ne'ilah ("closing" service)

8. For the *haftarah* to the Minchah service, we read the story of the Prophet Yonah who eventually delivers God's warning to the people of Nineveh and convinces them to repent.

9. Yom Kippur ends with the blowing of the shofar to remind us of the departing of God's presence from Mount Sinai after the giving of the Torah, which was also accompanied by the blowing of the shofar.

10. There is a widespread custom after the festive meal at the conclusion of Yom Kippur to immediately engage in the next *mitzvah* to come – the building of the succah.



It Once Happened on Yom Kippur...



ONE YOM KIPPUR, the Baal Shem Tov was praying together with his students, and he had a worrying sense that the prayers were not getting through, and the harsh heavenly decree against the Jewish people was not being overturned. As Ne'ilah approached, and with it the final opportunity for the Jewish people to avert this harsh judgement, he and his students increased their fervour and passion in their prayers, but to no avail.

As the chazzan began the Ne'ilah service a simple shepherd boy wandered into shul to pray. But he could barely read the letters of the Aleph-Beit, let alone say all the words in the machzor. Feeling helpless, he opened the first page of his siddur and recited: *aleph, beit, veit, gimel, daled*. He said to God in his heart: "This is all I can do. God, You know how the prayers should be pronounced. Please, arrange the letters in the proper way."

Louder and louder, with more and more intensity he recited the letters. *Hey, vav, zayin, chet...* the people around him began to mutter, complaining he was disturbing their prayers. But the Baal Shem Tov immediately silenced them, and declared for everyone to hear that "because of this boy's prayers the gates to heaven are wedged open for the last few minutes of Yom Kippur, allowing our prayers in." So it was on that Yom Kippur, that the simple, genuine prayers of a young shepherd boy who couldn't read, resounded powerfully within the Heavenly court, and saved the Jewish people.

Points to Ponder

1 Is it important to know that the boy was a shepherd boy?

2 Why do you think the boy chose to say the Aleph-Beit in the form of a prayer?

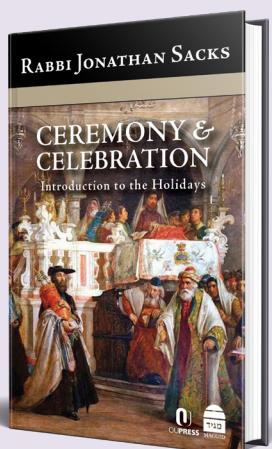
3 What message can you take from this story for Yom Kippur this year?

Chidon on the Chag (A Quick Quiz)

1. What does Yom Kippur mean?
2. What date is Yom Kippur?
3. What happens on Yom Kippur to the Book of Life on which God wrote our fate on Rosh Hashanah?
4. What happened on the first Yom Kippur after the Exodus?
5. What is added to Minchah on Erev Yom Kippur and why?
6. What happens to the two goats in the special Yom Kippur service in the Temple?
7. What kinds of sins cannot be atoned for on Yom Kippur?
8. What story do we read at Minchah of Yom Kippur and why?
9. What is the extra prayer service added at the conclusion of Yom Kippur?
10. What *mitzvah* do we have the custom to begin immediately after Yom Kippur?



This painting is called *Book of Life* by Shraga Weil



Ceremony & Celebration: Introduction to the Holidays

Bringing together Rabbi Sacks' acclaimed introductions to the Koren Sacks Machzorim, *Ceremony & Celebration* reveals the stunning interplay of biblical laws, rabbinic edicts, liturgical themes, communal rituals and profound religious meaning of each of the five central Jewish holidays: Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Succot, Pesach and Shavuot.

Ceremony & Celebration is published by Maggid/OU Press and is available to purchase online and in all good Jewish bookshops.

Educational Companion to the Questions

YOM KIPPUR IN A NUTSHELL

1. On Yom Kippur we stand before the King of Kings in judgement in a court of law that He has convened, and we confess our shortcomings, while He decides what will happen to us in the next year. This focuses us on who we are and who we can become. As we plead with God for a good year and ask to be written in the Book of Life, we can't help but consider whether we truly deserve this, and how we can become more deserving of it in the future.
2. Before the Temple was destroyed, and we lost the established Temple service, the sins of the entire nation were atoned for by the Kohen HaGadol (the High Priest), the holiest spiritual leader, who represented the people through the performance of the rituals and service of the day. This happened on the holiest day of the year, in the holiest place in the world, on behalf of the nation as a whole. Once this ritual was lost, the Rabbis recreated Yom Kippur in a way that each Jew could engage in their own atonement process, through *tefillah*, together with their community in their *Mikdash Me'at* (mini-sanctuary – the synagogue). They no longer had to rely on a service that took place centrally on their behalf. Instead they were each empowered to take responsibility for their own spiritual well-being.
3. Until this point in history, Jewish worship of God had been focused on the Temple service in Jerusalem. There was a danger that the destruction of the Temple, and the expulsion from Jerusalem, would spell the end for Judaism and the Jewish people. Yom Kippur's transition represents Judaism's transition to a religion that could survive exile and dispersion. Every individual Jew from now on could worship God privately in synagogues that could be built anywhere in the world. It is no understatement to suggest that when the Rabbis created this pivot in Jewish worship, they saved Judaism as a religion and the Jewish people as a civilisation.

DEEP DIVING INTO THE TEFILLAH OF THE DAY

1. It is important to face our mistakes so we can grow from them and ensure we don't repeat them in the future. If God can forgive our past sins then we can and must forgive them ourselves, to build a better future.
2. The *viduy* represents a generality of sinful behaviour. The Aleph-Beit as a poetic expression represents the entirety of sinful behaviour (from *aleph* to *taf*), just as the boy in the story used the Aleph-Beit to represent all possible words for his *tefillah*, pleading with God to arrange them in the correct order, promising that his intention was correct.
3. *Tefillah* is not the whole story of repentance on Yom Kippur. While the *tefillot*, including the *viduy*, are there to help us repent, there is plenty of opportunity to reflect on our past mistakes in our hearts. This is the essence of repentance and we should find time for this introspection during Yom Kippur.

IT ONCE HAPPENED ON YOM KIPPUR...

1. Perhaps the boy understood responsibility and leadership from his work as a shepherd, in much the same way as Moshe and King David were fitting leaders because they were also shepherds.
2. He was illiterate. He could not read, but he knew the Aleph-Beit. He said each letter over and over again with intense and pure *kavanah* (intention) instead of saying the words of the *tefillot*, which he could not read. He was also asking God to rearrange the letters he was saying into the correct orders so they would make up the words of the *tefillah*, and he would be saying the *tefillot* also.
3. Saying all the words of all the *tefillot* is not the most important thing on Yom Kippur (or any other day of the year). What happens in your heart is more important, and we believe God sees that. This may mean that you can say the *tefillot* in a language you understand if your Hebrew is not fluent, or even use your own words to approach Hashem and pray. What is most important is that your intention is pure and you take the opportunity to stand before God and open your heart.

CHIDON ON THE CHAG (A QUICK QUIZ)

1. Day of Atonement (atonement means to make amends for a wrong).
2. 10th of Tishrei.
3. Our fate is sealed.
4. Moshe came down from Mount Sinai with the second Tablets of Stone (signifying God's forgiveness of the Sin of the Golden Calf).
5. *Viduy* (confession) – in case one chokes at the special meal before Yom Kippur and does not have an opportunity to confess, we add *viduy* into the Minchah service.
6. Lots were drawn to choose between the goats. One was sacrificed on behalf of the people, and the other was sent into the wilderness, symbolically taking the sins of the people with it. (This is where the idea of a scapegoat comes from.)
7. Sins committed against other people (the sinner must ask for forgiveness directly – God cannot forgive these sins).
8. The book of Yonah, because the theme of repentance and forgiveness runs through the story. The repentance of the people of Nineveh serves as an inspiration to us to repent, and shows us that repentance can overturn a Divine decree.
9. Ne'ilah.
10. The *mitzvah* to build a succah.

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