



Finchley Reform Synagogue Ten Day Scheme

5773

*Days are like scrolls:
Write on them what you want to be remembered.*

Bahya Ibn Pakuda

Ten Day Scheme

Learn at your Leisure

As a community of individuals each with different commitments and time constraints we decided to make this year's Ten Day Scheme more accessible than ever. We are bringing it into your home or into your office.

We are encouraging you to learn on your own, with a *chavruta* (*partner*), or as part of a group. If you would like to be part of a group, you could try it with people you have known for a long time - or make new friends in the process. You can sit down once during the Ten Days and blitz it all - or take ten minutes out of every day. The choice is completely yours and the wealth of material is all there for you at your finger tips.

Rabbis Miriam and Howard with Cantor Zöe have compiled this booklet of texts to help you think about the process of *cheshbon hanefesh* (*self-evaluation*). It has questions to guide your thinking and a range of texts both modern and traditional, Jewish and secular, serious and humorous. Don't feel that you have to use all the passages on each day: if only one or two speak to you, work with those.

If you would like to join a group over the Ten Days, there will be study groups in people's homes to which you are warmly invited. Please contact the office for details.

Otherwise simply take up the challenge and let us know how it has been...

May you be sealed for a good year - לְשָׁנָה טוֹבָה תִּחְתַּמְנוּ -

Rabbi Miriam Berger, Cantor Zöe Jacobs, Rabbi Howard Cooper,

Continue the Conversation:

During the Ten Days, we will be posting further thoughts and questions about our texts on Facebook, Twitter, and on www.frsonline.org

You will be able to post your short comments (max 100 words) on to our Facebook page, or email them to community@frsonline.org, and we will share some of them on Facebook and Twitter.



Search for "Finchley Reform Synagogue" on Facebook, or zap the QR code on the right to post your comments.



Join the Twitter conversation
@FinchleyReform

Unless otherwise indicated, these texts and their translations come from the 'Forms of Prayer' Machzor (Movement for Reform Judaism, Eighth edition, 1985).

The FRS clergy team would like to thank Jon Freedman for all his hard work in compiling and creating this resource.

Cover Image:
Extracts from The Dead Sea Scrolls - Great Isaiah Scroll
<http://dss.collections.imj.org.il/isaiah>

Day 1: Akedah (*The Binding of Isaac*)

The word 'tested' can be translated and understood in different ways: God *tries* the righteous; because God knows that the righteous will do God's will, God wishes to make them even more upright.....So all trials in the Torah are for the good of the one who is being tried.

Nachmanides

Nachmanides provides a classical interpretation of the text.
Is there room for this interpretation in Reform Judaism?

1 After these things God tested Abraham. God called to him: Abraham! and he answered: 'Here I am.'

10 Then Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.

11 But an angel of the Eternal called to him from heaven, saying: 'Abraham! Abraham!' And he answered 'Here I am.'

Genesis 22

The Parable of the Old Man and the Young

So Abram rose, and clave the wood, and went,
And took the fire with him, and a knife.
And as they sojourned both of them together
Isaac the first-born spake and said, My Father,
Behold the preparations, fire and iron,
But where the lamb for this burnt-offering?
Then Abram bound the youth with belts and straps,
And builded parapets and trenches there,
And stretched forth the knife to slay his son.
When lo! an angel called him out of heaven,
Saying, Lay not thy hand upon the lad,
Neither do anything to him. Behold,
A ram, caught in a thicket by its horns;
Offer the Ram of Pride instead of him.
But the old man would not so, but slew his son.
And half the seed of Europe, one by one.

Wilfred Owen
First World War poet

Testing Ourselves and Our Destructiveness

Isaac

The ram came last.
And Abraham did not know
that it answered the question
that had come first
in the sunset of his life.

When he raised his white head
he saw he was not dreaming;
when he saw the angel
the knife dropped from his hand.

The boy who was unbound
saw the back of his father.

Isaac, it is told, was not sacrificed.
He had a long life, a good life,
until his eyes went dark.

But that hour
he bequeathed to his descendants
still to be born
a knife
in the heart.

*Haim Guri,
Israeli Poet*

1 וַיְהִי, אַחַר הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, וְהָאֱלֹהִים,
נָסָה אֶת-אַבְרָהָם; וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו, אַבְרָהָם
וַיֹּאמֶר הַגִּנִּי.

10 וַיִּשְׁלַח אַבְרָהָם אֶת-יָדָו, וַיִּקַּח אֶת-
הַמַּאֲכָלָת, לְשַׁחֵט, אֶת-בְּנוֹ. 11 וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו
מִלֶּאךָ יְהוָה, מִן-הַשָּׁמַיִם, וַיֹּאמֶר, אַבְרָהָם
אַבְרָהָם; וַיֹּאמֶר, הַגִּנִּי.

בְּרֵאשִׁית 22

How would our understanding of the text be different if we were aware that some tests are self-imposed?

Our dreams, if we learn to heed them, show hints of our own inner beast, our tendencies to bloodshed, torture and dissolution.

When these drives burst though into consciousness because we have not been honest enough to look at them, integrate them into our totality, and by doing, civilise them, these tendencies can be instigators of terrible and almost blissful experiences – ones which humanity, hiding behind the illusion of a culture and progress, believes (wrongly) to have outlived.

The orgies of murder and violence are still with us. Where do they originate, if not from the subterranean regions of the human psyche? And when they do occur, why do we always blame 'the other side'?

Contents of the psyche which remain unconscious are projected onto the outside world, so each one of us is partly responsible for the evil around us when we fail to get in touch with our own inner darkness. It is no use pretending it isn't there: all we achieve is to add yet another blow to the killing of a scapegoat.

*Molly Tuby
Jungian analyst, d.2011*

What part of our own 'darkness' are we frightened of passing onto others, or the next generation?

Day 2: V'Al Kulam

The God who once uttered the word "Salachti", ("I have forgiven"), speaks it again. He forgives, He atones and purifies. Only do you do your part; repair what can still be repaired, cast out of your house the unjust penny, make peace with the injured brother, restore the man you have wronged, remove what is unlawful and ungodly in your married life, in your education, in your business and pleasures, and then come to Him, the Father who never rejects, who proclaims eternally 'as I live, I desire not the death and the downfall of the sinner, but that he should return and win new life,' who is as gracious as He is just, and as omnipotent as He is gracious. He thus not only forgives in His grace, but when He has forgiven, He with His unrestricted power lays hold on the spokes of the wheel of destiny, on the fabric of your being, and with His forgiveness He uproots every seed of curse which you have yourself sown in the field of your destiny, and with His purifying and sanctifying force plucks out every poisonous grain of sin with which you have defiled your soul and made it troubled, sick, ill and lifeless, calling "Be ye clean again" (Leviticus 16:30) to all who in His presence seek to be pure again with a new spirit and a new life. The whole future is again yours; the whole past has been taken over by God.

Samson Raphael Hirsch

What is forgiveness from a fellow person?

**For all these things, forgiving God,
forgive us, pardon us, grant us atonement.**

What is forgiveness from God?

God, thank You for helping me see
That each phase of my life is perfect
That I have arrived,
That I've always been where I need to be
Living perfect moments....
With Your help, I relinquish my need to judge.
Embrace my heart as it beats, even as it bleeds.
Help me grow with love, acceptance, and
curiosity.
Thank You for lighting my way.
For gently illuminating a path in the darkness....

At every stage in my life, I did what I knew how to do. If I would have known better, I would have done better. But every day I must remember to be kinder to myself and more forgiving of my imperfections, because, at every point along the way, I am blessed. Everything I have done and seen has made me who I am in this moment. It's OK to have been me. I forgive.

Rabbi Karyn D. Kedar

Let it now be and always be
Yet another exquisite phase.
For the crimes against myself, I am sorry.
For all my slips and slides, I forgive myself.

For All These Sins...

Forgiveness is a by-product of an on-going healing process. Many of us grew up believing that forgiveness was an act to be performed or an attitude to possess, and the reason that we could not forgive was that we were not trying hard enough. But what really keeps us from forgiving the people who hurt us is that we have not yet healed the wounds they inflicted.

Forgiveness is freeing up and putting to better use the energy once consumed by holding grudges, harbouring resentments, and nursing unhealed wounds. It is rediscovering the strengths we always had and relocating our limitless capacity to understand and accept other people and ourselves. It is breaking the cycle of pain and abuse, ceasing to create new victims by hurting others as we ourselves were hurt.

Forgiveness is moving on, it is recognizing that we have better things to do with our life and then doing them.

Dr. Sidney B Simon and Suzanne Simon

What is forgiving ourselves?

וְעַל כָּל־אֲשֶׁר עָלְמוֹת
סָלַח לָנוּ. מְחַל לָנוּ. כְּפָר- לָנוּ:

High Holy Day Liturgy

Do we feel forgiven at the end of Yom Kippur?

A Parable

Why do we say the prayer beginning, 'Forgive us,' during the Evening Prayer at the close of Yom Kippur; lo, Yom Kippur has already made atonement for all sins? This may be compared to a parable about a king who was passing through a field. A countryman saw him and kicked him. The king's men wanted to kill the man. But the king said: 'Let him be, for he does not know who I am. If he knew me, he would not have done what he did, put him in a school, and let him get understanding and manners.' They put the man in a school, and he became a man of understanding. When he saw the respect the king was held in, and remembered what he had done to the king, he grew faint with shame and began to cry, 'Forgive me!' For all the time he had been a coarse man he had not known how great his sin was, and it had not been clear to him in what way he had sinned.

So it is with us. So long as we are filthy with transgressions, we do not know either the depth of our sin or the greatness of the King who is King over all kings, the Holy One, Blessed be He, against whom we have sinned. Now that we have cleansed ourselves, and our transgressions have been forgiven, we are ashamed over our past and beg: 'Forgive us, our Father, for we have sinned; pardon us, our King, for we have transgressed.

Gedulat ha-Zaddikim II. 21, quoting Yitzhak of Vorki

Day 3: *U'netaneh Tokef*

The Head of the Year

The moon is dark tonight, a new moon for a new year. It is hollow and hungers to be full. It is the black zero of beginning.

Now you must void yourself of injuries, insults, incursions. Go with empty hands to those you have hurt and make amends.

It is not too late. It is early and about to grow. Now is the time to do what you know you must and have feared

to begin. Your face is dark too as you turn inward to face yourself, the hidden twin of all you must grow to be.

Forgive the dead year. Forgive yourself. What will be wants to push through your fingers. The light you seek hides

in your belly. The light you crave longs to stream from your eyes. You are the moon that will wax in new goodness.

Marge Piercy

Do you experience the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur as a journey? What do you want to happen during this period?

We declare how profound is the holiness of this day, for it arouses in us the deepest awe. Today the power of Your kingdom stirs within us. Love is the foundation of Your throne, and the spirit of truth rests upon it. Truly You are the one who judges and tests, who probes and bears witness. You record and seal, You count and measure. You remember all that is forgotten. You open the Book of Memory, and it speaks for itself, for every man has signed it by his life.

How does the “holiness of this day” give us the impetus to overcome our fears and to “do what you know you must”?

Believe not that the world is for naught, made
For the wolf and the fox, for murd'rer and cheat;
That the sky is a blind to keep God from perceiving
The fog that thy hands not be seen
And the wind just to down bitter wails.
The world is not hovel, market or cast-off.

All will be measured, all will be weighed
Not a fear not a blood drop will fade,
Nor the spark in one soul be extinguished
uncharged.
Tears gather in streams, and streams into oceans,
Oceans will swell to a flood.
And sparks burst into thunder...
Oh, think not there is no judgement or judge!

*I.L. Peretz (1825-1915)
Yiddish poet/essayist*

Every individual is meted out his destiny according to his actions. The verdict for the past and the coming year is written on New Year's Day, and it is sealed on the Day for Atonement, when the last reprieve constituted by these ten days of penitence and turning to God is over. The year becomes representative of eternity... In the annual return of this day of judgment, eternity is stripped of every trace of the beyond, of every vestige of remoteness; it is actually there within the grasp of every individual and holding every individual close in its strong grasp.

Franz Rosenzweig

Judgement and Forgiveness

To judge and to forgive are but two sides of the same coin. But the two sides follow different rules. The majesty of the law demands that we be equal – that only our acts count, and not the person who committed them. The act of forgiving, on the contrary, takes the person into account; no pardon pardons murder or theft but only the murderer or the thief. We always forgive somebody never something..... We forgive for the sake of the person and while justice demands that all be equal, mercy insists on inequality – an inequality implying that every man is, or should be, more than whatever he did or achieved.

Hannah Arendt

וּנְתַנֶּה תִּקְוָה קְדֻשָּׁת הַיּוֹם כִּי הוּא נוֹרָא וְאִים.
וְבוֹ תִּנְשָׂא מְלֻכוֹתֶיךָ וַיִּכּוֹן בְּחֻסְדֵּךָ כְּסֶאֶךָ וְתִשָּׁב
עָלֶיךָ בְּאַמְתֵּךָ. אֲמַת כִּי אַתָּה הוּא דָּיִן וּמִוְכִיחַ
וַיִּוְדַע וַיַּעַד. וְכֹתֵב וְחֹתֵם וְסוֹפֵר וּמוֹנֶה. וְתִזְכֹּר
כָּל-הַנְּשָׁכָחוֹת. וְתִפְתַּח אֶת-סֵפֶר הַזְּכוֹנוֹת.
וַיֵּאֱלֵוּ יִקְרָא וְחֹתֵם יָד כָּל-אָדָם בּוֹ.

Liturgy for Rosh Hashanah/
Yom Kippur Mussaf

The imagery of the High Holy Days is filled with the idea of 'judgement'.
But who really judges us?
Is it God, ourselves, or others?
And who do we go to for forgiveness?
For what do we need to be forgiven?

Many consider this poem to be the pinnacle of the Rosh Hashanah liturgy. The poet has painted a picture of the most solemn day of the year, which to him is Rosh Hashanah, not Yom Kippur. All other concepts associated with the day have been stripped away. "Awesome and terrible" are the only fitting words to describe it. The poet's primary concern is with the Mishnah's description of the first of Tishri as the day when humanity is judged. And he fills in the details that the Mishnah only hints at to spread before us a terrifying spectacle of heaven and earth called to judgement...

There is a further note of hope expressed in this poem: God is depicted as a merciful judge who understands the frail nature of human beings. The pathetic description of the transitory nature of life and the heart-rending comparison between Eternal God and human beings who are no more than 'a dream that flies away' or a 'speck of dust that is gone with the wind' are not intended to depress us but to impress God, as it were, and make Him incline toward forgiving us.

Reuven Hammer

Day 4: B'Rosh Hashanah...

USING MUSIC AS MIDRASH: B'ROSH HASHANAH

"Just as the rabbis would create many midrashim on a single verse of the Bible, so should we express our ideas and feelings by creating many [musical] interpretations of a single prayer." (Rabbi Shoshana Boyd- Gelfand)

How this text is sung has the potential to change how we hear its message. On this page you will find the links to four recordings based on this text. The first, a traditional melody (chazanut) was composed by Cantor Israel Alter, an early 20th Century Cantor and notorious composer of chazanut. The second, a melody with which you may be more familiar after recent High Holy Days at FRS, was written by Cantor Meir Finkelstein, a contemporary British Cantor who lives and works in America. The third is the piece, 'Who By Fire' by Leonard Cohen, and is an adaptation of the text in English, and finally, the fourth is a setting of the text by Israeli composer Ya'ir Rosenblum. Rosenblum wrote this setting to specifically commemorate those killed in the Yom Kippur war from his Kibbutz; Beit Hashita.

The message of the text is extremely theologically challenging, asking who will live and who will die pending God's judgement. Indeed, it is so theologically troubling, that the editors of the Liberal machzor took the text out entirely from their most recent machzor. Meanwhile, the editors of the Reform Machzor not only included the liturgy, but used the first line as a piece of art work at the beginning of several services (see, for example, page 172).

On Rosh Hashanah they will be written down
And on Yom Kippur they will be sealed:
How many will pass on and how many will be created,
Who will live and who will die,
Who at their end and who not at their end,
Who by fire and who by water,
Who by warfare and who by wildlife,
Who by hunger and who by thirst,
Who by earthquake and who by plague,
Who by strangling and who by stoning,
Who will rest and who will wander,
Who will be tranquil and who will be troubled,
Who will be calm and who will be tormented,
Who will be exalted and who humbled,
Who will be rich and who will be poor?

Translation by Dr. Joel Hoffman from "Who by Fire".

The four musical tracks on this page are available for you to listen online.

To hear the music, you can either:

- click on the web links on this page;
- scan the QR codes with your smartphone; or
- Type into your web browser www.frsonline.org/HighHolyDays/TenDayScheme



Track 1: B'rosh Hashanah (Israel Alter)
www.frsonline.org/HighHolyDays/TenDayScheme

How does Israel Alter convey his understanding of the text through use of repetition and word-painting?



Track 2: B'rosh Hashana (Meir Finkelstein)
www.frsonline.org/HighHolyDays/TenDayScheme

How does Meir Finkelstein soften the blow of the challenging theology in this text?

We Consider How Judgement is Formed...and Sealed

בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה יִכְתְּבוּן
וּבַיּוֹם צוֹם כְּפוּר יִחְתְּמוּן:
כַּמָּה יַעֲבֹרוּן וְכַמָּה יִבְרֹאוּן.
מִי יִחְיֶה וּמִי יָמוּת.
מִי בְּקֶצֶף וּמִי לֹא בְּקֶצֶף.
מִי בְּאֵשׁ וּמִי בַּמַּיִם.
מִי בַחֲרֹב וּמִי בַחַיָּה.
מִי בְּרָעַב וּמִי בְּצָמָא.
מִי בְּרֵעַשׁ וּמִי בַמַּגָּפָה.
מִי בַחֲנִיקָה וּמִי בַסְּקִילָה:
מִי יְנוּחַ וּמִי יְנוּעַ.
מִי יִשְׁקֹט וּמִי יִטְרַף.
מִי יִשְׁלֹו וּמִי יִתְיַסֵּר.
מִי יָרוּם וּמִי יִשְׁפַּל:
מִי יַעֲשִׂיר וּמִי יַעֲנִי.

Extract from *Un'taneh Tokef*
liturgy. Rosh Hashanah/
Yom Kippur Musaf.



Track 3: Who By Fire (Leonard Cohen)
www.frsonline.org/HighHolyDays/TenDayScheme

Who By Fire

And who by fire, who by water,
Who in the sunshine, who in the night time,
Who by high ordeal, who by common trial,
Who in your merry merry month of may,
Who by very slow decay,
And who shall I say is calling?

And who in her lonely slip, who by barbiturate,
Who in these realms of love, who by something blunt,
And who by avalanche, who by powder,
Who for his greed, who for his hunger,
And who shall I say is calling?

And who by brave assent, who by accident,
Who in solitude, who in this mirror,
Who by his lady's command, who by his own hand,
Who in mortal chains, who in power,
And who shall I say is calling?

Leonard Cohen

Why do you think Leonard Cohen chose to use this text as the origin of a folk song? Do you think he is trying to convey the same message as the original author of the liturgy?

Does one of these melodies particularly speak to you?
Why/why not?

If you were editing the machzor, would you include this text?



Track 4: U'netaneh Tokef (Ya'ir Rosenblum)
www.frsonline.org/HighHolyDays/TenDayScheme

This melody includes the full text from which the section of B'rosh Hashanah is taken. This section is usually referred to as 'U'netaneh Tokef', and can be found in the machzor on page 224. How does it become apparent that this text was written for an Israeli audience? Does this text make sense as a song in memoriam?

Day 5: *Hin'ni ...*

Bold, Humble, Daring

Today we stand before the Mirror of All
to see ourselves as we are.
We come with no gifts, no bribes, no illusions, no excuses.
We stand without defense and wait to be filled.
What will fill us?
Remorse, certainly. So much error and needless pain.
And joy: remembered moments of love and right doing.
We are too complex for single-sided emotions.
And we are too simple to be excused by our complexity.
Let us be bold enough to see,
humble enough to feel,
daring enough to turn and
embrace the way of justice, mercy and simplicity.

Rabbi Rami M. Shapiro

How do you prepare yourself to stand before God at this time of awe?

Can one ever be too humble?
How do we balance humility and self-confidence in life?

A Prayer in the Prospect of Death

O Thou unknown Almighty Cause
Of all my hope and fear!
In whose dread presence, ere an hour,
Perhaps I must appear!

If I have wander'd in those paths
Of life I ought to shun,
As something, loudly in my breast,
Remonstrates I have done;

Though know'st that Thou has formed me
With passions wild and strong;
And list'ning to their witching voice
Has often led me wrong.

Where human weakness has come short,
Or frailty stept aside
Do thou, All-Good! For such Thou art,
In shades of darkness hide.

Where with intention I have err'd
No other please I have,
But Thou art good, and Goodness still
Delighteth to forgive.

Robert Burns

Here I stand, poor in good deeds, worried and anxious as I consider the Presence which lives in the prayers of Israel. I have come to plead for Your people Israel because they have asked me, though I am neither fit nor adequate. Yet I dare to ask You, God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob, 'the Lord, the Lord, God of love and mercy, God of Israel, transcendent, mighty and awesome.' Help me as I try to find a way to forgiveness for myself and for my community.

My God, keep my tongue from causing harm and my lips from telling lies. Let me be silent if people curse me, my soul still humble and at peace with all. Open my heart to Your teaching, and give me the will to practice it. May the plans and schemes of those who seek my harm come to nothing. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Eternal, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Liturgy

Burns suggests it is hard to stand before God. What do these texts suggest as tactics to facilitate this challenge?

Here I Stand...

A mother hears a crash in the living room and runs in to find her four year old son, rounders bat in hand, standing next to the shattered vase. "What happened?" she asks. Contrite, looking away, the boy answers, "Nothing".

When it comes to acknowledging difficult emotions, we often adopt the strategy of the young batter. If we deny that the emotions are there, then maybe we can avoid the consequences of feeling them. But we have about the same chance of hiding our emotions as the boy has of convincing his mother that all is well with the vase. Feelings are too powerful to remain peacefully bottled. They will be heard one way or another, whether in leaks or bursts. And if handled indirectly or without honesty, they contaminate communication.

From 'Difficult Conversations' by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton and Sheila Heen.

הַנְּנִי הָעֲנִי מִמַּעַשׂ נִרְעַשׂ וְנִפְתַּח מִפְּתַח יוֹשֵׁב
תְּהִלּוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל: בְּאֵתִי לְעַמּוֹד וּלְחַנּוּן לְפָנֶיךָ עַל
עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַחֲוֹנִי. אֵף עַל פִּי שְׂאִינִי
כְּדִי וְהִגּוֹן לְכַךְ: עַל כֵּן אֲבַקֶּשְׁךָ אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֵינוּ
אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב. יְיָ אֱלֹהֵי רַחוּם וְחַנּוּן.
אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. שְׂדֵי אִים וְנוֹרָא: הֲיִה נָא מְצַלִּיחַ
דְּרַכֵּי אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ. לְעַמּוֹד לְבַקֵּשׁ רַחֲמִים
עָלַי וְעַל שׁוֹלְחִי.

*Prayer for the Sh'liach Tzibbur,
From the Yom Kippur Additional Service*

I hope in God and seek God's presence. I wait for God to answer. Here among my congregation I sing of God's power, and as I sing I think of all that God has done. Our task is to open our hearts for prayer, but the answer to prayer comes only from God.

High Holy Day Liturgy

"Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord" (Psalms 150:6). Our Rabbis of blessed memory (Genesis Rabbah 14:9) interpret this verse to mean that man should praise his Maker for every breath he draws. For at every moment the soul wishes to leave the body, but the Holy One, blessed be He, restrains it. It follows that man becomes a new creature at every moment of his life. Man can gain encouragement from this when the thought enters his head at the time of prayer and worship, "How dare you, so base a man, full of sin and iniquity, open your mouth to praise God?" But he should then consider that at the very moment he has become a new creature and has not sinned in that moment, so now he is justified in standing in God's presence.

The novel idea is here expressed that, strictly speaking, no man is really worthy to pray to God. Yet at every moment man is, as it were, created anew by God, so that the man who now stands in prayer is not the man who had sinned.

Rabbi Dr. Louis Jacobs.

Day 6: Ashamnu...

Should confession of sin be made in the midst of the community and therefore as part of public worship? The Talmud reports a difference of opinion as to whether confession should be made individually and in solitude, or in the chorus of the community. The decision was made for the community, for public confession. And through this decision the Talmud may well have saved the purity of monotheism in its ritual profundity. For, in the first place, the public nature of the confession shows trust in God's forgiveness. Moreover, the act of confession, analogous to punishment, implies a demand to carry it out within the community. Now, however, we are guided by the point of view of trust in God's forgiveness, which takes away from the individual a false sense of public shame. Confession and remorse merge into one another. Thus remorse is already fully active when confession breaks forth. How can one shrink from and avoid the community of the fellow guilty, or the fellow confessor?

Herman Cohen

Why do we confess to things we haven't done?

What is the role of the community on Yom Kippur?

**We have abused and betrayed. We are cruel.
We have destroyed and embittered other people's lives.
We were false to ourselves.
We have gossiped about others and hated them.
We have insulted and jeered. We have killed. We have lied.
We have misled others and neglected them.
We were obstinate. We have perverted and quarrelled.
We have robbed and stolen.
We have transgressed through unkindness.
We have been both violent and weak.
We have practised extortion.
We have yielded to wrong desires, our zeal was misplaced.**

"It takes a village to raise a child." The saying and its attribution as an "African" proverb were in circulation before it was adopted by the First Lady of the United States Hillary Rodham Clinton as the source for the title of her book. It originated from the Nigerian Igbo culture and proverb "Ora na azu nwa" which means it takes the community/village to raise a child. The Igbos also name their children "Nwa ora" which means child of the community.

Is there a danger of hiding behind public confession as a way to avoid personal introspection?

We have sinned...

At this time, when the Temple no longer exists, and we have no atonement altar, there is nothing left but repentance. Repentance atones for all the transgressions. Even if a man was wicked throughout his life and repented at the end, we must not mention anything about his wickedness to him, as it is written: "A wicked man's wickedness shall not bring about his downfall when he gives up his wickedness" (Ezekiel 33.12). Yom Kippur itself atones for those who repent, as it is written "Atonement shall be made for you on this day" (Leviticus 16.30).

Perfect repentance is where an opportunity presents itself to the offender for repeating the offense and he refrains from committing it because of his repentance and not out of fear of physical ability...If, however, one repents only in his old age, when he is no longer able to do what he used to do, his repentance, though not the best, will nevertheless do him some good. Even if a person transgressed all his life and repented on the day of his death and died during his repentance, all his sins are pardoned, as it is written: "Before the sun grows dark, and the light goes from

moon and stars, and the clouds gather after rain" (Ecclesiastes 12.2), that is, the day of death. This implies that if he remembers his Creator and repents before death, he is forgiven.

Repentance and Yom Kippur affect atonement only for sins committed against God, as when one has eaten forbidden food; ... For sins committed against a fellow man, as when a person either injured or cursed or robbed his

neighbour, he is never pardoned unless he compensates his neighbour and makes an apology. Even though he has made the compensation, the wrongdoer must appease the injured person and ask his pardon. Even if he only annoyed him with words he must apologise and beg forgiveness...

One must not show himself cruel by not accepting an apology; he should be easily pacified, and provoked with difficulty. When an offender asks his forgiveness, he should forgive wholeheartedly and with a willing spirit. Even if he has caused him much trouble wrongfully, he must not avenge himself, he must not bear a grudge. This is the way of the stock of Israel and their upright hearts.

Moses Maimonides
Mishneh Torah, Laws of Repentance

What impact could public confession have on a community?

Day 7: *Shema Koleinu...*

Psalm 27:7

Listen Adonai when I cry aloud.
Have mercy on me; answer me.

Machzor

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

How does the sound of the shofar act as the antithesis to a machzor full of liturgy?

Hear our voice, Lord our God, show us mercy and compassion, accept our prayers willingly and with love. Turn us back to You, Lord, and we shall return; renew our lives as of old. Hear what we say; understand what we cannot express. May the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to You, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Do not send us away from our nearness to You, and do not take away from us the spirit of Your holiness. Do not send us away when we grow old; when our spirit fails, do not forsake us. Lord our God, do not leave us, be not distant from us. Our hopes rest on You alone, Lord; only You can answer us, Lord our God!

Preparing your heart for the High Holy Days

When we pray, we want God to respond. Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav, the Bratzlaver Rebbe, taught us about the silent scream, the kind that escapes from deep within our soul – erupting when we least expect it, without making a sound. “Help me!” we scream silently. Although we are working hard to prepare ourselves for the New Year, *t’shuvah* doesn’t always seem to work precisely the way we planned. Something gets in our way blocking our intention to change, no matter how hard we work. But that’s the nature of the human path to change; winding and circuitous with roadblocks everywhere. Often we get in our own way. It is time for us to get out of our way and start on God’s way.

We want God to hear us, whatever the nature of our prayer. We feel that we are doing our share of the work. Now we ask God to do what God is supposed to do – to help heal us. We pray that when Yom Kippur arrives, we will be able to stand erect before God, whole once again....

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

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

Rabbi Kerry M Olitzky and Rabbi Rachel T Shabbat

What gives us a sense of being heard?

A major tenet of Judaism is the responsibility to continue the chain of tradition. How do we ensure every voice is heard?

Hear our voice...

שָׁמַע קוֹלֵנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ. חוּס וְרוּחַם עָלֵינוּ. וְקַבֵּל
בְּרַחֲמִים וּבְרַצוֹן אֶת תְּפִלָּתֵנוּ:
הַשְׁיִבֵנוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְנִשְׁוֶבָה. חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקֶדֶם:
אֲמַרְנוּ הָאֲזִינָה יְיָ. בֵּינָה הִגִּינוּ:
יְהִי לְרַצוֹן אֲמָרֵינוּ וְהִגִּינוּ לְבָנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ יְיָ צוּרֵנוּ
וְגוֹאֲלֵנוּ:
אֵל תִּשְׁלִיכֵנוּ מִלְּפָנֶיךָ. וְרוּחַ קִדְשְׁךָ אֵל תִּקַּח מִמֶּנּוּ:
אֵל תִּשְׁלִיכֵנוּ לְעֵת זְקָנָה. כְּכֹלֹת כַּחֲנוּ אֵל תַּעֲזֹבֵנוּ:
אֵל תַּעֲזֹבֵנוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ. אֵל תִּרְחַק מִמֶּנּוּ:
כִּי לָךְ יְיָ הוֹחֵלֵנוּ. אֶתְּהָ תַעֲנֶה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ:
High Holy Day Liturgy

We All Stood Together – for Rachel Adler

My brother and I were at Sinai
He kept a journal
of what he saw
of what he heard
of what it all meant to him

I wish I had such a record
of what happened to me there

It seems like every time I want to write
I can't
I'm always holding a baby
one of my own
or one for a friend
always holding a baby
so my hands are never free
to write things down

And then
as time passes
the particulars
the hard data
the who what when where why
slip away from me
and all I'm left with is
the feeling

But the feelings are just sounds
the vowel barking of a mute

My brother is so sure of what he heard
after all he's got a record of it
consonant after consonant after consonant

If we remembered it together
we could recreate holy time
sparks flying

Merle Feld, 'A Spiritual Life'

Jewish law has preserved its strength because it is based on the physical reality of the written word. Interpretations may vary, and changing times be reflected in changing understanding, but at the core remains Torah, perceived as the immutable word of God.

Is Torah God's word or man's word? Women have not been part of mainstream Jewish history since biblical times – and their influence even then was played down by the rabbinic interpreters of later centuries. Jewish law and Jewish tradition as expressed in halachah and aggada reflect a man's law and men's traditions. Women figure only where their lives interreact with men, most notably in their relations through sex and marriage. This actually gave women of earlier times a strange sort of freedom. They were not as constrained as men religiously or ritually, and it seems likely that they owned a theology and participated in ritual practices independent of men. But this was an oral tradition, and since—unlike men's ritual practice—it was not dependent on the written word, it failed to survive.

The lost oral tradition has found its symbol in the song of Miriam (Exodus 15:21). After Moses sang of God's triumph at the crossing of the Reed Sea, Miriam took up her timbrel, and together with all the women of Israel went out dancing and singing. But, while all of Moses' song is recorded in the text, only the opening lines of Miriam's song are found there. What did she sing? Was the language as beautiful, as brimming full of the sheer joy of liberation? What metaphors did she use for God in place of the great warrior imagery of her brother? What, for her, was the crux of the event: not perhaps the defeat of the enemy, but the liberation, the assurance that all male children would now survive – that all their children would have a future?

One can speculate that had Miriam's song survived, there would be a non-masculine, non-combative view of God and of the Exodus in the very Torah itself. Jewish theology would have been very different.

Rabbi Sybil Sheridan
"Hear Our Voice"

Day 8: Adonai, Adonai...

R. Abba ben Memel said: God said to Moses, 'Thou desirest to know my name. I am called according to my deeds. When I judge my creatures, I am called Elohim; when I wage war against the wicked, I am called Tseva'ot; when I suspend judgement for a man's sins, I am called El Shaddai (God Almighty); but when I have compassion upon my world, I am called Yahweh, for Yahweh (Y.H.W.H.) - Adonai - means the attribute of mercy, as it is said, "Yahweh, Yahweh (the Lord, the Lord), merciful and gracious" (Exodus 34:6). [It is interesting that the Rabbis regard what was to them the highest, most sacred, and, in some strange sense, most intimate, name of God as specially identified with the attribute of mercy or compassion. The Rabbis, in their human frailty, dwelt too much upon divine vengeance against Israel's enemies, and, perhaps, also too much upon the divine punishment of unrepentant sinners, yet, nevertheless, the essence, the inmost core, so to speak, of the divine nature was not for them vengeance or punishment, but mercy and compassion.]

Exodus Rabbah and commentary by Montefiore and Lowe.

Do any of these 13 attributes correspond to your experience of the divine, or spirituality?

Then the Lord passed before him and proclaimed: 'The Lord, the Lord, a God of mercy and compassion, slow to anger, generous in love and truth, extending love to the thousandth generation, forgiving sin, wrong and failure, but not leaving the guilty unpunished, visiting the sin of parents on children and children's children, on the third and fourth generations.'

The most beautiful and deepest experience a man can have is the sense of the mysterious. It is the underlying principle of religion as well as of all serious endeavour in art and science...He who never had this experience seems to me, if not dead, then at least blind. The sense that behind anything that can be experienced there is something that our mind cannot grasp and whose beauty and sublimity reaches us only indirectly and as feeble reflexion, *this is religiousness*... To me it suffices to wonder at these secrets and to attempt humbly to grasp with my mind a mere image of the lofty structure of all that there is.'

Albert Einstein

When do you experience "the mysterious"?
Do you connect this with God?

The Mystery of God, and God's attributes...

What sense does it make to talk about God having different 'attributes' or qualities?

The Beginning of Wisdom

You have brought me so far.

I know so much. Names, verbs, images. My mind overflows, a drawer that can't close.

Unscathed among the tortured. Ignorant parchment uninscribed, light strokes only, where a scribe tried out a pen.

I am so small, a speck of dust moving across the huge world. The word a speck of dust in the universe.

Are you holding the universe? You hold onto my smallness. How do you grasp it, how does it not slip away?

I know so little.

You have brought me so far.

Denise Leverton

וַיַּעֲבֹר יְהוָה עַל-פָּנָיו, וַיִּקְרָא, יְהוָה
יְהוָה, אֵל רַחוּם וְחַנוּן--אֶרְךְ אַפַּיִם,
וְרַב-חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת:

נִצֵּר חֶסֶד לְאַלְפִים נִשָּׂא עוֹן וְנִפְשָׁע
וְחִטָּאָה וְנִקְהָ לֹא יִנְקָה פְקֻדַת עוֹן
אֲבוֹת עַל-בְּנֵים וְעַל-בְּנֵי בְנֵים עַל-
שְׁלֵשִׁים וְעַל-רַבָּעִים.

Exodus 34:6-7

How does this period of time serve to remind us of our own insignificance?

Day 9: *Avinu Malkeinu...*

The sinner himself is to turn to God, since it is he who turned away. It was his sin and it must be his conversions. No one can substitute for him in his return, no one can atone for him; no one stands between him and God, no mediator or past event, no redeemer and no sacrament. He must purify himself, he must attain his own freedom, for he was responsible for his loss of it. Faith and trust alone are therefore not sufficient; nor does confidence in God or a reliance upon an already acquired salvation suffice. Here again it is the deed which is paramount. Atonement is ours; it is our task and our way.

Leo Baeck

Does prayer take away our sins?

**Our Father, our King, we
have sinned before You.**

In Biblical Hebrew there are three main terms for sin – *pesha*, *avon* and *chet*...

Pesha means rebellion. It refers to the attitude of mind though which a man sets himself up as the sole judge of his actions, recognising neither God nor His law. *Pesha* signifies the refusal of man to consider himself accountable to God for his actions. For this type of man there are no external standards of right and wrong. Right is the name he gives to those actions which please him and further his aims, wrong, to those which displease him and frustrate his aims.

Avon comes from the root meaning 'to be twisted,' 'to be crooked.' It refers to the man whose course in life is deflected from the pursuit of the good...It refers also to the twist in a man's character which seems to impel him to do wrong, to a queer perversity of temperament which propels him in the direction of wrongdoing.

Chet is the weakest of the three terms. It comes from a root meaning 'to miss.' The word is used, for example, of an archer whose arrows fail to hit the target. *Chet* denotes failure to follow the good path, to the lack of character or staying power which prevents a man from arriving at the goal he has set himself... Blame is attached even to unwitting sin if it could have been avoided with the exercise of greater care. The careless driver, the slack teacher, the over-indulgent or the neglectful parent, the thoughtless son, are all guilty of *chet*.

Louis Jacobs

Have we as individuals, or as a Jewish community,
sinned in each of these three ways?

Our Sins and Prayers...

All is God's

Man has separated lust and sorrow.
But God holds them together like day and night.
I know lust. I know intense suffering.
I praise God's one name.

How difficult is it for
prayer to lead to action?

God's Gifts

My most pious songs have I written
On rising from my sinful bed.
God has given me a wealth of sins,
And God alone has saved me from my sins.

Jacob Israel de Haan

אָבינו מלְכֵנוּ. הָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ :

High Holy Day Liturgy

Deletion

In less than an instant, I can delete dozens
of messages from the computer screen,
watch them vanish as a swarm of mayflies
spirals upward through the hawthorn blossom
in its dance of nuptial suicide,
or iron filings rush towards a magnet.

But those hundred of words, read then deleted,
do not disappear. The air I breathe
is clogged with them, like pollen in hay-fever season
or prayer that cannot force the heavenly barrier,
the Heavside layer, to achieve response.
I can imagine them, twisted around each other
like a heavy ball of rubber bands, or
a weightless pale cocoon sheathing the future.

Ruth Fainlight

Do we need prayers like
Avinu Malkeinu to help us
atone?

Is poetry a form of prayer?

Can poems help us with our sins?

Day 10: *Jonah*

When all within is dark,
and former friends misprise;
From them I turn to You,
and find love in Your eyes.

When all within is dark,
and I my soul despise;
From me I turn to You,
and find love in Your eyes.

When all Your face is dark,
and Your just angers rise;
From You I turn to You
and find love in Your eyes.

*Israel Abrahams
Based on Ibn Gabirol*

How does Israel Abrahams' poem convey a different image of God from Jonah's?

Jonah Chapter 1

3. Jonah, however, started out to flee to Tarshish from the Lord's service. He went down to Jaffa and found a ship going to Tarshish. He paid the fare and went aboard to sail with the others to Tarshish, away from the service of the Lord.

6. The captain went over to him and cried out, "How can you be sleeping so soundly! Up, call upon your God! Perhaps God will be kind to us and we will not perish."

He went down

Four times Jonah 'went down' – to Jaffa, into the ship, into the innermost part of the ship, to the depths of the sea (2:4). Whoever flees God's presence cannot preserve on the old plan of his own being; falling, he must fall deeper and deeper; the direction of flight is necessarily downwards.

Ernst Simon

Tarshish

What is Tarshish?...In the story it is anywhere – anywhere but the right place; it is the opposite direction, the direction a man takes when he turns his back on his destiny...It is the excuse we give – our rationalisations.

Sheldon H. Blank

How does the human propensity to "flee to Tarshish" affect the decisions we make in life?

3. וַיְקַם יוֹנָה לְבָרַח תְּרִשִׁישָׁה,
מִלְפָּנֵי יְהוָה; וַיֵּרֶד יָפוֹ וַיִּמְצָא
אֲנִיָּה בָּאָה תְרִשִׁישׁ, וַיִּתֵּן שְׂכָרָהּ
וַיֵּרֶד בָּהּ לְבוֹא עִמָּהֶם תְּרִשִׁישָׁה,
מִלְפָּנֵי יְהוָה.

6. וַיִּקְרַב אֵלָיו רַב הַחַבְלִים, וַיֹּאמֶר
לוֹ מֶה-לָּךְ נִרְדָּם; קוֹם, קְרָא אֶל-
אֶל־הַיָּם--אוּלַי יִתְעַשֶׂת הָאֱלֹהִים
לָנוּ, וְלֹא נִאֲבָד.

How is prayer viewed differently
in these various texts?

Maurice Shochet was an observant Jew. When he had to go to hospital for an operation, he didn't forget his prayerbook and tefillin. The following morning he rose early and put on his tefillin.

A patient in the next bed looked on in amazement. 'No wonder they say these Jews are brilliant,' he said, 'this chap hasn't been in hospital 24 hours and already he's taking his own blood pressure.'

That is the kind of prayer that God answers. We can't pray that He makes our lives free of problems; this won't happen, and it is probably just as well. We can't ask Him to make us and those we love immune to disease, because He can't do that. We can't ask Him to weave a magic spell around us so that bad things will only happen to other people, and never to us. People who pray for miracles usually don't get miracles any more than children who pray for bicycles, good grades, or boyfriends get them as a result of praying. But people who pray for courage, for strength to bear the unbearable, for the grace to remember what they have left instead of what they have lost, very often find their prayers answered. They discover that they have more strength, more courage than they ever knew themselves to have. Where did they get it? I would like to think that their prayers helped them tap hidden reserves of faith and courage which were not available to them before. The widow who asks me on the day of her husband's funeral, 'What do I have to live for now!', yet in the course of the ensuing weeks finds reasons to wake up in the morning and look forward to the day; the man who has lost his job or closed his business and says to me, 'Rabbi, I'm too old and tired to start all over again,' but starts over again nonetheless – where did they get the strength, the hope, the optimism that they did not have on the day they asked me those questions? I would like to believe that they received those things from the context of a concerned community, people who made it clear to them that they cared, and from the knowledge that God is at the side of the afflicted and the downcast.

Harold Kushner

Handwritten Hebrew text on the left page of an ancient scroll, showing signs of age and wear.

Handwritten Hebrew text on the right page of an ancient scroll, showing signs of age and wear.

לְשָׁנָה טוֹבָה תִּחְתָּמוּ

May you be sealed for a good year.