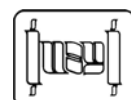


New Year, New You!
*A Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur Program Guide for USY and
Kadima Teens and Pre-teens*

Compiled by Amy Dorsch
Education Coordinator, United Synagogue Youth



Shanah Tova!

This guide is to assist you in programming for teen and pre-teen High Holy Day services. This is not a prayer service, but rather ideas and explanations of liturgical themes, holiday customs, and activities for questioning, contemplating and exploring the *Yamim Nora'im* or Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur High Holy Days. The booklet is divided into four sections:

Section I: Overview

- High Holy Day themes
- Summary of Liturgy- highlights of the liturgy and its core concepts
- Customs and rituals- High Holy Day glossary
- Programming in a Nutshell: Ideas for Quick Activities on liturgical themes

Section II: Readings, Reflections and Ideas for Discussion


Section III- Making It Real

Turning Discussion into Action

Activities to bring the themes, concepts and liturgy of the *Yamim Nora'im* to life.

Section IV: Holiday, not Holy Day program Ideas

Ideas for chapters to use on non-Yom Tov (chol) days

Appendices are included as well as a High Holy Day joke page to balance the serious nature of the discussion pieces and holiday themes. Some information in the programming section is presented as a complete program, ready to use. Other information is to be adapted into a program suitable for your setting and population. Most ideas are presented for high school participants but included in some of the readings or activities is this symbol  to indicate an adaptation for younger audiences from fifth to eighth grade. Additionally, available on the USY website, is a bibliography with suggested resources for you to use to plan your own activities.

Thank you to those who contributed program ideas. Please feel free to submit new ideas to me so that we may continue to update this booklet and share our great ideas. Additionally, a huge todah rabah goes out to our small team of proofreaders: Barbara Sharofsky, Mark Gulner, Rabbi Jennifer Gorman and Stephanie Nichol.

With *T'shuva*, *Tzedakah* and *Tefillah* in mind, may we help our youth to embrace this season with introspection, compassion and a commitment to becoming their best selves.

Amy Dorsch
USY Education Coordinator

Table of Contents

Section I: Overview

High Holy Day Themes in a Nutshell.....	4
Liturgy at a Glance, Liturgical Highlights and Themes.....	6
Programming in a Nutshell: Ideas for Quick Activities.....	16

Section II: Readings and Discussion.....21

Tefillah.....	21
Yom Din/Day of Judgment.....	27
Shofar/Shofarot: a Call to Action.....	29
Tshuva and Vidu'i and Heshbon Nefesh.....	31
Readings for the Torah Reading.....	39
Tzedaka- learning to live by learning to give.....	42
For Fun/Miscellaneous: Uncle Eli's Machzor.....	43

Section III- Making it Real

Turning discussion into action through activities.....	45
--	----

Section IV: Holiday, not Holy Day Program Ideas

Ideas for chapters to use on secular (chol)days.....	81
--	----

Appendices to Activities

Mitzvah Meter.....	84
Zikaron/Remembrance: a Service.....	85
On the Lighter Side: HHD Humor.....	88

Also available through links on www.USY.org/advisors:

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur Glossary of Customs and Rituals

Bibliography/Suggested Books for Teen High Holy Day Services

Key:



Reading or reflection



QPM: Question for personal meaning or deeper thinking



Adapted activity for younger groups

Section I: Overview

High Holy Day themes in a nutshell

New Beginnings

Although teens may struggle to relate to a very spiritually intense time period of the Jewish calendar, one thing they can relate to is change. Rosh Hashanah marks a new beginning, a time for reflection, change and discovery of a new sense of self. To *this* teens relate.

Although one of four “new years” of the Jewish calendar, Rosh Hashanah is the new year’s day or “head of the year.” It marks the creation of the universe, the beginning of the Jewish calendar year and the *Yamim Nora'im*. Beginning with a preparatory period in the month of Elul, these holidays are a time of contemplation, introspection, prayer, meditation, repentance and atonement. Rosh Hashanah marks a spiritual beginning, a chance for renewal, a chance to turn inward, reflect on our past year and vow to improve our behavior and relationships with God, with others and with ourselves. On Yom Kippur, we try and reflect upon our actions and find ways to balance wrongdoings with positive actions. This season is a tremendous opportunity for insight and growth, if we choose to take it.

Explaining the holiday origin with Biblical bites:

- Rosh Hashanah: “In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe complete rest, a sacred occasion commemorated with loud blasts.” Vayikra/Leviticus 23:24
- Yom Kippur: “Mark, the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. It shall be a sacred occasion for you: you shall practice self denial. And you shall do no manner of work in that same day; for it is a day of atonement, to make atonement for you before the Lord your God.” Vayikra/Leviticus 23:27-28

Other Names for Rosh Hashanah:

- **Yom T'ru'ah**- the day we usher in a “wake up call” by the sound of the shofar.
- **Yom Din**- “On Rosh Hashanah all the inhabitants of the world pass before Him [in judgment] like a flock of sheep” (Midrash R.H. 1:2). “All are judged on Rosh Hashanah, and the verdict is sealed on Yom Kippur” (Tosefta, R.H. 1:12). Not only are our past actions judged by God, we turn inward and judge ourselves.
- **Yom Hazikaron**- Memory- we remember our actions from the past year as well as our deceased loved ones.

Based on the themes of *t'shuva*, *tefillah*, and *tzedakah*, mentioned in the well known High Holy Day tefillah, *U'netaneh Tokef*, this booklet will focus on three main themes of the *Yamim Nora'im*:¹

T'shuva- literally means "to return." Through repentance, introspection- a deep look at our past actions- and self and Divine judgment, we make a commitment to "return," to judge our actions and commit to being the best we can be. T'shuvah is a four step process where we recognize our sins, feel regret for having committed them, promise not to do them again, and try to make up for any harm we may have caused. The major prayers of the Yom Kippur liturgy focus on this concept.

Tefillah- through prayer, we (re-)connect with God and with our personal, innermost selves. Though many people find themselves lost in the *machzor*, this guide will use the contents of the machzor to help you explore and connect with the themes of the liturgy with your youth through discussion and activity.

Tzedaka- giving back- it is customary to not only give financially in this season but also to commit to giving more of oneself to friends, family, God and community.

The Process of the Yamim Nora'im: Beyond the 3 Days

Preceding the Holy Days:

Shofar- the Shofar is blown each day of the month of Elul as a wake up call to remind us to start the process of introspection and reflection of our past actions.

Slichot- These are the Penitential prayers recited each morning during the month of Elul as well as during the Ten Days of Repentance. Ashkenazim recite it on the Sunday before Rosh Hashanah. A minimum of four days before Rosh Hashanah is required to say Slichot. In North America, we say Slichot on the Saturday night to mark the beginning of the preceding days before RH. However, Slichot prayers do not have to be said on Saturday night as long as there are four days in between Slichot and RH. The Slichot liturgy includes *piyyutim* (liturgical poems) and penitential prayers. We prepare ourselves for the intense soul searching and accounting of the Yamim Nora'im, take stock of our wrongdoings and righteousness over the past year and prepare to ask God for forgiveness.

During:

Aseret Y'mei T'shuva- The ten days through Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur, are a time of introspection, reflection, and asking for forgiveness from

¹ "U't'shuva, u'tefillah u'tzedaka ma'avirin et ha'g'zeirah"- Repentance, prayer and acts of righteousness avert the severity of the decree (U'netaneh Tokef prayer)

those we have pained. We soul search, take stock, and repent for our errors.

Tashlich- Although outside of the synagogue, Tashlich is still included as an integral part of the Rosh Hashanah prayer experience. We would be remiss not to mention it in this booklet, however not much else will address the Tashlich ceremony. For more information on Tashlich, including sample readings: http://www.uscj.org/TashlikhCasting_Sins5674.html

Tefillah: Highlights of the High Holy Day Liturgy² *At a Glance*

The order of each service will appear by column. You can choose which parts of the service on which you'd like to focus with your group. Following the chart is a brief explanation of each section or key prayer.

Erev RH	Shacharit RH	RH Mincha	Kol Nidre YK	YK Shacharit	YK Mincha	N'ilah
Preparatory prayers	Birkot Hashachar	Preparatory prayers	Kol Nidre prayer	Birkot Hashachar	Torah Service (Haftara-Jonah)	Intro prayers
Shema and its Blessings	P'sukei D'zimra	Torah Service (if Shabbat)	Shema	P'sukei D'Zimra	Amidah	Amidah
Silent Amidah	Amidah (silent)	Amidah	Amidah	Shema and blessings	Repetition of Amidah (includes Avinu Malkeinu)	Repetition of Amidah
Dedication of the New Year	Repetition	Conclusion	Slichot prayers	Silent Amidah		Slichot and Vidu'i
Concluding prayers	Torah Service		Vidu'i-Ashamnu, Al Cheyt	Repetition		Conclusion and Shofar
	Torah reading and Haftara		Conclusion	Slichot (incl. in repetition)		
	Shofar			Vidu'i-Ashamnu and Al Cheyt		
	Return Torah			Avinu Malkeinu		
	Musaf: Silent Amidah			Torah Reading and Haftara		

² Page numbers quoted are from the Rabbinical Assembly *Machzor for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur*, edited by Rabbi Jules Harlow. For a wonderful complete, yet simple High Holy Day machzor good for youth services, order a copy of Shoshana Silberman's *Tiku Shofar*, USCJ, 1990.

	Repetition- Malchuyot Zichronot Shofarot			Yizkor		
				Musaf: silent Amidah and repetition		
				Eileh Ezkerah		
				Vidu'l, Slichot H'neni		

Liturgical Highlights and Themes of Rosh Hashanah Shacharit

You can use the QPMs and Readings or Reflections in a T'fillah text study or to include if planning your own discussions on the liturgy. Additional readings can be found in the Readings and Reflection section

Ailu D'varim (These Things)- this prayer mentions essential values that define life: compassion, kindness, Torah, and our relationship with God. We have the ability and responsibility to prioritize these values.



QPM: What do you value? What do you prioritize? What would be on your "These things" list that you wish to focus on this year?

Hamelech (The King)

Sovereignty is a common theme in High Holy Day liturgy. Sovereignty describes God as supreme ruler, God as judge. *Yom Din* or "Judgment Day," isn't meant to be a Santa Clause distinction of naughty or nice. God is Judge because God cares for us to improve ourselves, re-evaluate, and recommit to ethics, morals, and values to which we may not have remained committed.

God Remembers Everything You Forget

"He knows when you've been bad or good...so be good for goodness sake!" Again, the Santa Clause analogy does not apply to God on Yom Din. However, knowing that God remembers helps us to remember. We cannot reflect and respond to our actions the past year without God's help.



"Over God's desk is a plaque that says, "God forgets everything you remember and remembers everything you forget"--*Bernie Siegel, MD*



QPM: "I always stress about things I have no control over." Have you ever said this? Do you sometimes leave things up to God and understand that "whatever will be, will be?" How do you determine whether to act on your own

or leave it up to God? Remember, God gives you the ability to make choices. Ultimately, even though you've made the decision, you were able to because of your God-given ability!

Ahava Rabah and The Shema

This is a time to be thankful for the love of God and for the love that we do have in our lives. Instead of complaining, we can be thankful for the love and friendship in our lives.

Shema- Hear and Listen

On this day, Shema is a wake up call. It reminds us to keep our connection to one God. Like the shofar, we call out to our people and announce our faith.



"I was taught by my mom and dad that in Judaism the most important prayer is the Shema- "Hear o Israel." It was taught to me from childhood that the most important thing I could do as a Jew was to listen. It wasn't a way for my parents to say, "I know more than you," they meant listen to yourself. Listen to those little whispers that we tend to not want to hear because they're too soft and we tend to listen to shouts not whispers. So listening carefully is what I was taught all my life. When people don't listen, its not that they don't learn, they just deny themselves tremendous opportunities and wise choices" - *Steven Spielberg*

Amidah - our personal prayers for a better world and for self improvement. We begin our plea to God, expressing our imperfections, and requesting the strength to change and improve.

Zochreinu L'chayim- Remember us for life



QPM- The Big Question: Do you live the life you want to lead? Given the aspects of your life that you do have choices over, are you making the best choices for yourself?



High Holy Day Fear Factor!

Why would we ask God to make us afraid on Rosh Hashanah? When you're afraid, your adrenaline pumps and you are quick to act. How can the seriousness of this holy day be fearful for some of us? Fear on this day, also means awe, making this day "awesome." What is the difference between something we fear and what causes us to be in awe?

Avinu Malkeinu



"The theme of God as King is a common theme of the Rosh Hashanah liturgy. Knowing we have little control over certain aspects of our lives, how can we learn to be rulers over our actions and thoughts? We are masters over

our own deeds, not slaves. Since we do have control over our own inclinations, we have the ability to rule over our own passions and desires."
Debra Orenstein

Torah Reading Day 1

The Torah Reading on the first day of RH is about the birth of Isaac, the miraculous fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham, and the famous story of Ishmael and Hagar.



If Rosh Hashanah marks the birthday of the world, *why is the story of Hagar and Ishmael's expulsion by Avraham and Isaac's birth read and not the Creation story?*

Torah Reading Day 2

The Akeida, a most puzzling story...faith or fanaticism?

Shofar Service: The HHD Alarm Clock

T'kiah - one long note

Shvarim- 3 short notes

T'ruah- 9 short notes

T'kiah G'dola- one loooooooooooooong note



"The shofar is a prayer without words." Saul Lieberman,
Quoted in Leo Rosten's *Treasury of Jewish Quotations*

High Holy Day Musaf

Core themes: Malchuyot (the rulership of God), Zichronot (God Remembers) and Shofarot (Revelation of God). The prayers of each of these sections are comprised of texts from the Tanach. We begin with the haunting and beautiful **Hin'ni** prayer, where the chazzan or Shaliach Tzibur pleads to God on behalf of the people. This plea is stirring, moving and solemn.



You may notice the chazzan prostrates him/herself by bowing low to the ground, even getting on his/her knees. Why do you think this custom exists? Read the Hin'ni prayer and figure out why the physical act of bowing so low to the ground exists. What message does this send about the seriousness or gravity of the Hini'ni prayer?

Malchuyot

Malchuyot is the concept of the Sovereignty and ultimate Sovereignty of God

At the end of the day, God has given you the power to change and be empowered to make change. However, not all the power is in your hands. Some change, we must leave up to a Higher Power.



QPM: We are not ruled by a king (or queen!) in North America, making the idea of God's Sovereignty as opposed to human sovereignty more relevant in both our religious and secular lives. What do you think is the value behind attributing Sovereignty only to God and not a human?

Zichronot- Memory and Yizkor

Zikaron- Remembrance

Another name of Rosh Hashanah is Day of Remembrance



Memory- we are given the power to remember in order to recognize what we value and appreciate, as well as make change for the better.

QPM: What little things do you do to help you remember the mundane tasks and "to do" items? How do you remember something much more important than the little "to do" items? Is there someone in your life who is no longer with you that you choose to remember this year? Did you go through something that you wish to remember in order to make a change for this year?



From the last paragraph of the obituary of Simon Wiesenthal, Nazi hunter:

"He was often asked why he had become a searcher of Nazi criminals. One response he gave was, 'I believe that when we come to the other world and meet the millions of Jews who died in the camps and they ask us 'what have you done?' there will be many answers. You will say 'I became a jeweler,' Another will say, 'I built houses,' but I will say, 'I didn't forget you.'"



To us, recollection is a holy act; we sanctify the present by remembering the past. To us Jews, the essence of faith is memory. To believe is to remember."

Abraham Joshua Heschel

Shofarot- the Shofar Service



Shofarot and Tikun Olam: "How wonderful it is that no one need wait a single moment to start to improve the world"

Anne Frank

"If we are able to be involved but remain indifferent, we are responsible for the consequences" --Midrash (commentaries, teachings of the Rabbinic sages)



Hayom Harat Olam- today the world is born. RH is also known as the birthday of the world. Why do we acknowledge the birthday of the world on the same day as judgment, reflection, and internal "housekeeping?"

Musaf Amidah- Among many other words of heartfelt prayer, we ask God to remember us and inscribe us into the Book of Life. "zochreinu l'chayim, Melech chafetz b'chayim..."

U'netaneh Tokef

This is not only a liturgical highlight of the High Holy Days, but likely the most well known prayers. It is a stirring passage that relates back to Rabbi Amnon who was slowly dismembered rather than convert and give up his Judaism. We live for the sake of Judaism for those who died for Judaism. We also recite the fact that, on RH, our fate is written and on Yom Kippur, it is sealed.

Found in this prayer is a core concept of the Yamim Nora'im, that "b'rosh Hashanah yikateivun uv'yom tzom Kippur y'chateimun" - *on Rosh Hashanah our fate is written, on Yom Kippur our fate is sealed.*

T'shuva, Tefillah, Tzedakah- these three core concepts are a fair summary of the meaning behind the liturgy and the holy days in general. *Activities in the subsequent sections will focus on these themes from the Rosh Hashanah Musaf service.*

Adam Y'sodo M'afar- the origin of humanity is dust. We are humbled by this prayer that helps us recognize that no matter how wealthy our material lives are, we all originated as dust and no one is better than the other. One way to relate this to teens is to discuss concepts of envy, materialism, cliques and Hollywood "role models" vs. authentic role models.

Atah Zocheir- You Remember. How do you wish to be remembered this year? What impression do you want to leave on those you meet and with whom you associate? As what kind of person do you wish to be remembered?

For more information on High Holy Day themes, liturgy, customs and rituals, check out the glossary at the back of the book Celebrating the Jewish Year: the Fall Holidays, by Paul Steinberg, available through USCJ Book Service: https://secure.uscj.org/bookservice/BookDetail.asp?item_id=559&

Yom Kippur Liturgy



*One thing to note is the subject of T'fillah is often written in plural. Why do we admit to our wrongdoings and ask to be forgiven as a collective unit?

Kol Nidrei- repeated three times, the "all my vows," t'fillah is likely one of the most serious of prayers (and the most solemn of services) during this time. "All my vows" is the request to be absolved of all the vows and promises we make. Even on this day, we may have to retract our words in the event that we don't keep them. We're telling God collectively that we're not perfect and to forgive us in advance. This is your contract with God and with yourself. The promises you make are signed and sealed, yet you're human and will err. Note that we recite this in the plural, as a community, illustrating the imperfections of us all. Kol Nidre sets the tone for our final accounting of the soul (Heshbon Hanefesh). The emotional melody helps us become aware of the seriousness of our self reflection and the vows we have broken this past year.



How do the confessional prayers of Yom Kippur differ from the confessional prayers of other faiths?

Al Cheyt- Although we repeat this on Yom Kippur day, we list our wrongdoings first in the evening service and then again during the day (see more in Shacharit section).³

Adonai Eil Rachum - Compassionate God- we ask for God's compassion in forgiving us.

Shma Koleinu- Have pity on us, accept our prayers in compassion and kindness. *S'lach lanu, m'chal lanu, kapeir lanu*- forgive us, pardon us, grant us atonement.

Vidui'i- The day time Yom Kippur liturgy focuses on t'shuva and forgiveness. Vidu'i is the "confessional" of the Yom Kippur liturgy. All the wrongdoings we recite are in the plural; that we are all guilty of these wrongdoings and that no one is perfect. This also teaches us the importance of collective responsibility. As a community, we confess our wrongdoings and ask for forgiveness with the support of others to make change. The well known "confessional" prayers of Yom Kippur are the *Ashamnu* and *Al Cheyt*. *Ashamnu* is the shorter of the two confessional prayers and is written alphabetically as an acrostic. We beat our chests when reciting each wrongdoing of the *Ashamnu* and *Al Cheyt*.

³ See page 123 of *Tiku Shofar* for a nice translation of Al Cheyt



"We have sinned against you." Against whom have we sinned? Why does the *Al Chayt* only list wrongdoings between people and not between a person and God? The *Al Chayt* proves the value of relationships between *Adam L'chavero* (person and his/her fellow) and allows us to focus on how we have treated others while in prayer with God. Traditional Jewish prayers tell us that God is forgiving and will forgive us for the wrongdoings that were done against God, and affect no one else other than our relationship with God. For sins that affect and harm others, we must first apologize and seek forgiveness from those people we have hurt.

Avinu Malkeinu- God as parent, God as Sovereign Ruler, we admit to our errors and ask for help from God with becoming better people and forgiving our errors.

Shacharit

Many of the Tefillot we say at Kol Nidrei are repeated at Shacharit.

Al Cheyt- for all these sins we have committed against You, we ask for Your forgiveness.

Ba Din- in judgment- we claim God's Sovereignty and God who sits in judgment



Compare some of what we claim God does in judgment to what people are capable of. Are there any similarities between the abilities of God which we recite and the abilities of people?

Torah:

Leviticus 16:29-32- Holy Day text source!

29 And it shall be a statute for ever unto you: in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and shall do no manner of work, the home-born, or the stranger that sojourn among you. **30** For on this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins shall ye be clean before the Lord. **31** It is a sabbath of solemn rest unto you, and you shall afflict your souls; it is a statute for ever. **32** And the priest, who shall be anointed and who shall be consecrated to be priest in his father's stead, shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen garments, even the holy garments.

The **Torah Readings** of Yom Kippur are from Vayikra and deal with sacrifices and sacrificial ritual. Sacrifices to God were made as a way to repent for sins. The goat sacrificed represented the pardon or release from sin and the sins of the people would be placed on another goat (the "scapegoat") and sent away.



QPM: When was the last time you were promised something and the person making the promise didn't follow through? When was the last time you made a promise that you didn't commit to? Imagine a world where everyone remained committed to their word, where a handshake could be trusted and one could not back out of statements they had made. Imagine a world where integrity of verbal statements mattered. During Kol Nidre, we consider the integrity of our own promises we make to others and to ourselves. To whom do you have credibility? Who can count on your "Kol Nidre" n'darim?

Yizkor - For many Jews, Yizkor is the most significant part of the Yom Kippur service as we remember loved ones departed. We recall the souls of those who have left us and understand that their souls are eternal. By recalling the memories of those who have died, they live on through us.

Musaf

Zochreinu and Ashamnu are repeated.

Hin'ni- The Chazzan recites this very emotional, dramatic plea to God on behalf of the congregation.

"Here I stand, impoverished in merit, trembling in Your Presence, pleading on behalf of Your People Israel...I plead for help as I seek mercy for myself and those whom I represent..." *It's tough stuff, but so powerful!*

"On Rosh Hashanah it is written, on Yom Kippur, it is sealed...repentance, Tzedakah and prayer can annul the severity of the decree."

U'netaneh Tokef is repeated. Again, we recite that on Rosh Hashanah our fate is written and on Yom Kippur, it is sealed. Tefillah, T'shuva, and Tzedakah, 3 core tenets of Judaism will help lead us to righteousness. This includes some of the most forceful and profound statements and meaning of the Yamim Nora'im. It expresses our awareness of the uncertainty of life and Divine judgment of the Universe. It is probably one of the most significant prayers in Jewish liturgy. Through Heshbon Hanefesh, an accounting of the soul, we can change the future by changing ourselves.

V'chol Ma'aminim: We read the details God's attributes and reflect how they apply to our lives.

Eileh Ezkerah- Rabbinic martyrs and the gory details of their deaths

This section of the *musaf* service, unique to Yom Kippur, describes the deaths of famous rabbis by Roman persecutors. Standing together in prayer, we prove that those who died for Judaism did not do so in vain. We ask God to remember the devotion of our ancestors and proclaim that despite those who have tried to kill us, *Am Yisrael Chai*, we live on!

Shma Koleinu is repeated, including prayers of atonement: "S'lach kanu, m'chal lanu, kapeir lanu..." We repeat our petition to God to forgive us, pardon us, grant us atonement.

Vidui and Al Cheyt are repeated.

Hayom- a short and sweet prayer reminding God what we have requested of God on this holy day (to inscribe us, to hear us, to forgive us)

Ne'ilah
(“Locking” - as in the locking of the Heavenly Gates)

Chai-lights (it *is* when our fate is sealed and we wish for life!) of the Ne'ilah service:

The gates are closing...the Vidu'i is repeated, pleas for forgiveness are repeated, we ask for God's compassion in forgiving our sins and transgressions. We also repeat prayers detailing the reciprocity of the human-God relationship. This is our final plea...we want to make it count. We have been asking to be "inscribed" all day and now we ask to be "sealed." The Ark is open for the Reader's Repetition and we stand.

Seal us in the book in the Book of Life

Here we have our final plea with God: "Okay God, I'm trying here, let's seal the deal."



Is there really a list of "life" and "death?" Do you believe that God decides our fate and chooses life or death for each of us? What do you think this prayer means, asking God to "seal us in the book of life?"

Sim Shalom- The Jewish people are rarely at peace- with each other, with our enemies, with issues that disturb our consciences. We come to a close praying for peace, a core Jewish value that we constantly seek.

Programming in a Nutshell

Ideas for Quick Activities on Liturgical Themes

Use the glossary from *Celebrating the Jewish Year: the Fall Holidays*, by Paul Steinberg, available on the USY advisor page, for the following three activities:

HHD Taboo

Taboo is a board game where you have to describe a noun without using the listed words on your Taboo card in your description. On an index card, you would list the noun and then 5 "taboo" words under it that the person cannot say when describing this noun to the group.

Example: Describe *shofar*. Your taboo words are:

Blow

Ram

Horn

Holiday

T'kiah

HHD Mixer

Give each person in attendance an index card with a word or phrase from the glossary and its definition. Each person must find his/her partner, introduce him/herself and share one favorite HHD custom (example: my bubbe's honey cake).

HHD Jew-pardy (courtesy of Joy Newman of Tzafon Region USY)

The classic game of Jeopardy with HHD questions and answers.

Customs and Symbols

Game: Do, Say and Eat

One person stands in the middle of a circle of people. He/she spins around, stops and points at a member of the circle and calls out either "do," "say" or "eat." That person must respond with a holy day custom or ritual according to what was shouted and explain why.

Examples

do-tashlich

say- U'netaneh Tokef

eat- pomegranates

The Prayer Puzzle

For those who learn by mapping, try this activity to help learn the structure of the HHD prayer service:



a) Have each part of the RH and YK prayer services written out on index cards. Split the group into teams and give each person a Tefillah or part of the service they will represent. Have them order the service first by mapping it out on the floor and then arrange themselves in order in a line.

b) Next, have them think of an analogy or metaphor to present the order of the service so that they can understand the significance of the order.

Example: praying this service is like a hiker on a mountain. There are certain peaks and valleys he/she must reach in order to accomplish his/her journey. Or the RH and YK prayer service is like a Kosher Clubhouse sandwich with all the fixings. Each part provides its unique taste and function but there are "meatier" layers that offer particular significance such as U'netaneh Tokef and Avinu Malkeinu.

The above activity is a level for older audiences who may be able to think more abstractly (best for adults), but you'd be surprised at the responses teens can come up with!

Ashamnu and Al Cheyt "Whip"

The *Ashamnu* t'fillah is an alphabetical list of wrongdoings of which we are all guilty. This game is similar to "Whip" where one person stands in the middle and quickly turns around and points at someone who then has to say his/her name. Instead, the Yom Kippur version has each person pointed at say a wrongdoing they have committed this year by alphabet.

Interview

Through the Vidu'i prayers, God has asked you to come clean, to admit to all the ways you have mistreated your parents, siblings, friends, teachers, cousins, store clerks, etc. Have each person find a partner and pretend that one of you is God and the other him/herself. In an interview, "God" must ask the person to describe one moment or action from the past year that still lingers in his/her partner's head, of a wrongdoing one has committed against another in his/her life. What questions would "God" ask you if you were facing God and had to list your "ashamnus?"

Hin'ni- Here I am

"Here I stand, impoverished in merit, trembling in Your Presence, pleading on behalf of Your People Israel...I plead for help as I seek mercy for myself and those whom I represent..."

This can be a very dramatic, emotional and powerful part of the Musaf service. The chazzan pleads, with emotion and fervor on behalf of the community.

Option #1 A Dramatic reading of Hin'ni: Split the group into teams and have them act out the Hin'ni according to their own dramatic interpretation. How would you read this with intensity, with deep *Kavanah* (intention, personal meaning)?

Option #2 Ask the group to imagine the following situations and to come up with a plea for the people:

- *You have a horribly mean teacher who piles on the homework. Your class can't take it anymore but everyone's afraid to say something. You stand up to speak on behalf of the class.*
- *You are working your first summer job and the boss often makes you stay late and doesn't pay you. How do you stand up for yourself?*
- *Your parents won't let you go on a camping trip with your friends. How do you plead your case?*

Explain: Obviously, *I'havdil* (to differentiate), there is a huge distinction between Hin'ni and asking your parents to go on a trip, but imagine the pleading, the begging and the desperation of *Hin'ni*.

Option #3: As you may have noticed, the chazzan prostrates him/herself low to the ground as he/she recites the Hn'ni. Discuss the powerful impact this image or action has given the gravity of the Hin'ni prayer. Have the group members read the Hin'ni and come up with another physical expression that could reflect the plea of the Hin'ni.

Jonah (read during Mincha on Yom Kippur)

Theme to use for activities: Escaping responsibility

Midah K'neged Midah- facing consequences for our actions and second chances.

a) Game-



1) One person is "it" and stands in the middle with his/her eyes closed and an object nearby (can be anything one can grab). Each person must try, one by one, to grab the object in the middle without the "it" person sensing his/her presence. When "it" feels the person approach, he/she must yell "Gotcha!" Alternatives to the eyes closed is to challenge the "it" person by blocking out other senses such as using ear plugs or hands behind the back to lose the sense of touch.

Explain the connection: You each tried to take what you needed without being caught. You can't escape your responsibilities. The person in the middle represents someone who has asked something of you. You can try and "take away" the demand he/she is placing on you but you will likely be caught. You can avoid your homework or skip taking the trash out, but you will only be

shortchanging yourself and disappointing the people around you. Jonah was only looking out for himself and what he wanted (grabbing the object and running), and tried to get away with avoiding God's request. God caught him escaping and punished him until he could repent, change his ways and face up to responsibility.

2) Ask for four volunteers to stand up and play the following characters from this story: Anybody, Nobody, Somebody and Everybody. Ask them to act out what you read: *This is a little story about four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought that Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.*

Discuss the idea of responsibility and our tendency to wait for others to take care of what we should be doing ourselves. How many of you often say "I'll do it later," or "you do it," when it comes to chores, homework, or other responsibilities at home or school? What do you think is the source of escaping responsibility, and what motivates you to do as you should and get things done?

Jonah II: Second chances

(you may vary this activity in any way you choose but each person must have a fair shot at hitting a challenging target)

Blindfolded Ball Toss: Ask each participant to be blindfolded for this game. Put a bucket at a decent distance or hang a paper target on a distant wall in order to make the target challenging to hit. Each participant will toss a ball and try to hit the target, demonstrating the idea of *second chances*. Most people will not toss the ball into the bucket or hit the target on the first try but will eventually get it with practice.

Relate it to Jonah: a) when Jonah missed the boat (no pun intended) and ran away from God, God sent the whale to save him in order for him to have a second chance at taking responsibility and following God's command. You may sometimes "miss the target" and not do the right thing, but God (and people) is forgiving and will almost always give you another chance to do better. It is up to you to take that chance to do what is right.

V'chasmaynu B'sefer Chayim: Signed, Sealed, Delivered

God decides your fate for the upcoming year, yet you have the capability to make choices to determine how that fate might unfold. If you were to send an email to God, asking God to consider your fears, wishes and anxieties about the upcoming year, what would you say to God? What input do you want to have for the fate that will be sealed by Ne'ilah? Ask for volunteers to sit in the "hot

seat" and pretend to be in front of a computer (a Yom Kippur-friendly computer!). Ask each person to "type" one thought to God as he/she begins his/her year with a clean slate, before fate is sealed. To prevent boredom and keep the momentum going, make sure it moves quickly by choosing people to try the "hot seat." This type of introspection is not common and many in the group may be hesitant at first. Remind them to think about it, and try sharing the first thing they think of.

Section II: Readings and Discussion

Use these readings to spark discussion or to inspire your own creative planning

Sources: Yom Kippur Readings and Rosh Hashanah Readings as well as Celebrating the Jewish Year: The Fall Holidays, and Tiku Shofar (a United Synagogue Publication). Use the following section to provoke discussion on the themes of the liturgy and holidays.



QPM will provide guidance for your discussion

- Tefillah
- Yom Din: Day of Judgment
- Shofar
- Heshbon Nefesh
- T'shuva
- Tzedaka- learning to live by learning to give
- For Fun: Uncle Eli's Machzor

High Holy Days or Holidays?

Rabbi Elliott Dorff writes a comparison between the secular New Year and the Jewish New Year. He ends his comparison by distinguishing between the holiday of New Year's Day and the Holy Day of the Jewish New Year.

"...there is a world of difference between a holy day and a holiday. As Rabbi Sidney Greenberg put it in a reading he created for Rosh Hashanah:

'On holidays, we run away from duties. On holy days, we face up to them. On holidays, we let ourselves go, on holy days, we try to bring ourselves under control. On holidays, we try to empty our minds, on holy days, we attempt to replenish our spirits. On Holidays we reach out for the things we want. On holy days, we reach for the things we need.

Rabbi Sidney Greenberg, qtd. by Rabbi Elliott N. Dorff, in "Celebrating the Jewish Year," page 54

Prayer is...

God Hears Our Prayers: The Lesson

One year on Rosh Hashanah, Rabbi Levi Yitchak of Berditchev told the following story:

Once, he came to an inn where businessmen were praying in a minyan. He was shocked at how fast they were praying and how badly they mispronounced the words. He approached them at the end of the service and started uttering nonsense syllables. "The way I spoke to you," he said "is the way you just spoke to God."

One of them answered "when a baby utters syllables that have no meaning to anyone else, the mother and father know what the infant needs. Even if you didn't understand our prayers, God knows our true most inner most feelings and thoughts."

Rav Levi Yitzchak knew that the man was right. "He showed more faith in God than I did. He taught me something that I now teach you: on this holy day, even the prayers of those we are unable to say them properly or don't feel they know them well, will be heard if they come from the heart."

Source: qtd. in *Tiku Shofar*, p.3

Why We Praise God



Why do we praise God? Some Jews believe that God wants our prayers as a way of connecting with us. Others feel that we need to pray because when we say words of blessing, we are changed for the better. Some feel the need to speak to God. Others feel that prayers help us think about following God's way. What do you think?

Source: *Tiku Shofar*, p.7

Tefillah- The Prayer of a Confederate Soldier

I asked God for strength that I might achieve
I was made weak, that I might learn to serve
I asked for health that I might do great things;
I was given infirmity that I might do better things
I asked for wealth that I might be happy
I was given poverty that I might be wise
I asked for power, that I might earn the praise of others
I was given weakness that I might feel the need of God
I asked for all things that I might enjoy life;
I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.
I got nothing I asked for, but all I hoped for. Despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered, and I am, among all people, most richly blessed



"God doesn't answer my prayers. Why should I pray?" Does this sound familiar? God may not give you the answers you're looking for but you may learn something you weren't expecting from your prayers.

Hayom Harat Olam- on this day the world was created



Rosh Hashanah is the birthday of the world. How is this holy day like a birthday party?

Waiting on the World to Change- a song by John Mayer

Me and all my friends
We're all misunderstood
They say we stand for nothing and
There's no way we ever could

Now we see everything that's going wrong
With the world and those who lead it
We just feel like we don't have the means
To rise above and beat it

So we keep waiting
Waiting on the world to change
We keep on waiting
Waiting on the world to change



The world has become a crazy place since its creation. It keeps changing both for good and toward destruction. Should we follow Mayer's advice and "keep waiting" or do something about the destruction we see? As we celebrate Rosh Hashanah as the birthday of the world, how can we take care of the world we celebrate? Instead of waiting on the world to change, how can we make those changes for a better world?

An Interview With God

Note: During the Yamim Nora'im (High Holy Days), we have ample opportunity to converse with God and ask God anything that may be in our hearts and on our minds. This is a great script to use to begin discussing "talking with God," but it is not easy. Also, this may not be appropriate for younger audiences but can be adapted for younger groups without using this script. To use this with older audiences, you can either role play this as a script or ask two volunteers to ad lib an actual interview they would imagine using this reading to help give them ideas. Participants may be hesitant to respond since they may not have ever been asked to do this. You may want to prepare some possible answers yourself to get them thinking.

"Come in," God said. "So, you'd like to interview me."
"If You have the time," I said. God smiled and said: "My time is eternity and is enough to do everything. What questions do you have in mind to ask me?"



Pause for a moment. What would you ask God if you could ask God anything?

"What surprises You most about humankind?"

God answered: "That they get bored of being children, are in a rush to grow up and then wish to be children again. That they lose their health to make money and then use their money to restore their health, that by thinking anxiously about the future, they forget the present, such that they live neither for the present nor the future. That they live as if they'll never die and they die as if they've never lived..."

God's hand took mine and we were silent for a while and then I asked...



After hearing this "rant" from God, what would you say to God?

"As a parent, what are some life lessons you want your child to learn?"

God replied with a smile:

"To learn that they cannot make anyone love them. What they can do is to let themselves be loved. To learn that what is most valuable is not what they have in their lives, but who they have in their lives. To learn that it is not good to compare themselves to others. All will be judged individually on their own merits, not as a group on a comparison basis! To learn that a rich person is not the one who has the most but is one who needs the least. To learn that it only takes a few seconds to open the wounds in persons we love and that it takes many years to heal them. To learn to forgive by practicing forgiveness. To learn that there are persons who love them dearly, but simply do not know how to express or show their feelings. To learn the money can buy everything but happiness. To learn that two people can look at the same thing and see it totally differently. To learn that a true friends know everything about them...and likes them anyway. To learn that it is not only enough that they be forgiven by others, but that they will have to forgive themselves."

I sat there for a while enjoying the moment. I thanked God for the time and for all that God has done for me and my family and God replied: "Anytime. I'm here 24 hours a day. All you have to do is ask for me and I'll answer."

Author Unknown, qtd. in "Yom Kippur Readings", page 50-51

Al Cheyt and Lashon Hara

Eleven of the 44 wrongdoings mentioned in Al Cheyt involve sins of speech or the misuse of the tongue. Use the following quotes to discuss the power of negative speech and its effects on the talebearer and the victim (s). Give examples of each quotation and relate each to today's "digital" Lashon Hara and discuss how the effects of Lashon Hara have drastically changed since the digital revolution.

(1-3 qtd. In "Yom Kippur Readings, pages 38-39, 4-5 pages 48-49)

1. For lack of wood, fire is extinguished. Without a talebearer, strife is stilled. (Mishlei/Proverbs 26:20)
2. The gossip stands in Syria and kills in Rome (Talmud Y'rushalmi, Pe'ah 1:1)
3. There is hardly a day when we are spared from Lashon Hara. (Baba Batra 164b)
4. What is noble can be said in any tongue, what is ignoble should be said in no tongue. (Rambam)
5. If a horse with four legs can sometimes stumble, how much more a human with only one tongue. (Shalom Aleichem)

When You Don't Know the Right Words to Use/Creating Your Own Prayer

Prayer is not easy. Sometimes, you may feel that you don't connect to Jewish liturgy but don't really know what words of your own to use. You may connect with the following:

"Prayer expresses itself directly in the language the heart knows best"- *Rabbi Arthur Green*

"I'm not religious. I don't know the prayers. I'd feel hypocritical. I'm not sure what I believe so how can I pray?" Would you say, "I'm not Albert Einstein so I'm not going to think?" or "I'm not Michael Jordan so I shouldn't play basketball?" Prayer is scary because we want answers to our questions and may not get them. The very least is that you ask yourself questions to find out who you are and could be: "Is there someone there greater than us?" "Does he/she care about me?" "What is expected of me?" The answers may be just in asking, making you think of thoughts you may not have considered before.

Jewish Theological Seminary program advertisement



If you were to create your own prayer, something that would give you words to say, what would you include? What questions would you ask?

Prayer from the Heart

"Hannah prayed in her heart, only her lips moved, her voice could not be heard." -I Samuel 1:13



What does this text, read in the RH haftara, teach us about our own prayer? What can we learn from Hannah about finding our own Kavanah or spiritual intention? We so often define prayer as reading the words of the siddur (Keva or fixed prayer), but Hannah teaches us otherwise.

A story:

A young Jewish boy was orphaned and adopted by Gentile neighbors. He knew he was Jewish but didn't know what that meant. He was a shepherd during the day and would go out each day with the flock and with his flute. As he would watch the flock, he would sit on a rock and play upon his flute.

As the Jewish Holidays neared he saw many people traveling on the road going to the nearby city of Berdichev. He was curious to where they were going and so he asked them.

"We are on the way to Berdichev, to spend the High Holy Days with the pious and righteous Rabbi Levi Yitzchak," was the reply. The boy had to ask what the High Holy Days were and was told that it was the Jewish New Year.

The men laughed, "It is the Jewish New Year, silly, all the world is being judged, and you are out here with your sheep? You belong in the synagogue!"

"I know I am a Jew", the boy thought. "But I don't know how to pray. I don't know how to read Hebrew." So he just sat in the field, playing a mournful tune on his flute.

Not knowing what else to do, the young boy, who had decided to come to Berdichev, entered the synagogue. He was totally amazed at the sight of the townsfolk engaged in prayer. Each person was beseeching God to give them a good year. In their devoted concentration, they did not notice the young lad enter the synagogue.

The boy felt lost. Each person in the synagogue was able to communicate with God but not him. He felt an urge to do something, but what could he do? He could not read Hebrew, he knew no prayer. With streams of tears, he decided to play a tune to God. It was his way of communicating. Unknown to him, playing music on this - the holiest day of the year - was forbidden. He pulled out his flute and in sincere concentration dedicated a soul searching tune to God. As he began his melody, the entire synagogue became astounded. They turned in anger to look at this terrible desecration of the holiday. As they shouted at him to stop this terrible desecration, the boy looked terrified. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak, came running to the boy smiling and joyous.

"Ah," he laughed, "know that this boy's innocent mistake has saved our prayers."

The congregation stood back in awe of the tzaddik's words. What had happened?

"This boy saved our prayers." Rabbi Levi Yitzchak continued, "I saw that our prayers were not ascending to the heavens. We were not able to pray with the purity, feeling and sincerity that are required to elevate our prayers into the heavenly courts. Suddenly, this boy with his unknowing error but pure heart and tears began to play his flute. His purity was added to our prayers and the doors of heaven opened up and our prayers were accepted.

"We owe our thanks to this young man." He finished his words and took the young boy with him to the front of the synagogue. "You shall sit with me, for you have saved our prayers."



Do you relate to this story at all? Do you think the boy did the right thing? What would you have done? What do you do when you feel that you aren't connecting to the liturgy during a service? Do you find your own way to pray? Is it true that any words from the heart are prayers? How would you define prayer?



The Different Ways to Pray: Which way do you pray? Do you keep a journal? Do you talk to God while trying to fall asleep or listening to your Ipod? When not holding a siddur, how do you pray?

Just as the boy did, we too can make our own prayers. Start by just filling in the blanks:

I am in awe of...

I am thankful for...

I think it's amazing that...

I feel badly about...

I regret...

I fear...

I can't wait to...

I struggle with...

Help me to...



Keva vs. Kavanah: Lessons from Hannah

Just as the shofar is a prayer without words, Hannah moves her lips in prayer but speaks no words. What does this teach us? If we speak from our hearts, with intention (kavanah) and really make our prayers personal, it counts. If this is so, why do we have the siddur of fixed prayers (keva)? Can you think of another example of prayers without words?

Possible response: Nigunim! Most of us have experienced the power of "ruach," of wordless melodies or nigunim. Have you ever felt swept away by the power of a nigun?

The Emotion of Sarah and Hannah: Connecting the Torah reading with the Haftara



On Rosh Hashanah, we read that Sarah laughed when she heard she was to have a son at her old age. We then read in the Haftara, the story of Hannah, who wept because of her own infertility. Why do we read two stories of infertility on Rosh Hashanah? Why do we read about human weakness and emotion on Rosh Hashanah? What is the connection between these two women, how do they react differently to the same predicament and why do we recount their stories on RH?

Yom Din: Text Sources on Judgment

"All are judged on Rosh Hashana, and the verdict is sealed on Yom Kippur" (Tosefta, *Rosh Hashana* 1:12).

"Rabbi Kruspedai said in the name of Rabbi Yohanan: 'Three books are opened on Rosh Hashana, one for the utterly wicked, one for the perfectly righteous, and one for the intermediates. The perfectly righteous are straightaway inscribed and sealed for life; the wicked are straightaway inscribed and sealed for death; the intermediates are suspended and wait from Rosh Hashana until Yom Kippur. If they merit, they are inscribed for life; if not--they are inscribed for death'" (Talmud, R.H. 16b).

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 (qtd. in "Yom Kippur Readings," page 32)



How is this poem significant on Yom Kippur? Which line or phrase resonates with you? Do you think it explains universal human emotion and experience?

"We are too complex for single sided emotions"- how do you feel about this statement. Do you often feel conflicted or confused by the complexity of your emotions?

If you were to be "bold enough to see," what would you force yourself to see?

If you were to be "humble enough to feel," what would you need humility to feel (example: empathy).

Malchuyot: The King's Secret

There once was a king who would sometimes go out in regular clothes to talk to his people as a regular guy. One day he joined a farmer on a wagon ride into town. The farmer and the king hit it off and the farmer couldn't believe how friendly and thoughtful his new friend was. The farmer talked and talked and the king listened to his thoughts. The King asked the farmer great questions and really made him think a lot. The farmer was so thankful for the opportunity to speak with this nice man. They reached town and parted ways. Suddenly, two boys, the king's helpers, approached the farmer. "You were traveling with the king, did you see which way he went?" The farmer was astonished. "The king? I was with a simple peasant man who pleased me with his thoughtfulness and listened to my woes so well, a king wouldn't have time for little old me! I'm so pleased to have had the chance to talk with the king and get his advice and

guidance." "You know", said one of the boys, "I sometimes go to the king when I need advice or guidance or need someone to listen and he helps me feel better. He likes to help when you tell him how you're feeling" The farmer felt warmed by the thought of such an important man making time for his thoughts and feelings and went to visit his friend the king many times again.



One of the themes of Rosh Hashanah is Malchuyot- God as King. Sometimes we talk to our "king"(God) without even realizing we are and it makes us feel at ease just knowing we can express our innermost thoughts somehow.

Avinu Malkeinu

The depiction of God as *melech* or king was a key part of the legacy of symbols and images that ancient Israel received from the surrounding cultures. As human kings were revered as Gods in the ancient Near East, so too were the gods depicted among the trappings of royalty.

Post Biblical Judaism continues to cherish the royal metaphor, the idea that God is the only true King, and therefore that all flesh and blood rulers are more or less usurpers, was widely if not quietly believed among Jews for a very long time. An emperor might dare call himself "king of kings," but God remained beyond him, since God was called *Melech malchei hamlachim*, King over king of kings." The liturgy, and especially that of Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah, is especially enamored with royalty.

Rabbi Arthur Green, *These are the Words*, qtd. In "Yom Kippur Readings," page 105



Can you think of other Tefillot that have God as King in them (beyond every bracha that begins with Baruch ata...melech ha'olam)?

Shofar

Shofar: Because It's Not Perfect

"The sounds of the shofar are odd, squeaky and uneven. Yet it gives a most haunting sound that, although not pretty, stirs us. Perhaps it does so because it is imperfect as we are."

--Rabbi Laura Metzger

As our ancestors before us, we listen to the sounds of the shofar. First we hear a voice that calls out the names of the sounds, then we hear the sounds of the shofar, each with its own special meaning:

Tekiah (one blast)- the single blast commands us to care about others and reach out to each other one by one.

Shv'arim (3 short blasts)- the three blasts command us to keep the many promises we make as a new year begins.

Teruah- (nine blasts)- the nine blasts remind us to respond to the many needs of the Jewish people where they live, is the hope that we will stay united.
Tekiah Gdola- (longest blast) This long, loud blast commands us to begin our work to make this year better for all people. As the ancient sage Hillel said "If not know, when?"

Wake up! Cries the shofar, and we are sad. We remember our wrongdoings this past year. Wake up! Cries the shofar and we are glad. There's time to change, we need not fear.



Like the world we live in, the sounds of the shofar are broken. We end with a long smooth blast as a way of envisioning a smooth world that is in one piece. What can we do to repair the brokenness of the world and hear a "smooth sound?"

The Drum

The Magid of Dubna told the following story to teach people the importance of understanding and not just hearing the Shofar blasts.

Once came a peasant just when a fire had broken out. He was surprised to see a number of people blowing trumpets and beating drums and others running out with axes and shovels. He asked a small child why a musical band was playing and the child replied, "The trumpeting and drum beating is to put out the fire." The peasant quickly went to a nearby shop to purchase a drum to take back to his village.

A year later, a fire broke out in his village. The peasant announced that no one needed to fight the fire for his drum would quench the flames.

As he beat his drum, the fire quickly spread. Seeing that their village would soon be destroyed, the townspeople shouted, "You idiot! The drum is only needed as an alarm to alert us to danger. We need to do something about the fire if we are to save ourselves and our village."

And so it is with hearing the shofar. The shofar can only alert us to the need for change. Only we can change and improve ourselves.

Tiku Shofar, p.88

Yom T'ruah- Sounding the Shofar

Rosh Hashanah is called Yom T'ruah- the Day of Sounding the Shofar. The shofar was sounded at Mt. Sinai when the Israelites were given the Ten Commandments. It was blown in ancient times to announce the coming of the king or the appearance of a new moon. The shofar even called people together for special meetings and signaled armies to go to war. Today, the shofar calls us to review our deeds and turn to God. The shofar also calls us to stand together as Jews and to work hard to make a better world for all peoples.

T'kiah- could sound like an alarm

Shvarim- sounds like wailing

T'ruah- sounds like broken sobs. Listen and see if you agree.



How do these analogies fit with the themes of the Yamim Nora'im? Discuss how each could be an appropriate description considering the themes of the holidays.



God's secret code with the Jewish people

The shofar is like a code-language between God and the Jewish people. Decode the sounds of the shofar for yourself. What is the secret code we are trying to tell God with each sound?

Some say a shofar has a curved shape to show that we bow before God. Others say that it is this way so we may bend our hearts towards God...The mitzvah is to *hear* the shofar, not to blow it. When we hear the shofar, it is easy to say, "I'll be better next year." But it is harder to work at just being a little better in day-to-day living. How can we keep the memory of the shofar with us?

Tiku Shofar, p.89

T'shuva, Vudi'I, and Heshbon Hanefesh

Changing Ourselves

Why is it easier to give others advice, but difficult to take it ourselves?

Changing others is so much easier than changing ourselves.

"Levi Yitzchak wanted to change the world. After several years, he realized that was too hard, so he decided to try to change his own community. Several years later, that goal became too difficult so he decided to focus on changing his family. He finally concluded that the only one he could really change was himself! That's the only person we can truly change anyway. If we decide not to help ourselves, we are totally lost . --*traditional source*

Be Good, be Righteous, be You

When Rabbi Zusya was about to die, his students gathered around him. They saw Rabbi Zusya's eyes break out into tears. "Our master," they said with deep concern, "Why are you crying? You have lived a good, pious life, and left many students and disciples. Soon you are going on to the next world. Why cry?"

Rabbi Zusya responded, "I see what will happen when I enter the next world. Nobody will ask me, why was I not Moses? I am not expected to be Moses. Nobody will ask me, why was I not Rabbi Akiba? I am not expected to be Rabbi Akiba. They will ask me, Why was I not Zusya? That is why I am crying. I am asking, why was I not Zusya?"

Some Old Thoughts for the New Year

Others can live without us, but we cannot live without others

We cannot be happy unless we are useful

It is great to be loved, it is even greater to love
When we improve ourselves, we make a most vital contribution to the
improvement of humanity
In morals as in mathematics, a straight line is the shortest distance between
two points
We may declare time to be an enemy, when in fact time is our most faithful
friend. How do you spend yours?
It is no less important to cultivate the ability to forget than it is to develop the
power to remember
The true measure of a person's size is his ability to make others feel large
The indispensable requirement for mastering life is mastering ourselves
We learn to live when we learn to give --*Rabbi Sydney Greenberg*



Which line or phrase of this poem resonates with you? Who are you? What are your priorities? What do you value?

Recognize Your Flaws (a Hasidic Tale)

The Rabbi of Levov always said to his students: one cannot be redeemed until one recognizes the flaws in the soul and tries to mend them...whoever permits no recognition of one's flaws...permits no redemption. We can be redeemed to the extent to which we recognize ourselves.



Can you commit to self improvement without recognizing what it is you need to improve? How can we find a balance between positive self esteem, humility and recognizing that it's okay not to be perfect? How does self judgment and introspection help us find this balance?

Sins are Parts of Us Yet to Complete

(on reciting the sins of the Al Cheyt)

...As I matured however, I began to see that by focusing on my misdeeds, I was missing a deeper truth in Judaism. The greater issue was not just turning from sin but rather becoming a full human being. The focus on wrongdoing allowed me to overlook all the standard good actions, the routine tasks which fell short of what I could, and should be doing. The issue was not just misdeeds, therefore, but mediocrity. Could I change, could I grow? The *Yamim Nora'im* challenged me to reshape myself, to improve relationships and become a more vital person.

Rabbi Irving Greenberg, qtd. In "Yom Kippur Readings," pages 56-57



Why is it that we focus on the negative behavior and not the "standard good actions" we do each day? How does focusing on our wrongdoings help us recognize that we are not living up to our potential?

An Alternative Al Cheyt

For the sin of dismissing God's sacred time as inconvenient. For the sin of insisting on our rights while ignoring our responsibilities...
For the sin of justifying our behavior because it's what everyone else does.
For the sin of profaning the sacred and sanctifying the profane...For all these sins, O God of forgiveness, forgive us pardon us, grant us atonement.
For the sin of believing that Judaism has no meaning without first seeking meaning in Judaism.
For the sin of reducing Judaism to chicken soup and matzah balls.
For the sin of abandoning our brothers and sisters in Israel when they need us most.
For the sin of our silence in the face of media distortion of Israel's position.
For the sin of seeking God without using the roadmap God gave all Jews...
For all these sins, O God of forgiveness, forgive us pardon us, grant us atonement.
For the sin of reading the paper each morning but not taking time for Torah.
For the sin of excluding ourselves from the community of Israel that says twice daily *Shma Yisrael*.
For the sin of insisting on a quality Jewish education for our children but not for ourselves.
And for the sin of feeding our own intellectual hunger while our Jewish learning stopped at age 13. For the sin of talking to God without also listening.
For the sin of having walked so far from God we've forgotten what true awe is.
Rabbi Diane Cohen, qtd. In "Yom Kippur Readings," pages 60-61



If someone reading this wasn't Jewish, would they still be able to relate to it? What is so human about this particular *Al Cheyt*? How does it compare to the liturgical *Al Chayt*?

How We Become Wise

Insight into learning from our mistakes and doing T'shuva (regret and repentance)

After a long, hard climb up the mountain, a group of spiritual seekers finally found themselves in front of the great teacher. Bowing deeply, they asked the question that had been burning inside of them for so long. "How do we become wise?" There was a long pause until the teacher emerged from the meditation. Finally, the reply came: "Good choices." "But teacher, how do we know how to make good choices?" "From experience," said the wise one. "And how do we gain experience?" they asked. "Bad choices" smiled the teacher.

B'Timhon Levav: Confusion of Values

Do you have your priorities straight? *B'timhon Levav* is one of our *Al Cheyt*'s that we mention on Yom Kippur. We often confuse our values, setting the wrong priorities.

A story by famous Yiddish writer, S. Ansky:

"One day, a Hasid came to the Rabbi: he was rich but a miser. The Rabbi took him by the hand and led him to a window. "Look out onto the street. What do you see?"

"People," answers the rich man. Again, the rabbi takes him by the hand and this time, leads him to a mirror.

"What do you see now?" he says. "Now I see myself," answers the rich man.

Then the Rabbi says: "Behold- in the window there is glass and in the mirror there is glass. But the glass in the mirror is covered in a little silver and no sooner is the silver added that you cease to see others but see only yourself."

God's Boxes

I have in my hands two boxes
which God gave me to hold

He said, "put all your sorrows in the black box and all your joys in the gold"

I listened to what he said and in the two boxes
both my joys and sorrows I stored

But though the gold became heavier each day
the black was as light as before.

With curiosity I opened the black

I wanted to find out why,

and I saw in the base of the box, a hole

which my sorrows had fallen out by

I showed the hole to God and mused,

"I wonder where my sorrows could be"

God smiled a gentle smile and said,

"they're all here with me"

I asked why God gave me the boxes

why the gold and the black with the hole?

"The gold is for you to count your blessings", he said. "The black is for you to let go"

Changing Your Ways: A Wife's Wise Words

Talmud, Berachot 10a

There were once some highwaymen in the neighborhood of Rabbi Meir who caused him a great deal of trouble. Rabbi Meir accordingly prayed that they should die. His wife Beruria said to him: "How do you make out [that such a prayer should be permitted]? Because it is written, 'Let *hatta'im* cease?' (Psalms 104:35) Is it written *hot'im* (sinners)? It is written *hatta'im* (sins)! Further, look at the end of the verse: 'and let the wicked men be no more.' Since the sins will cease, there will be no more wicked men! Rather pray for them that they should repent, and there will be no more wicked. He did pray for them, and they repented.



You can admit it...sometimes, when you're angry at someone who has bullied or hurt you, you wish for them to be hurt. Imagine instead, if you were to wish for them to do T'shuva and stop their wicked ways or bullying. How can you ever manage to do the latter and not the former? What does it take?

Learning to Forgive: A Story

HOW HEAVY IS YOUR BAG?

One of my teachers had each one of us bring a clear plastic bag and a sack of potatoes. For every person we'd refuse to forgive in our life, we were told to choose a potato, write on it the name and date, and put it in the plastic bag. Some of our bags, as you can imagine, were quite heavy. We were then told to carry this bag with us everywhere for one week, putting it beside our bed at night, on the car seat when driving, next to our desk at work.

The hassle of lugging this around with us made it clear what a weight we were carrying spiritually, and how we had to pay attention to it all the time to not forget, and keep leaving it in embarrassing places. Naturally, the condition of the potatoes deteriorated to a nasty slime. This was a great metaphor for the price we pay for keeping our pain and heavy negativity!

Source: unknown



Discuss the idea of grudges and letting go. Also read the poem "God's Boxes" above.

Idea: try doing this as an activity (anything heavy can be used in place of potatoes)

Too often we think of forgiveness as a gift to the other person, and while that's true, it clearly is also a gift for ourselves! Both asking for and granting forgiveness helps improve our relationships and become better people.

If God forgives, so must we (a Hasidic tale)

One Yom Kippur night, when Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev was reciting his prayers, he came to the verse "And God said: 'I have forgiven according to your words.'" Upon reading this, he said to the congregation, "Do our sages not teach us that 'one who recites a quotation in the name of the person who first said it brings redemption to the world?' Very well then, let us say together

something in the name of its Author: 'And God said, "I have forgiven according to your words.!"'



Is there ever a situation where we just cannot forgive?

[i.e. if someone murders a parent, the Holocaust]

From Whom Do You Ask Forgiveness? A Story

A rabbi of small stature was sitting on a train on his way to Russia, dressed shabbily and studying the Mishnah. Two Poles started to taunt him and tease him. They cursed him and the rabbi ignored them and continued to study. They threw his suitcase on the floor and emptied its contents. All the while, the rabbi did not rebuke them but gathered his belongings and put them back in the suitcase. They continued to taunt him until they finally reached the town.

When they reached the town, a crowd had gathered to meet an important dignitary. The Poles realized that the victim of their taunting was a revered and respected rabbi. They asked him for forgiveness. The rabbi said "You are asking the rabbi to forgive you, not the little old Jew on the train." You must ask him to forgive you since he is the one you insulted."

Abraham Joshua Heschel, qtd. in Moments of Transcendence, Vol. 2



What do you think of the rabbi's response? So, did he actually end up granting them forgiveness? What do you learn from this story?

How can we make this story relevant to your life? There's a new boy at school who is being picked on by some older kids. They push him into the lockers and trip him in the halls. One day, a girl says to the bullies "I can't believe you'd pick on him...don't you know that he's the principal's son?" Suddenly, the bullies become terrified and beg the victim for forgiveness. What do you think? Do they deserve his forgiveness? Would they have asked him for forgiveness and stopped the teasing had he not been the principal's son? On the other hand, they did their duty through T'shuva.

U'netaneh Tokef: Thinking about Looking Ahead

In a way, we are partners with God in determining what will happen to us. Can we pray to God for a good grade on a math test? Not unless we study for that test! However, we can pray to God to give us the strength and the calmness needed to do our best on that test (after we have prepared for it). If we don't do our homework one week, for example, it makes it harder for us to succeed the next week. If we get a bad test grade, it is not God's fault, but ours. A lesson to learn is that our past affects our future.



Why is it easier to blame God when something doesn't go our way rather than ourselves? Do you believe that everything that will happen is up to you or does God play a role?

On Rosh Hashanah, we each have to write our own page in the Book of Life. If we do something terrible to ourselves (like abuse our bodies with drugs), we may not live! If we decide to get plenty of exercise, eat good foods and get plenty of rest, we may be healthier. Think of other decisions that you make to either harm life or improve it...



Making Choices- you have the God given ability to choose between right and wrong, good and bad, helpful and hurtful. How do you decide on the best option? What influences your decisions?

On Rosh Hashanah, we begin to measure ourselves to see if we're the people we want to be. Each person must say, "How did I measure up?" Rosh Hashanah also teaches us that we can change. Think about someone you know who has changed for the better. In what way did he/she change or improve? How have you changed for the better?

God made us free to choose how we will grow up. What is scary about this? Our world is full of many possibilities. What are some things you'd like to do in the coming year?

Tiku Shofar, p.76

T'shuvah means we can turn ourselves around and make ourselves into better human beings.

U'netaneh Tokef: Tefillah, T'shuva and Tzedakah

What good is it if we don't use it? A Hasidic Tale:

A Hasidic rabbi and a soap maker were walking along. The soap maker said to the rabbi "Rabbi, we have been studying the Torah and its mitzvot for thousands of years, yet what good is it? There is still so much evil, meanness, lies and apathy in the world. Why has the Torah not succeeded in helping us do t'shuva- changing our lives for the better?"

They suddenly came upon a boy covered in dirt and grime. The Rabbi said to the soap maker: "What good is the soap you make? This boy is still dirty. Why hasn't your soap helped make this boy clean and neat?"

The soap maker replied: "well, soap is no good unless you use it."

"Aha!" replied the rabbi. "So it is with the Torah. Unless we apply its teaching to our daily lives and apply its morality to our immoral behavior, it is of no use. The U'netaneh Tokef prayer teaches us three things that will help us

cleanse and purify our lives: T'shuva, Tefillah and Tzedakah. However, they are useless unless we take them seriously and put them into practice into our daily lives.

A Hasidic tale, qtd in "Yom Kippur Readings," page 151

T'shuvah/ Repentance

"Where those who do t'shuva stand, the completely righteous cannot stand." The Sages teach that the one who does t'shuva is honored because that person had to work hard to change.

Tiku Shofar, p.89

"While bicycling one the first day of summer, I passed a church bulletin with a message on it that read, "If you are headed in the wrong direction, God allows U-turns." Teshuva, the idea of repentance means 'turning around.' We're allowed and encouraged to "turn around," to recognize when we've gone off course and have the courage to make the U turn and head in the right direction again.

Rosh Hashanah Readings

The Power to Change is Yours

"It is I. I have come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. I possess tremendous power to make life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration; I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis is escalated or de-escalated, and a person is humanized or de-humanized." -- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe



On Rosh Hashanah we vow to change and are given a chance to start anew and write a new fate. On Yom Kippur our fate is sealed. We make a deal with God. But God isn't the One who entirely determines our fate, rather God gives us the power to change and remain committed to these changes. You determine your own actions and thoughts that lead to your fate. God gave you the power of choice.

The Four Steps to T'shuva- not your average New Year's resolution making

Step 1: Recognition: Admit to your wrongdoing - *why is this often the most difficult step?*

Step 2: feel regret

Step 3: confess to your wrongdoing and ask for forgiveness

Step 4: vow to never do it again (often the most difficult to keep).

In order to do full t'shuva for wrongdoings against another person, you must be granted their forgiveness. It is not enough to apologize, they must actually forgive you!



Which step do you think is the most difficult for you? Is there a step that is missing? If faced with an opportunity, do you think you would repeat this action? Why is step four so difficult for so many people? Is t'shuva sincere if you can't keep all four steps?

A note on forgiving your friends: According to Jewish tradition, when someone asks for your forgiveness, you must forgive them. Can you think of anything that is unforgivable? Is there anything that someone has done to you that you just could not forgive them? What can carrying a grudge in your heart do to you? Why is it just as important to forgive someone as it is to ask for forgiveness?

The Different Types of Sin

Chey-t- a wrongdoing committed unknowingly

Avon- a wrongdoing committed in a premeditated fashion

Pesha- a "crime" or rebellious action carried out consciously and with hate or contempt

T'shuva and Responsibility for Your Actions: To Whom Are You Responsible?

Akavya ben Mahalalel said: Reflect upon three things and you will not come to sin. **Know from where you came and where you are going and before whom you are destined to give account and reckoning.** From where have you come?--from a putrid drop. Where are you going?--to the place of dust, worm, and maggot. Before whom are you destined to give account and reckoning?--before the supreme King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be he.

Pirkei Avot 3:1



Anavah or humility is a Jewish virtue. How does humility prevent us from committing wrong-doings? What are the many things this verse teaches us about t'shuva and responsibility for our actions?

Readings for the Torah Reading



The story of the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael is told on the first day of Rosh Hashanah (the Akeida is Day 2). Ishmael and Isaac reunite to bury Avraham, their father. Today, Arab people are descendants of Ishmael and the Jews are descendents of Avraham. How can we reconcile and unite as Jews and Arabs today, and use these biblical brothers as an example?

The Binding of Isaac/the *Akeida*

All of life is a test. The story of the Akeida reminds us of the difficult and painful choices we must make each day. It teaches us of the power of faith and powerful lessons of parenthood.

Love and Pain



Why would Abraham ever think to sacrifice his son?

"There is no life without love and no love without pain" - source unknown (*Moments of Transcendence*). Abraham is tested by God and although bound by his faith, experiences the intensity of both love and pain, emotions often felt by parents who want their children to succeed in a harsh, tough world.



Do you think that Avraham should have had to say t'shuva? Or do you think that because he was following the orders of God, that he wouldn't have to? *To consider: the four steps of t'shuva are meant for wrongdoings we have committed against others...imagine the pain Avraham caused both his son and wife.*



Hin'ni vs. Hin'ni: Proclaiming our Presence

At the beginning of the Akeida story in B'reishit 22, God asks Abraham where he is and Abraham responds with "Hin'ni." (Here I am). Hin'ni is one of the most poignant prayers of the High Holy Day liturgy where we humbly stand before God and plead with a merciful and compassionate God to hear our prayers (see page 532 of the Harlow Machzor) and forgive us. What is the connection between Abraham proclaiming his presence to God and our telling God that we stand before God in our most vulnerable of moments? What is the connection between the Akeida story and the Hin'eni of Yom Kippur?

"Vayelchu shnayhem yachdav" - **And the two of them went together (Genesis 22:6)**. Charles Francis Adams, a 19th century political figure, kept a diary. One day he entered in it: "went fishing with my son today- day wasted." His son also kept a diary. On that same day, he wrote: "went fishing with my father- most wonderful day of my life."

This phrase in the Akeida story is often completely overlooked. Although Avraham took his son out to potentially harm him, the very fact that they went out and spent time together can be a lesson in itself. We don't always have to do the most exciting activities with the people we love, just spending time with them is enough to show we care. Imagine Isaac's excitement (and then eventual panic and fear!) when he went out with his father for an adventure!

The Binding of Isaac- the Voice of the Mother *Sarah's Song*

Why did I keep silent? Why did I not speak

when I saw the smoke in your father's eyes?
I stood in anguished silence waiting for some word,
A word I heard from angels' mouths who mocked me in old age
...no child for me in vibrant youth, when my arms were strong to carry him in
joy. Now I have a son--my only son--child of my laughter, child of my dreams
How dare they take you from me across the desert sands? To a place of smoke
and fire, to Moriah's ancient spire?
Who will draw the first drop and who will weep the most?
And who will take her vengeance on the father of the child?
...now rise up women of silence, sing a new song, with voices echoing over
time, make known how with strength of heart we mastered God and human
with strength of love we forged a covenant of hope.
---Michael Halperin



Avraham's Turn to Speak

Avraham waited his entire adult life for his son Isaac. He then was prepared to kill him. Nowhere do we hear words that described Avraham's battle with God over this command to hurt the boy he loved. He bargains with God to save the people of S'dom and Gmorrah, who God wanted to destroy, but says nothing to spare Isaac. Why do we not hear Avraham's feelings but only read about his actions? What would Avraham say? How do you think he reacted or felt before, during and after this experience?

Fasting

On this Yom Kippur day, Jews do not eat at all, to physically remind ourselves that:

"Humanity does not live by bread alone, but that mankind lives by everything that God says" (Dvarim 8:3).

This is the fast that I desire...to share your bread with the hungry, to take the wretched poor into your home, and when you see the naked, to clothe them (Isaiah 58:7).

Better a dry crust of bread than a house full of feasting with strife (Proverbs 17:1)

May we who constantly face the temptations to over consume, learn the virtue of moderation and self denial.

May we spend less on ourselves and our families and give more to charity and education. O God, may those who fast today, realize the value of self-discipline through the next year. And may those who still struggle to fast avoid the consequences of overindulgence over the next year

Rabbi Allen S. Maller qtd. In "Yom Kippur Readings," pages 122-123



Recognizing over-indulgence, learning moderation

On Yom Kippur, to focus on our inner souls, we turn the focus away from our physical needs by fasting. One may think “how does me starving help me think about my soul when all I can think about is my stomach?”

Fasting involves shifting our focus and priorities and learning the art of maximizing moderation and minimizing self indulgence. Think about what you over-consume or over-indulge (doesn't have to be food). What would you give up to shift your focus to something of higher priority? For example, would you give up one less hour of computer time to help your family with chores? How can giving up something physical help you turn toward your inner self?

Tzedakah

According to Rambam (Maimonides), there are eight degrees of giving charity, one higher than the other:

- One who gives grudgingly, reluctantly or with regret
- One who gives less than he should be gives graciously
- One who gives what he should but only after being asked
- One who gives without knowing to whom he gives but the recipient knows the donor
- One who gives without making his identity known
- One who gives without knowing to whom he gives and the recipient does not know the donor
- One who helps his fellow person help him/herself by giving him/her a loan or gift
- One who helps his/her fellow person by giving him/her a gift or loan or finding employment so that he/she may become self supporting.



Would you agree with this list? Would you re-arrange the order or add or remove any of the “wrungs” of the ladder?

On a lighter note...some Tzedakah humor:

During an army roll call, each recruit was asked to answer to the call of his name. The corporal called out: “Kelly” and the response was “Here.” “Armstrong.” “Here.” Next came Private Cohen’s turn. “Cohen.” Being habituated to charity appeals so often in his life, Private Cohen yelled out: “twenty five dollars!”



Most synagogues use the High Holidays as an appeal for Tzedakah. Why do we give Tzedakah during this season?

Tzedakah: How Important is it?

There is no word for chemist or physicist in the Talmud, yet why are we so impressed by them? If a guest in our house tells us he/she is doing research in sub-atomic particles, we are impressed by this. Why is there such admiration for this person? But what if we suppose this Jew says "I am a celebrator of Mitzvot" or "my occupation is *zeisskeit*, kindness/sweetness and I study the way it plays out among Jews." What would the reaction be?

Surprise, of course.

A little, "a *meshuggeneh*, must be an artist."

Or, unable to suppress our urge to think, we blurt out... "this, you call a living?"

We ask our children about their grades in history, and literature although rarely do we inquire about excellence in Tzedakah and *rachmones* (compassion), uniquely Jewish loving and giving.

Danny Siegel, qtd. in *Yom Kippur Readings*, page 159

IF NOT HIGHER* - I.L. Peretz, *famous Yiddish writer*

Every Friday during the month of Elul the Rabbi of Nemirov would vanish. He was nowhere to be seen. Where could the Rabbi be? In heaven, no doubt, the people thought, asking God to bring peace in the New Year. Where could the Rabbi be? A villager decided to find out. One night he sneaked into the Rabbi's home, slid under the Rabbi's bed, and waited. Just before dawn, the Rabbi awakened, got out of bed, and began to dress. He put on work pants, high boots, a big hat, a coat, and a wide belt. He put a rope in his pocket, tucked an ax in his belt, and left the house. The villager followed.

The Rabbi crept in the shadows to woods at the edge of town. He took the ax, chopped down a small tree, and split it into logs. Then he bundled the wood, tied it with the rope, put it on his back, and began walking. He stopped beside a small broken-down shack and knocked at the window. "Who is there?" asked the frightened, sick woman inside. "I Vassil the peasant," answered the Rabbi, entering the house. "I have wood to sell." "I am a poor widow. Where will I get the money?" she asked. "I'll lend it to you," replied the Rabbi. "How will I pay you back?" asked the woman. "I will trust you," said the Rabbi. The Rabbi put the wood into the oven, kindled the fire, and left without a word.

Now whenever anyone reports that the Rabbi has gone to heaven, the villager only adds quietly, "Heaven? If not higher."

*The USY program bank includes a dramatic play version of this story. See <http://www.usy.org/yourusy/pbank> "recently added programs" of the program bank to obtain a copy.



Helping others, a holy act, is "even higher" than prayer. Agree or disagree. Was it justified to skip Tefillah on the holiest day of the year to help an older lady chop wood?

For Fun/Miscellaneous⁴

Did you know that Yom Kippur is supposed to be a joyous day, a day to search for love? See? Now you know of a good reason to come to synagogue on the High Holy Days!

The Dating Game

Source: Mishnah, Taanit 4:8

Rabban Shimon Ben Gamliel said: "Israel had no better days than the 15th of Av (Tu B'av) and Yom Kippur, when the young women of Jerusalem would go out dressed in borrowed white clothes - [borrowed] so as not to embarrass those that did not have...the young women of Jerusalem would go out and dance in the vineyards. And what would they say? 'Young man, raise your eyes and see what you choose for yourself. Don't pay attention to beauty. Don't pay attention to family lineage. "Grace is deceptive, beauty is illusory; for her fear of the Lord that a woman is to be praised"' (Proverbs 31:30).



What messages does this send to us about Yom Kippur?

What do we learn about love, dating and partnership from this? Compare these ideas to our culture. Our culture values beauty and wealth, Judaism tells young men to look for partners of faith and intellect. Why was it a custom to find a romantic partner on a day like Yom Kippur?

Dr. Suess does the High Holidays: Uncle Eli's Machzor

For fun and cute "Dr. Suess" versions of key High Holy Day prayers, please visit <http://people.ucalgary.ca/~elsegal/EliMahzor/index.html>

⁴ See the Appendix "On the Lighter Side" for High Holiday jokes!

Section III: Making it Real

Turning Discussion into Action through Activities

Vidu'i: Ashamnu, Al Cheyt

1. Breaking Bad Habits

Background to use to connect activity to the liturgy: the Ashamnu and Al Cheyt prayers list wrongdoings we have all committed over the past year. Although we are all guilty of these bad habits, we can learn as a community to break them.

Materials: string or yarn


Ask: How many of you have a bad habit you're trying to break, something you know isn't good for you but you can't help but do it? (examples: too much junk food, txt message addiction, on Facebook 'til the wee hours of the night, nail biting). We're going to demonstrate the effects of bad habits and the difficulty we have in breaking them and becoming better people.

Activity: Have everyone partner up. Give one person a bunch of yarn and have the other person hold their hands together, with palms touching. Ask the one holding the yarn to wrap it around their hands once and have the other person pull his/her hands apart (it should be very easy). Explain: "you've just committed a wrongdoing but it's okay as a "first offense." Next have the person with the yarn wrap the yarn a few times around the hands and have them try to pull their hands apart again (it should be harder to do so with more yarn). Explain: "as you commit the act over and over, you begin to make it habit." Next wrap all the yarn around the hands tightly. Ask the person to try and pull his/her hands apart (it should be very difficult, almost impossible). Explain "the more you commit an act that isn't good, the more it becomes habit, a part of who you are and difficult to break." On Rosh and Yom Kippur we admit to our mistakes, admit to our bad habits and resolve to break them and become better. (now ask them to unravel the yarn and break their hands free). T'shuva sets us free from our bad habits and mistakes.

2. Collective T'shuva

Background: The Ashamnu lists the sins we commit in the order of the alef bet. It also uses the suffix 'nu' meaning "us," so that each individual understands that all humans err and no one is perfect.

First, read the Ashamnu in Hebrew and English. Teach them the custom of beating the chest when mentioning each wrongdoing.

Activity 1: As a group, try coming up with wrongdoings we've all committed in English, by the ABC.  You can use Uncle Eli's Vidu'i poem as an opener:

<http://people.ucalgary.ca/~elsegal/EliMahzor/index.html>

אֲשָׁמְנוּ-
כָּגַדְנוּ, גָּזַלְנוּ, דָּבַרְנוּ ד' פִּי. הֶעֵוְנוּ יָנוּ, וְהִרְשָׁעְנוּ, זָדוּנוּ, חָמַסְנוּ, טָפְלוּנוּ שָׁקַר.
יָעַצְנוּ רָע, כִּזְבְּנוּ, לְאָצְנוּ, מָרְדְנוּ, נֶאֱצְנוּ, סָרְדְנוּ, עָוְנוּ יָנוּ, פָּשַׁעְנוּ, צָרְדְנוּ,
קָשְׁנוּ יָנוּ ע' רָף. רָשָׁעְנוּ, שָׁחַתְנוּ, תָּעַבְנוּ, תָּעַבְנוּ יָנוּ, תַּעֲתָעְנוּ.

ASHAMNU: We have become desolate. We commit ourselves to recognizing that our failures are self-destructive.

BAGADNU: We have betrayed our potential

GAZALNU: We have stolen- time, money, misleading others

DEBARNU DOFI: We have been hypocritical.

HEYVINU: We have provided false justification

VIHIRSHANU: We have caused others to sin

ZADNU: We have sinned intentionally (example: lying)

CHAMASNU: We have been violent.

TAFALNU SHEKER: Dishonesty seems normal to us

YATZNU RA: We have given bad advice. Sometimes, its okay to say "I don't know."

KIZAVNU: We have disappointed God, ourselves and others by not living up to our promises.

LATZNU: We have been contemptuous, we have tried to raise our own esteem by putting others down.

MARADNU: We have rebelled.

NIATZNU: We have enraged people and purposely pushed other people's buttons (your parents, maybe?)

SARARNU: We have turned aside when confronting truth and maybe avoided doing the right thing.

AVINU: We fallen victim to our impulses.

PESHANU: We have broken standards of behavior that we know to be right and then justified this because of our egotism.

TZARARNU: We afflicted others.

KISHINU OREF: We have been stiff-necked, stubborn

RASHANU: We have been wicked.

SHICHATNU: We have been immoral (example: we have not treated the opposite sex with respect).

TAINU: We have erred, when we knew better

TITANU: We have misled others.

We have spread our ignorant assumptions and thereby victimized others.

The purpose of studying this list is not to wallow in guilt. It is to bring us to the point where we can honestly come before God and say, "This is who I was. Help me be who I want to be. Help me find my truest self."

The ABCs of Ashamnu

An example of Ashamnu by English Alphabet (difficult concepts are explained for younger groups)

Arrogance	Malicious
Bigotry (intolerance of a belief different from you own)	Narrow minded
Cynicism (we have to be selfish to be motivated to do anything)	Obstinate
Deceit (distorting the truth)	Possessive
Egotism	Quarrelsome
Flattery	Resentful
Greed	Selfish
Hatred	Threatening others
Injustice	Ungrateful
Jealousy	Violent
Killing a reputation	Weakness of will
Lustful	Yelling at your loved ones Zealous for bad causes

Activity 2: Act out real life examples of each of these wrongdoings. Discuss how sometimes you don't even realize what you're doing when you commit

these wrongdoings and how the Vidu'i makes you aware of your actions and just how human your errors are.

Activity 3: Create your own list with any additional Ashamnus

Activity 4: Collective vs. Individual

Background: The Ashamnu ends in the suffix "nu" meaning "anachnu" or "we." Discuss why we say these wrongdoings collectively and perform one of these exercises to demonstrate the value behind doing t'shuva as a community and alone.

Exercise 1: Link



Using the Ashamnu list for help, ask each person to stand up, one by one and admit to a wrongdoing he/she may have committed and one example of how he/she will improve this upcoming year.

Example: I lied to make myself appear better/smarter. This year, I'm really going to try to talk less about people and more about ideas.

After each person says his/her "Ashamnu," he/she will link arms to the last person, demonstrating that we all make mistakes on our own, but vow to improve together. Explain this at the end, once everyone has linked up.

Exercise 2: Better as a team- trust exercise

Have one person sit on a chair (females in skirts may not want to do this). Ask for a volunteer to try and lift him/her with two fingers (absolutely impossible). Add more volunteers one by one and try it again. Finally, you will have the entire group try the exercise and it should work if done properly and you have an even distribution of people on every side. Explain that any difficult task is hard on an individual basis but with the help of others, you can do anything! Vidu'i or confessing your wrongdoings can be very painful. Most of us want to avoid admitting our errors. But when we have the support of the community and see that we're not alone, it's much easier.

Activity 5: Vidu'i Popcorn



Have a volunteer read the Ashamnu list. As each wrongdoing is read, ask participants to "pop up" if they feel they are guilty of this act over the past year. Those who get the most "exercise" have a lot of work to do to improve for next year. You can point out how we each commit some of the same

wrongdoings but overall, as a group, we complete the list. This illustrates how true to human nature the Ashamnu and Al Cheyt prayers are.

3. Heshbon Hanefesh: Internal “Housekeeping” or Accounting for the Soul

a) **Where are you now?** This is a very intrapersonal exercise, focusing on the individual. The “taking stock” handout below uses examples from *Ashamnu*. Participants will mentally “check” off which statements apply to them. You want them to take this seriously and really think about taking account of their soul and their actions. With a partner, they should share which one has truly affected their relationships this past year and which one they plan to focus on to improve as we begin a new year.

Taking Stock (Handout)

<p>___ <i>Bagadnu: We have betrayed our friends or family members</i></p>	<p>___ I have fought with my parents way too much ___ I betrayed a friend or wasn't always loyal to the special people in my life ___ I bullied someone or made someone feel awful or made someone cry</p>
<p>___ <i>Gazalnu: We have stolen- stolen an item or someone's time, energy, etc.</i></p>	<p>___ I'm always late and make people wait for me ___ I leave my room a mess forcing my dad/ mom to make my bed when they don't have time</p>
<p>___ <i>Debarnu Dofi- we haven't spoken truthfully</i></p>	<p>___ I spread a rumor or lied about something</p>
<p>___ <i>He'evinu: We have caused others to sin- peer pressure!</i></p>	<p>___ I have pressured someone to do something not so good</p>
<p>___ <i>Zadnu: We have had evil hearts - we haven't been so kind to those around us</i></p>	<p>___ I was horrible to my brother/sister. We were constantly fighting this year</p>
<p>___ <i>Chamasnu: We have become violent- in speech or action</i></p>	<p>___ I got into screaming matches with my parent (s)</p>
<p>___ <i>Tafalnu Sheker: We have started rumors or lies</i></p>	<p>___ Gossip or Lashon Hara</p>
<p>___ <i>Maradnu: We have rebelled</i></p>	<p>___ who hasn't rebelled as a teenager?</p>
<p>___ <i>Ni'atznu: We have angered others</i></p>	<p>___ I have really upset my parent at times</p>
<p>___ <i>Sararnu: We have been disobedient</i></p>	<p>___ I broke the rules a few times too many</p>
<p>___ <i>Tzararnu: We have persecuted</i></p>	<p>___ I have bullied, teased or made someone feel badly</p>
<p>___ <i>Titanu- we have allowed ourselves to be led astray</i></p>	<p>___ I have not always made the best choices and been influenced by others</p>
<p>___ <i>Sarnu- we have turned away from Mitzvot</i></p>	<p>___ I didn't make good Jewish decisions or got lazy on my commitment to Jewish living</p>

b) Evaluating my actions

*The items on this list can be adapted for younger groups. The content is very heavy and may not be developmentally appropriate for younger than a teenager.

Ask the group to seriously consider their actions over the past year and whom they may have affected.

Standing on a line of 5 points of relevance (you can use chairs to mark the 1-5 points, 5 should be “most relevant to me” and 1 should be “doesn’t really apply to me”), ask participants to respond to the statements you make according to their past actions. Any responses that are on the 4 or 5 mark can be discussed as a group to find reasons or explanations as to why these are common errors.

Action	5	4	3	2	1
At times I've avoided a difficult or painful situation because I didn't want to deal with it					
I am sometimes able to recognize my error where and when it occurs and fix it on the spot					
I know that my life is mine to make, yet much seems beyond my control. I am okay with this.					
I may not be aware of all the wrongs I've done					
I keep making the same mistake.					
I told the person I wronged what it was that I did.					
I've been insincere in my responses to others.					
I've done the wrong thing, knowing it was the wrong choice.					
I've done things to others that I would not want done to myself.					
I've done wrong under pressure or stress because I didn't know how to deal with it					
I've expressed sorrow for my actions, but only when I felt it might prevent worse consequences.					
I've let friendships deteriorate because I hadn't tried to alleviate the pain I caused					
I've not helped when I could.					
I've said "I will" but then didn't.					
I've said: "I won't" but then did.					
I've thought of doing the right thing, but not acted on my thoughts.					
I've thought: "Since I can't complete it, I won't bother to start."					

Sometimes, even though I sincerely try to change my ways, I fall back into old patterns of behavior. <i>Discussion: how can we commit to our promises to change if we know we are guilty of this?</i>					
There's something I didn't do, and now I'm ashamed of it.					
When I express sorrow for the wrongs I've committed, it is because of my awe and love of God.					
When I share with others the fact that I've done wrong, I find that we all share the same experience and grow together. <i>Although this is an individual and personal exercise, how does this help?</i>					

6. Turning Back (adapted from an activity on www.Morim.org)

Read the following make-believe situation: "The pilot of an airplane makes an announcement to the passengers over the loud speaker, saying: "Dear passengers, I have good news and bad news to tell you. The bad news is that the electronic compass is broken and the radar is not working. The good news is that the motors are working perfectly and we are maintaining an excellent average speed."

Discuss: This is not a Jewish text, yet how can we relate it to Jewish concepts? How can we relate this story to the concept of T'shuva?

Try replacing the passengers on the plane with yourselves and the plane with life in general.

Suggested answers: We may not know how we're going to get there, but we know from where we've come and to where we wish to go. We may not have the compass but we have the momentum to keep us going. Although a difficult journey, tomorrow is a new day, a new season and with t'shuva, can get us back to where we wish to be.

7. Complete Heshbon Hanefesh program- putting these ideas into one

Source: adapted from the Young Judea Holy Day Program Kit 5743

Prep:

3 posters with the following headings:

- Goals for Next Year
- My Ideals and Values
- Where am I now?
- A handout with the heading "MYSELF" and 2 columns with the headings: Strengths and Room for Improvement

Step 1: Explain the idea of Heshbon Hanefesh (taking stock, accounting of the soul) and its connection to the High Holidays

Step 2: Post the first paper up on the wall or have someone hold it up. Give the group a couple of minutes to think about what they would put on the paper titled "Goals for Next Year." Ask them to share if they wish.

Step 3: Hold or post the second paper. Give the group a couple of minutes to think about what they would write on the second paper: "My Ideals and Values." Who are you and what do you stand for? Is this reflected in your goals? This allows them time to really think about who they are and allows for taking stock of one's self.

Step 4: Now hold up the third paper titled "Where am I now?" and have them think about it and share it. Ask them to explain how their responses to each connect: How do your goals reflect your values and how can you use those values to get you from where you are now to where you wish to be?

Step 5: Hand out the page titled "Myself" with the 2 columns. Because this is sensitive material, they really should work individually but if they want to work in partners, they are free to do so.

Ask the group to really be honest and think of their strengths and areas they can improve for this upcoming year. No one is perfect, so really take the time to think about how you can change for the better. Have them consider the different relationships in their lives: parents, friends, teachers, God, self

Sample questions to get them thinking:

- What problems or issues did I have to deal with this year?
- What are some great things that happened to you this year? What do you really have going for you?
- Is there a particular person that you've hurt or are struggling with in terms of your relationship? How could you improve that connection? Is it a relationship worth working on (keep in mind that not all relationships are positive- do you need this person in your life)?

Summarize the activity by explaining the goal of the activity- that by taking the time to do some "internal housekeeping" of the soul, Heshbon Nefesh, you have the opportunity for real T'shuva, to think, reflect and act on making changes for the upcoming year.



8. Target Practice- a program for Kol Nidre

Source: North Suburban Synagogue Beth El, Highland Park, IL

Concept/Goal: Participants will become familiar with the concept of "missing the mark" in our behavior (as opposed to "sinning").

Prep/materials: Large targets on poster paper on wall. (The bigger the better. Size will depend on the layout of the room, but every participant should be able to see the whole thing. You may use three sheets of butcher papers taped together horizontally to get the idea).

Stickers or push pins, depending on the type of wall

A "bulls eye" or target with words like: *B'tzelem Elohim*, *Tzadik*, or *Kadosh*.

Trivia Questions (on index cards, you can also use a slotted poster board for holding the questions which has the categories and points listed clearly on it like a Jeopardy board)

Prizes if possible

Instructions: Divided into different levels, you will be playing a Jeopardy-style game using the large target boards. If possible, attach the targets to the wall. It will depend on what kind of walls you are using. Push pins work for walls made out of cloth material to stick onto the target, and stickers work best for drywall. In the center

"bulls-eye" of the target board should be written a word like "*B'tzelem Elohim*," "*Tzadik*," or "*Kadosh*." This is to symbolize our efforts as people to become holier and more God-like...to make the mark. Outer levels of the target board can have more words, or just numerical value points. Divide the participants up into teams based on age, sex, grade, pre-assigned number, color, or team names using concepts or items associated with the *Yamim Nora'im*. They can choose categories of questions worth a certain amount of value points. These point values should correspond to the circles of the target, and the team should get a push pin or sticker on the actual target board in the correct circle when they answer a question correctly. The team is only asked a question after they have chosen a point value or category. When a team has accumulated enough points, they can get a sticker or push pin in the center target. They win! After the game there are discussion questions.

Discussion Questions:

1. Level 1: Yom Kippur is often called the Day of Atonement. Or maybe the day of "At- One- Ment," where we attempt to make ourselves even closer to ("at one with") God. Are we more at one with God when we humble ourselves? Are we more comfortable with ourselves after we have taken a long hard look at who we are? If not, what are we going to do to change that feeling? What does it mean to "miss the mark?" How do you "miss the mark" with your family? Siblings? School? Friends? Earth? Self? God?
2. Level 2: (Grades 6-7): Same game, harder questions. In depth discussion of the concept of "Missing the mark" as a personal failure to meet the standards you set for yourself, or that others set for you. In Judaism we don't talk about this as "sinning," where you have done wrong according to the standards set for all Jews. We recognize how difficult it is to live up to the level of obligation that Jews have. But as Hillel (?) said, "It is not your job to finish the task, but neither may you refrain from doing it." (You might want to check if I have that quote correct.) You can also discuss the "legal implications" of the phrases in Kol Nidre and their importance. We are basically making a legal document/contract in which we agree that we are not going to hold up our end of the bargain. We are covering ourselves for not living up to our word. Why?
3. Level 3: Same game, even harder questions. Does God truly sit and judge over us, deciding who will live and who will die in the coming year? Can we affect God's judgment through prayer, repentance, or *tzedakah*? How? Also cover the ideas behind the recitation of Kol Nidre as a legal document/agreement/contract and those of "missing the mark." Why is Kol Nidre repeated three times? Why is this considered to be one of our holiest prayers/services?

9. Mending our Relationships

Explain: T'shuva helps us think about how our actions have affected both our own emotional state as well as how our actions have affected others in our lives. The Ashamnu and Al Cheyt mention wrongdoings we have committed against other people and not between person and God. Why? It could be that God grants forgiveness, human beings do not always do so. Therefore, we specifically evaluate our behavior toward others and openly admit to hurting those around us as a community.

Split the group into smaller teams. Assign each group a different relationship and have them come up with “before” and “after” skits illustrating how the relationship can change after t’shuva and what it takes to make it change.

Example: Mother and daughter are constantly fighting. Daughter thinks mother is constantly “on her back” to do better in school, dress differently, look for a job, etc.

Before: daughter is “mouthy,” disrespectful and often ungrateful. She yells at her mother whenever her mom asks her to do something.

After- daughter recognizes that maybe her mother is trying to help her become a better person and just doesn’t know how to do it. Daughter vows to be more patient with her mother and try to explain her own point of view more calmly and maturely...and maybe once in a while, follow her mother’s advice without a fight. Mother sees that the daughter is under a lot of pressure and is trying to form her own identity. She will need guidance but also a chance to be her own person, on her own terms.



Option 2: Changing Our Ways

Our wrongdoings stem from letting our emotions get the best of us (reacting vs. responding) as well as our lack of understanding and empathy toward another. Learning to communicate more effectively, responding with thought vs. reacting with emotion, and speaking with compassion and empathy can help us stick to our vows of improving ourselves and in turn, our communication with our loved ones.

4 characters: Mother, father, daughter, friend. Conflict will be presented. Solving the conflict requires better and more respectful communication. Give these “character quotes” out on slips of paper or cards to be used for “role plays.” Each role play involves a conflict of some kind that can be solved using better communication methods. Give them 3 minutes to come up with something. They can ad-lib the interaction.

Interaction #1

Daughter- “I hate emptying the dishwasher. None of my friends have to do chores in their homes. You are not my boss and I’m not your slave.”

Mother- “It’s your job to empty the dishwasher before you go to school. You didn’t do it for the last 3 days and if you don’t do it now, you’re not allowed to go to your friend’s birthday party on Saturday night.”

Interaction #2

Father- "Does the punishment fit the crime? Do you think you can back down on her a bit? But she isn't following through with her responsibilities. What should we do?"

Mother [ad lib- how would you choose to respond?]

Interaction #3

Friend- "Your parents are so mean. No one else has a job to do at home every day. And not letting you go to the party is so unfair."

Daughter- [ad lib]

Discussion: You may choose to discuss after each skit or after all three have been performed.

What happened here?

Who was wrong in this case (all were in some way)

How can we learn to interact so that our relationships improve? What could have been said/done in each situation to prevent damaging any of the relationships at play?

10. An Alternative Al Cheyt

Read the "Alternative Al Cheyt" on pages 30-31 and split the group into pairs. Discuss which they feel they relate to most personally. Have each pair come up with 3 new Al Cheyt's to add to this list.

Or, cut the alternative Al Cheyt into parts as well as the text of the liturgical Al Cheyt (page 378 of the Rabbinical Assembly Harlow Machzor) and hand out in small groupings in an envelope. Ask them to pair up any of the alternative Al Cheyts with similar Al Cheyts from the Machzor to find common themes.

Or on two single pieces of paper, compare the two lists and decide into which categories of the liturgical version the Alternative Al Cheyts would fall.

Example: B'vli da'at- misusing our minds (or not fully using our minds)

...reading the paper every morning but not making the time for Torah

11. Forgiveness

Adonai, Adonai, Eil Rachum for Chanun...v'salachta l'oneinu, ul'chata'einu, un'chaltanu.

Merciful and patient God...you forgive our wrongdoings and our sins.

We beg a compassionate and loving God for forgiveness during the Yamim Nora'im and expect God to grant it to us.⁵ We ask for forgiveness from those we have hurt as well as are required to grant forgiveness to those whom we have hurt. What happens though, when someone commits an act against you that you feel is unforgivable? Can we forgive the unforgivable? Is there such a thing?

Situation:

Simon Wiesenthal, the famous Holocaust survivor who dedicated his life to capturing Nazi war criminals describes a situation that happened to him while he was an inmate in a concentration camp. He writes about it in his book "The Sunflower." The conflict he describes in his story is that a dying Nazi officer who recounts all the atrocious crimes he committed against Jews while lying in the hospital. He asks Wiesenthal, as a Jew, to forgive him on behalf of the Jewish people, against whom he has sinned, before he dies.

Things to consider:

- Does Wiesenthal have a right to decide this on behalf of his people?
- You are not just hearing these stories but are experiencing them still. Does that change things?
- Why would he forgive him? What does it do for both parties
- If he didn't forgive him, what point would he be making?
- What should he have done/said?

To find out what he decided to do, they have to read the book!

Note to educator: Wiesenthal stood up and silently walked out of the room.

⁵ We learn that if we sin against God and ask for forgiveness, God will grant it. "And the Lord descended in the cloud, stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, "The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, to the third and to the fourth generation." (Exodus 34:5-7)

(Text: Babylonian Talmud Rosh Hashanah 17b)

Rabbi Yohanan explained:

Were it not written in the text, it would be impossible for us to say such a thing; this verse teaches us that the Holy One, blessed be He, drew his *tallit* around Him like the prayer leader of a congregation and showed Moses the order of prayer. He said to him: "Whenever Israel sin, let them carry out this service before Me (i.e., read these passages containing the thirteen attributes of God's mercy which we recite during the Slichot service), and I will forgive them.

Consider Rambam's response below. Does this apply to acts as atrocious as the ones committed by the Nazi officer?

According to Rambam, one of the most famous Medieval Jewish philosophers, when someone asks for forgives with the right intent, you must forgive them. On the other hand, he does mention acts that are unforgivable, yet the atrocities of the Nazi officer are not included in this.

In *Hilkhot Teshuvah* 2:10, he writes,

It is forbidden for a person to be cruel and unappeased. Rather, one should be easily mollified and hard to infuriate. And when asked to forgive, one should forgive wholeheartedly and enthusiastically. Even if the aggressor maltreated him and sinned against him a great deal, one should not bear a grudge and not take revenge. This is the way of the seed of Israel and their proper hearts. But heathens of uncircumcised hearts are not this way; they maintain their wrath forever...

Hilkhot De'ot 6:6:

When one person sins against another, [the victim] should not harbor hatred and remain silent... Rather, it is incumbent upon him to speak [to his assailant] and to say, "Why have you done such and such and why have you sinned against me [by doing] such and such?" as it says, "Thou shalt surely rebuke your fellow." If the [aggressor] repents and asks for forgiveness, he must forgive. The forgiver must not be cruel, as it says, "And Abraham prayed to God."

Option 2: Come up with a list of "unforgivables." If there are indeed wrongdoings that we do not have to forgive, what do you think they are?

If you'd like to go into discussion with this: What's the difference between holding a grudge and something that is unforgivable? Can you eventually forgive and forget? Does time heal all wounds?

12. Talking with God

Use the reading "An Interview With God," on page 21 for the following activities:

a) During the Yamim Nora'im, we have ample opportunity to converse with God and ask God anything that may be in our hearts and on our minds. You can either role play this as a script or ask two volunteers to ad lib an actual interview they would imagine using this reading to help give them ideas.

b) The author asks God two questions: "what surprises You most about humankind?" and "As a parent, what are some life lessons you want your children to learn?"

First choose which ones you feel are the most important as you look back on your past actions this year and reflect, and what would you add to this list based on your own introspection from the past year?

c) Use God's responses and act out examples or scenarios of when his responses may have been true for you.

13. Yetzer Hatov and Yetzer Hara

Explain (or use these texts as a handout): According to the rabbis of the Talmud (Brachot 61a), we are born with the ability to choose between good and evil. "Rabbi Nachman Bar Rav Hisda explained: When it is written "and God created (yetzer) humanity, with two yuds," it is because God created two inclinations, one good [Yetzer Hatov] inclination and one evil inclination [Yetzer Hara]." *It is important to point out that Hatov isn't all good and Hara all evil, even poor choices can lead us to make better ones along the way.*

"The evil impulse desires only that which is not permitted" (Y. Yoma 6:2).
"God created the evil impulse for the purpose of testing man" (Zohar 1:27b)

We recite the Al Cheyt and Ashamnu prayers for the times when we give in to our Yetzer Hara more than Hatov. We commit to self improvement and recognize that our actions are our own internal struggles of our Yetzarim.

Activity: if you have space, and can get a hold of a strong rope, you may demonstrate the struggle of our "yetzarim" using scenarios and a tug of war game.

Examples: Your best friend invites you to come over and hang out. You accept the invitation but while getting dressed to leave, get a phone call from a "cooler" friend, inviting you to a party. You can't decide whether to ditch your friend or keep your word.

Option 2: Game: Try this, Not That!

Explain: imagine the "before" and "after" shots of a person undergoing a make-over. On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we remember that we are "masters of our actions," and can learn to exercise our Yetzer Hatov over our Yetzer Hara. This game illustrates our ability to choose the Yetzer Hatov when faced with options.

Present 10 situations that reflect different Jewish values (see below):

Designate one half of the room as Yezter Hara. This side will act out the "wrong choice" and its consequences. The other side will act out "Yetzer Hatov" and explain the difficulties but reward in making a good decision

Discuss: why is it so difficult to try this (referring to Yetzer Hatov) and not that (the less than ideal option)? How do the Yamim Nora'im teach us to make better choices? (Summarize: when we have a chance to reflect, when we judge ourselves and are judged by God, we can recognize our abilities to choose better and commit to these choices. We can influence our future by choosing differently than we may have in the past).

Examples:

Tzniut/modest or appropriate dress- You are going to a party. You have a really short skirt you could wear. You think it looks cute on you and you know you'll get attention in it, but it'll mean that you won't be able to sit and be comfortable the whole night...not to mention that so-and-so may get the wrong message.

Ve'ahavta L'reyacha Kamocha/love your neighbor as yourself- your friends are posting nasty Facebook messages on the wall of a girl in your grade. You decide to...

Kibud Av Va'em/honor your parents- your mom asked you to come home after school to help her move some furniture in the living room. Your friends are all going over to someone else's house and you want to go. But you promised your mom...

K'vod Pnei Zaken/honor the elderly- there's an older man who sits by himself in synagogue every Shabbat. You see him each week and feel badly that he's all alone. You sit in the front with your dad and brother every week. This week you...

14. *B'Timhon Levav*: Confusion of Values

One of the wrongdoings we confess to in the Al Cheyt is *Timhon Levav* or confusing our values. Have you prioritized well this year? Have your actions reflected your values? In order not to confuse your values this year, try this "Would You Rather" values clarification activity to determine what they are.

Directions: designate one side of the room as "Option A" and the other side as "Option B." Ask the participants to really be honest with themselves. Although this is "Yom Din," no one will judge your responses and what you truly value. (activity adapted from "Love Your Neighbor, Love Yourself," United Synagogue Youth, page 73)

1. Beauty vs. Brains: Would you rather...

A: be considered to be on your school's "most beautiful people" list

B: do really well in school and have a shot at your top college picks.

2. Reputation

A: be well known for something negative

B: feel invisible at school

3. Time for Others vs. Time for Yourself

A: Have more free time to chill and be with your friends

B: have more free time to volunteer and give to others

4. Appearance vs. Accomplishment

At your high school reunion, would you rather:

A: have others marvel at how great you look

B: have others marvel at how accomplished you are

5. Quality vs. Quantity friendships

A: Have 3-4 really wonderful, loyal friends

B: Be considered popular, be "friendly" with everyone in your school but not have a lot of friends you can count on.

6. Money

A: Save your money to earn something you really could use

B: Spend whatever you have to enjoy each day.

7. Family

A: Spend more quality time with your family

B: Spend more time with your friends or chilling by yourself

8. God

A: Feel a little bit of a connection with God every day

B: wait for moments of Divine inspiration or specific moments when you feel a connection with God

9. Tikun Olam

A: commit to improving the world a little bit each day (every little bit helps)

B: not really do anything to improve the world because nothing one person can do will help solve the world's problems anyway

10. Love

A: be in a long term relationship with one true love

B: be in many different relationships but meet different types of people in the process of finding love

11. Power

A: Be known or recognized in a position of power

B: Accomplish what you want to and do your own thing but be anonymous

12. A: Be polite and courteous but often miss out of getting what you want

B: Be assertive or aggressive and get what you want but be known as pushy or forceful

What values did we not mention? Add your own

15. Zichronot- Memory and Yizkor

a) Yizkor is recited four times a year: Pesach, Shavuot, Sukkot, and Yom Kippur. For those who have lost a loved one, the Yizkor section of the liturgy is often the most powerful. Many youth do not connect with this part of the service and often use this time to socialize. How can we connect this crucial concept of memory to the teen High Holy Day program? One way is through a general service of remembrance. You may also choose to read poems dedicated to the victims of the Shoah, Israeli casualties of war, or victims of September 11.

Please see the Appendix entitled "A Service of Remembrance" for a sample general memorial service. Discuss with your group the Jewish concept of *Zikaron* and the importance of memorial and memory.

b) Zikaron: memory

We recite in our liturgy that "God remembers" and recall that throughout our history, God has remembered us (except for the times when we wonder if God forgot about us in recalling the martyrdom of our rabbis in the prayers of Eileh Ezekerah).

God remembers your year but do you remember it? Close your eyes and recount your year. Think of times you experienced:

Sadness, joy, excitement, nervousness/anxiety, content, happiness, frustration, love.

Remember that both the tough times and times of joy didn't last.

16. The Yom Kippur Torah reading

The Scapegoat- transferring blame

29 And it shall be a statute for ever unto you: in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and shall do no manner of work, the home-born, or the stranger that sojourns among you. 30 For on this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins shall ye be clean before the Lord. 31 It is a sabbath of solemn rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls; it is a statute for ever. 32 And the priest, who shall be anointed and who shall be consecrated to be priest in his father's stead, shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen garments, even the holy garments.

Vayikra/Leviticus 19:29-31

Explain: The Torah Reading read on Yom Kippur is the story of the scapegoat. Aharon, as the Kohen Gadol or High Priest confessed the sins of the people in an unusual way. He took two goats and offered one as a sacrifice to Adonai. Unto the other, he would symbolically place all the sins of the people and send away as a sign that the people truly wished to send away their sins and turn to God. The term "scapegoat" we use in English speech comes from this source.

Activity: Define *scapegoat* as a group (The Scapegoat- blaming all problems on one person or situation instead of addressing the real issue. The scapegoat covers or draws attention away from the real issue).

Present the dilemma: Is the scapegoat an excuse to bully? How can all problems be placed on one person/animal/thing? In the Vayikra portion we read on Yom Kippur, the scapegoat is symbolic of the people's commitment to change- that's not a bad thing at all! However, during the Holocaust, the Jews were used as the scapegoat for the Nazi party to blame all problems of Germany on one group of people. In small groups, come up with a skit of a realistic situation where scapegoating could be considered okay. For example, some people tend to blame America's problems on the President (any president- no reference at all to the current American leadership) and his policies. One could argue that policy changes may have created particular challenges in American society.

Explain: Instead of blaming a person, the Israelites used an animal as a *symbol*. Since all people sin, they collectively transferred their sins to a common place and collectively sent it away. We on the other hand, sometimes can scapegoat our friends, relatives (“it’s not my fault, my mom wouldn’t let me...”) or public figures such as the President. Is it ever okay to scapegoat or is the biblical scapegoat meant to act as a symbol for collective t’shuva?



Option 2: bring in a stuffed animal to demonstrate the scapegoat. Pass it from person to person and have each person “pass on” a wrong-doing they may have committed to the animal. Then, have someone hide the stuffed animal so it is out of sight and the group has been absolved of its sins.

17. The Rosh Hashanah Torah reading, second day: The Akeida

The Other Voices: Bibliodrama Exercises

Concept/Goal: to explore a more personal and deeper understanding of the *Akeida* through empathy

Materials: Copies of the Torah Reading, page 174-177 of the Harlow Machzor

Instructions: This really works well if the participants can get into it. It may be awkward at first, but really push them to become their characters and envision the person as that character.

Review the story of the Akeida (found on page 174-177). Explain that the Akeida story is one of the most controversial and inexplicable stories in the Torah. Why did God ask Avraham to take the life of the child he had been waiting for? Why was Avraham so willing to do it? More importantly, what did the victims and participants of Avraham’s actions have to say?

Ask the participants to imagine being a player in this story- either a character or inanimate object such as the sacrificial altar. One way to determine this is to find a “missing voice” in the story. Whose voices are missing in this story? How do you think they experienced the events of this story? Have someone volunteer to sit in the “hotseat” in the middle of a circle and play out the conversations we could have if we could meet the person or object from the story. The subject must introduce him/herself as that character or object and answer all questions in first person, as if they were that person or thing and use “I statements.” Other participants must ask the subject questions as if he/she were the biblical character or object.

Example: “I am the horn of the ram who got caught in the bushes. Without me, who knows what may have happened to little Isaac. I am happy that I am a symbol and that my sound is a wake up call to all Jews to make changes.”

Question: "But you put yourself in danger because your body (the ram) was then offered as a sacrifice. Didn't that hurt you?"

Person playing the ram's horn can respond.

After the volunteer has dramatized being that person or thing, group members can each approach the person and come up with questions to ask them. Others in the group may interview that person to get the perspective of the "silent voices" of the Akeida. You may use the readings from pages 33-34 to ignite the discussion.

Examples of conversations to act out in first person:

Issac and Avraham: Imagine the conversation that ensued following the Akeida. You are one angry young man

Questions you could ask Isaac: What were you thinking as your father was tying you up? How has this incident changed your view of him? What do you want to say to him now? Can you ever forgive him? [tie it into the theme of Tshuva].

Abraham and Sarah: Isaac tells Sarah what happens. What does she say to Abraham?

Questions to ask Sarah: What do you want to say to Abe right now? How are you feeling? Could you ever forgive him? Do you think he was trying to punish you for forcing him to kick Hagar and Ishmael out? How does it feel that he didn't consult you?

The Ram- imagine you are the ram. How would you explain to Abraham to put yourself in Isaac's place instead and learn his lesson?

The Altar: You are the altar and are bearing the weight of the boy, Isaac. You don't believe what is happening. What would you say?

God and Abraham: Why didn't Abraham bargain with God as he had in the past with S'dom and Gemorrah? What would the argument look like?



Discussion Questions (adapted from North Suburban Synagogue-Beth El "The Ultimate Sacrifice" program, courtesy of Ali Drumm):

Parental sacrifices: Do parents make a sacrifice when they have kids?

Do parents often give things up for their kids?

Do kids give things up for, or because of, their parents? For example, have you had to move to a new city for your mom/dad's new job?

Does this Torah portion mean that we as Jews are supposed to make sacrifices? Since Abraham was the first Jew, are we supposed to follow his

example, maybe not in the literal form of attempting to kill our children, but in the figurative form of making sacrifices for our family members?

Option 2: Paper Bag Skits: The Akeida

(adapted from Joy Newman, Advisor for Congregation Ohav Shalom, Albany, NY)

Prep: Gather a bunch of random objects (about 10) around the office, home or synagogue and put into a reusable shopping bag. Examples of what you could use include anything from an extra shirt, baseball cap, office supplies, to a ball, kippah, whatever you can find. Split the larger group into teams and give them the text of the Akeida as their story. (pages 174-177 of Harlow Machzor or Beresheit 22). Now ask one person from each group to reach into the bag and select one object they must use to re-tell the story of the Akeida or extract a lesson from the Akeida in 21st century terms (example: parents finding other ways to make sacrifices so their children don't suffer. An example of such is a parent missing an important work meeting so they can watch their child's soccer game and he won't be the only one without a parent to cheer him on).



Incorporate the object into a skit of the actual events of the Akeida.

18. Hannah and the Rosh Hashanah Haftara

"And it came to pass, as she prayed long before the Lord, that Eli watched her mouth. Hannah prayed in her heart only her lips moved, her voice could not be heard." - I Samuel 1:13

Explain: On Rosh Hashanah, we read the story of Hannah, mother of the prophet Samuel, during the reading of the Haftara (from the Book of Prophets). Hannah was barren and desperately wanted a child. She begged with bitter emotion, "heavy in mood," for a child. She was speaking with her heart and because she did so with so much meaning and intention, her prayers were answered and Samuel was born.

In Judaism, we have fixed prayer because sometimes, when we wish to pray from our hearts, we cannot find the words. The siddur gives us guidance for what to say when we can't find the right words. On the other hand, sometimes the siddur can be complex and confusing and we just want to say what's in our hearts. Although Hannah didn't use fixed words of prayer, she learned to pray with kavanah- heartfelt intention and it was only then that her prayers were answered.

Activity: Sometimes, we too have trouble finding the right words to form into prayer. What is prayer? Ask the group to play word association and call out the first things that come to their mind that define prayer. Ideas: Prayer is wonder, awe, amazement, questioning, fear, thanksgiving, requests, love, God, anger,

frustration, worry, etc. Try to fill in the blanks of the following statements. Use a ball and toss from person to person in order to actively engage participants.

I fear...

I wonder...

I'm proud of...

I'm sacred of...

I wish for myself.../family.../friends.../world...

I am thankful/grateful for

Add your own

Tzedakah:

19. Rambam's Ladder of Tzedakah:

The Musaf service includes a reference to the "Big 3," three core tenets of the Yamim Nora'im: tefillah, t'shuva and tzedakah. As we commit to self improvement, we remind ourselves that to live a complete life, we must learn to give to others.

Use Rambam's Ladder of Tzedakah on pages 39-40, to debate the degrees of giving. Do you feel there should be degrees of giving?

Option 1 (advance prep): write out each level on different index cards and have them first try and guess the order. Then try and rank it according to your own opinions. Think of examples of each level.

Option 2: Present a play or scenario of one of the 8 levels of giving. Or add your own level of giving through a skit or play

Jonah

20. Jonah- Freedom and Moral Responsibility

(Jonah text can be found on page 632 of the Harlow Machzor or:

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt1701.htm>)

Jonah fled from God and God pursued him. Why wouldn't God just choose a more willing representative to speak to the people of Nineveh? What lessons does Jonah's fleeing from God teach us?

Present Jonah's story as a modern moral dilemma:

Jonah goes to an average high school where typical adolescent issues play out each day. A boy in his class is constantly bullied by a group of inconsiderate mean boys. Sometimes, they egg the girls on to join in. Jonah decides to stay out of it. A teacher approaches Jonah and asks him to be the boy's partner for an upcoming project because no one will choose him and it will devastate him. Jonah agrees but then avoids the boy altogether. A few weeks later, after Jonah and the boy have both submitted phase one of the project separately, the teacher threatens that if they don't work together, they'll both fail. Jonah tried to run, but now he's caught.

Moral dilemma: is it really Jonah's responsibility to agree to the teacher's request even if he doesn't want to? Why would he agree to it? What should he do?

Discuss the dilemma and compare it to the biblical Jonah story.

Next, split them into smaller groups and assign each group one of the following moral dilemmas. Discussion: How does the Jonah story relate to Yom Kippur? How does this activity, debating dilemmas connect to the Jonah story? In what way(s) can we relate the Jonah situation to our own experiences? How can we use Yom Kippur and our commitment to change to handle our own moral dilemmas throughout the year?

Dilemma 1

In Europe, a woman was near death from cancer. One form of drug might save her, a form of radium developed by a chemist in town. The chemist was charging \$2000, ten times the cost of the drug. The woman's husband went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could only gather half of what it would cost him. He told the chemist that his wife was dying and asked if he could pay half price (5x what it cost the chemist to make) and he would pay the rest in installments. The chemist said "no." The husband got desperate and broke into the man's store to steal the drug and save his wife. Should the husband go to jail? Why or why not?

Dilemma 2:

You have a teacher that many students pick on by pulling embarrassing pranks. You feel that this treatment (or bullying) is unfair. What do you do?

Dilemma 3:

You see a kid being beaten up across the street from your home. You know the bullies. Do you do anything?

Dilemma 4:

You are very stressed out about an upcoming test. Your friend tells you that he stole the teacher's answer key and is willing to share it with you. This test will make or break your grade. If you know you will not be caught, would you take a peek at the test?

Dilemma 5:

Friends of yours graffiti'ed the school wall. You were a witness to the vandalism so the principal called you into her office and said that if you didn't give her a list of names of the perpetrators; everyone in the grade would be punished, including those who had nothing to do with the act. Do you turn on your buddies?

See the bibliography at the end of this booklet for great book suggestions on ethical dilemmas for teens.

T'shuva, Free Will and Fate

21. U'netaneh Tokef: Signed, Sealed, Delivered

"B'Rosh Hashanah yikateivun, u'vyom tzom Kippur yikateimun...mi y'chye u'mi yamut"

"On Rosh Hashanah it is written, on Yom Kippur it is sealed...who shall live and who shall die..."

Read the complete *U'netaneh Tokef* prayer on page 536 of the Harlow Machzor (or found in the Musaf service of any machzor). Discuss the line above. Does God really decide your fate on RH and then seal it on YK? Do you feel like there really is a "naughty" and "nice" list sealed on YK? What does this concept of written and sealed teach us?

Activity: Deciding Your Own Fate/Choices

Explain: Not everything that happens is left up to God. You have the God given abilities to make decisions that can determine your fate. God gives you the chance to write your own fate. Once you've exercised your ability to choose, your fate is sealed. In the 10 days between RH and YK, you can decide to "return" to a better self, do T'shuva and commit to living a better life. How do you make these decisions? (activity source: *Love Your Neighbor, Love Yourself*, United Synagogue youth, 2009, pages 172-173).

Solicit responses: Who has the most influence over the decisions you make? When faced with options, the person(s) whose face I see and voice I hear in my head is:

Stand up if you are influenced by:

Yourself

Your best friend

Your mom/dad

Older sibling or cousin

Aunt or uncle	A group of people (e.g. the popular clique at school?)
Teacher	Media (television, movies, music)
Another trusted adult, a mentor	

Option 2: Situational

Solicit responses to the following situations:

Think of a person who influences the decisions you make when:

Buying new clothes	Deciding how to spend free time
Deciding what music to listen to	Deciding what to eat
Responding to a rude remark or disrespectful behavior	Deciding how to behave or what to say toward a member of the opposite sex

During which situations do you consider Jewish values? (*note: a Jewish value is something such as a value that is inherently rooted in the Torah such as Shmirat Halashon/guarding what you say or Kibud Av Va'em/honoring your parents. These could also be universal values but we teach them as essential values a Jew should hold*).

Think about the last big decision you had to make. Were you influenced by a positive example or maybe an example that wasn't such great influence in making that decision?

Discuss why they think they are most influenced by the people that influence them. Discuss why certain people have more influence in particular situations than others. Finally, discuss why we tend to allow ourselves to be influenced by others instead of relying on our own ability to choose wisely.

Summarize through a High Holy Day connection: As you do t'shuva and make your New Year's resolutions, keep in mind that it's your life, your choice. Things do happen that are beyond your control and it is perfectly natural to blame God when things "happen" that you aren't happy about, but remember as you do t'shuva and commit to being a better you, that God gave you the ability to make your own decisions...so choose wisely!

Option 3: The "pressure" of the influence of others

Ask for a one person to volunteer and stand up at the front of the room. Describe a scenario where he/she faces a decision such as deciding on a college. Ask the group to call out examples of who would influence this

decision (examples: boyfriend/girlfriend, teachers, best friend, school administration, parents, siblings, grandparents). As they call out each influence, have one person volunteer to represent that influence and begin to form a circle around the person. Eventually, a full circle should surround this person and he/she should be completely surrounded (and likely feel stifled or overwhelmed) by the crowd of people forming around her/him. Have every person stand as close together as possible so the person in the middle feels "the pressure" of his/her influences.

Ask the group: when faced with a tough decision, does your head ever feel like this? Where so many people are influencing what you think that you don't even have room for your own thoughts? How do you control the pressures of outside influences from getting to you and ultimately making your own choice?

22. Signed and Sealed: Fate vs. Free Will

Looking at the Unetaneh Tokef, we read that our fate is signed, sealed and delivered during the Yamim Nora'im.

Core question: is your fate determined by God alone?

Fate vs. Free Will: a Text Study

Use the following text to determine the Jewish perspective on free will and decide the role of free will in "sealing your fate."

Text 1:

All is foreseen but permission [choice] is given and the world is judged with leniency, and the judgment is delivered according to the majority of a person's actions. - Mishnah Avot 3:15

What does this mean? If judgment is delivered according to a person's actions, then what can you say about fate?

Text 2:

R. Hanina said to them [his disciples]: Go out and tell the son of Levi, not the constellation of the day but that of the hour is the determining influence. He who is born under the constellation of the sun will be a distinguished man: he will eat and drink of his own and his secrets will lie uncovered; if a thief, he will have no success. He who is born under Venus will be wealthy and unchaste [immoral]. What is the reason? Because fire was created therein. He who is born under Mercury will be of a retentive memory and wise. What is the reason? Because it [Mercury] is the sun's scribe. He who is born under the Moon will be a man to suffer evil, building and demolishing, demolishing and

building. eating and drinking that which is not his and his secrets will remain hidden: if a thief, he will be successful. He who is born under Saturn will be a man whose plans will be frustrated. Others say: All [nefarious] designs against him will be frustrated. He who is born under Zedek [Jupiter] will be a right-doing man [zadkan] R. Nahman b. Isaac observed: Right-doing in good deeds. 'He who is born under Mars will be a shedder of blood. R. Ashi observed: Either a surgeon, a thief, a slaughterer, or a circumciser. Rabbah said: I was born under Mars. Abaye retorted: You too inflict punishment and kill. It was stated. R. Hanina said: The planetary influence gives wisdom, the planetary influence gives wealth, and Israel stands under planetary influence. R. Johanan maintained: Israel is immune from planetary influence.

What is with all this talk about planets? Do you agree with R. Hanina or Johanan? How does astrology help us distinguish between fate and free will? [hint: have you ever heard the expression "it's in the stars?"] Why would Rabbi Johanan say that Israel is immune from "planetary influences?" Who then determines Israel's fate?

Rashi Explains:

'There is a planet for Israel,' means that prayer and charity do not change fate. 'There is no planet for Israel' means that through prayer and charity, Israel's fate can be changed for the good.

Check out the machzor to see how Rashi's explanation is included in our Tefillah on RH and YK

{hint: see the U'netaneh Tokef}

Text 3: Mishneh Torah, Hilchot T'shuva 5:4, Maimonides

אילו האל היה גוזר על האדם להיות צדיק או רשע או אילו היה שם דבר שמושך את האדם בעיקר תולדתו לדרך מן הדרכים או למדע מן המדעות או לדעה מן הדעות או למעשה מן המעשים כמו שבדים מלבם הטפשים הוברי שמים היאך היה מצוה לנו על ידי הנביאים עשה כך ואל תעשה כך הטיבו דרכים ואל תלכו אחרי רשעכם והוא מתחלת ברייתו כבר נגזר עליו או תולדתו תמשוך אותו לדבר שאי אפשר לזוז ממנו ומה מקום היה לכל התורה כולה

If God were to decree that a person should be either good or bad, or if there were in the very essence of man's nature anything that irresistibly draws him to a particular course, or to a special branch of knowledge, to special characteristics or actions, as the foolish stargazers invent in their own minds, how could God have commanded us through the prophets: "Do this and you must not do that, improve your ways, and do not follow your wicked impulses," if a man's destiny had already been decreed from his very birth, or his innate make-up draws him to something from which he cannot escape?! What room would there be the entire Torah?...

What problem does Maimonides present here? What is his solution?

ואל תתמה ותאמר היאך יהיה האדם עושה כל מה שיחפוץ והיו מעשיו מסורים לו וכי יעשה מסורין לנו כיצד כשם שהיוצר חפץ להיות האשבעולם דבר שלא ברשות קונו ולא חפצו... דע שהכל כחפצו יעשה ואף על פי שמעשינו מסורין לנו כיצד כשם שהיוצר חפץ להיות האש והרוח עולים למעלה והמים והארץ יורדים למטה והגלגל סובב בעיגול וכן שאר בריות העולם להיות כמנהגן שחפץ בו ככה חפץ להיות האדם רשותו בידו וכל מעשיו מסורין לו

Do not wonder, saying: How can man do all that he pleases and be in control of his actions? Is there anything in the world that can be performed without the Creator's authority and against His wish?... Know, indeed, that God performs everything according to His wish, even though we are in control of our actions. For example, just as the Creator willed that fire and air should ascend upward and water and earth should descend downward and that the sphere should revolve in a circle [as in Aristotle's metaphysics], so He willed that man should have freedom to act and that all his actions should be within his power.

"God performs everything according to God's wish, even though we are in control of our actions." Do you think this is a good summary of fate and free will in Judaism? Does this help us understand the concept of the inscription of our fate into the different "books" on Yom Kippur?

23. If it's Broken, Fix it: T'shuva

Prep: Take a piece of oak tag and tear it into medium sized pieces. Depending on the size of your group, you may want to do this in teams, so make five piles of torn pieces of oak tag.

Ask the group if they feel there is any part of them that could use "fixing."

Explain to the group that the pile of papers in your hand is a broken soul, a result of a year of misdoings and wrong decisions, a typical human being. During the Yamim Nora'im, we have a chance to do t'shuva and "mend our broken pieces" and make ourselves whole again. Challenge the teams to fit the broken pieces together, not just physically but through symbolic steps to take to solve the personal conflicts they faced. There are many ways you can do this activity. You can either have one person mention an example of how they became broken this year and have the others contribute pieces to suggest improvement or start with one example of brokenness and somehow connect each other's examples to the previous one. Or have each group member one by one come up with an example of how they have become "broken" this year and use the pieces to symbolize general steps to take for self improvement. Each paper could represent one step one would need to take to become whole again after breaking apart this year.

Example: "This year, I would get frustrated at my parents very often for not understanding me. I need to learn how to communicate better with them."

Connect this to another piece on patience “we need to be patient when others think differently than we do.” The next piece could symbolize recognizing differences in others and learning to be more accepting of others.

Also note that although you could fit the pieces together, they don't quite fit exactly back together. When we commit wrongdoings, even when we vow to change, we can never truly return to where we were before- we grow, learn and change from all of our actions- both positive and negative.

24. The Sin Spin

*Materials: *This requires advanced preparation of a wheel that can spin or you may use a floor map with the “wrongdoings” laid out on the floor and a set of dice to throw.*

If you can, create a wheel of triangles similar to *Wheel of Fortune*, out of paper and a fastener that can spin and attach it to an easel. Each triangle of the wheel should be a different “sin” from the Al Cheyt (page 378-379 of the Harlow Machzor) or the Ashamnu prayer. Allow each person to spin the wheel and try to think of an example of when they may have committed that wrongdoing or how it affected them this past year.

25. Repentance and Forgiveness in Your Life

Explain: you've hurt others this year and others have hurt you. Take 1 minute to think of an example from the past year of someone you would have to give forgiveness to and ask for forgiveness.

T'shuva- what does it mean to repent and ask for forgiveness? What does it mean to forgive? Is it okay to hold grudges if you've really been hurt badly by someone? What is the difference between having to ask someone for forgiveness and having to grant forgiveness? Which do you think is more difficult?

Activity- Divide the group into smaller groups. Hand out one of the following texts to each group and ask them to read the text and go through the discussion questions that follow. Then ask them to prepare a skit of an example of when this text would apply in “real life.”

TEXT 1:

Reb Simcha Bunem said: “true repentance does not begin when you say you're sorry. True repentance begins when you find yourself in the same situation and do not repeat the sin.”

Can you think of any wrongdoing that you have repeated this year even after feeling sorry for the act the first time? Why is it so hard to stop our wrong behavior? How can we learn to prevent habits from forming?

TEXT 2:

If people's sins die with them, they can receive complete pardon. But if the fruit of their sins remains after their death, they cannot be completely forgiven. (Talmud Y'rushalmi, Shabbat 9:3)

What are examples of sins that could die with someone? What is meant by the "fruit of their sins?" Can you think of an example of a sin that bears "fruit?"

Text 3:

There are five kinds of people whose sins have no easy path to forgiveness: One who sins in many ways, one who repents many times of the same sin, one who sins in a sinless age, one who sins in order to repent and one who causes the Holy Name to be profaned (Avot D'Rabbi Natan).

Which of the five kinds of people do you think is the worst? Why do you think these actions "have no easy path to forgiveness" as opposed to other actions?

Text 4:

There was a wicked man whose wicked deeds were widely known. Once however, he was seen to perform a deed which seemed to be a positive and good action- and yet it contains a slight possibility of being evil. The right thing to do is be careful and wary of him, and not believe that it is good since it contains the possibility of being evil (Rambam/Maimonides commentary on Avot).

If someone commits a mitzvah but has evil intentions, does it cancel out the mitzvah? If someone commits evil but for a good reason (example: your big brother beats up someone who has been bullying you in order to protect you) does he have to repent? Should we not trust any good action of someone who has committed evil in the past? Do you agree with what Rambam is saying? How do you know how to trust someone once they have committed evil against you? Does "being wary" mean not trusting his/her intentions at all?



26. Mitzvah Meter

Mark Your Meter (a take home activity for the Aseret Y'mei T'shuva).

Between Yom Kippur and RH, you have ten days to prove your commitment to becoming a better person. Start with a Mitzvah Meter (see the Mitzvah Meter

appendix)! Each day, mark your meter by performing one mitzvah at each point in the meter.

See sample mitzvah meter at the end of this booklet.

26. The Legend of U'N'Taneh Tokef- a dramatic debate

Source: North Suburban Synagogue Beth El, Highland Park, IL, courtesy of Ali Drumm

Explain: *This is the very powerful legend of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz. Whether or not it's true, it really makes you think about the text of U'N'Taneh Tokef and how important it is.*

(Also, you can find the prayer during Musaf on Rosh Hashanah, on page of the 536 of the Harlow/RA Machzor)

Narrator: Rabbi Amnon was a wealthy and respected Jew of Mainz, a small town in Germany.

(now we need someone to play Rabbi Amnon)

Narrator: The Archbishop of Mainz tried many times to get him to convert to Christianity.

(now we need someone to play the Archbishop)

Archbishop: Rabbi Amnon, for the umpteenth time...will you CONVERT!?

Rabbi Amnon: Ummmm, can I have three days to think about it?

Archbishop: Fine, fine, but you'd BETTER come back after that with an answer! And just to help you in your decision, if you don't decide to convert, I will chop off your hands as a punishment!

Narrator: So Rabbi Amnon went back to his house to think it over. Many Jews came to visit him to help him decide.

Take a stand: What should Rabbi Amnon do? Who thinks that he should convert in order not to get his hands cut off? Who thinks that he SHOULDN'T convert? Let's hear some arguments both ways...

Rabbi Amnon, what do YOU think you should do?

Narrator: Unfortunately, while Rabbi Amnon was listening to both sides of the argument, the three days passed quickly and he missed the deadline. When he

failed to appear on the appointed day, the archbishop had his guards bring Rabbi Amnon forcibly into his presence.

(now we need some guards to bring Rabbi Amnon to the Archbishop)

Archbishop: Well, Amnon, you missed your deadline, but what is your answer?!

Rabbi Amnon: Archbishop, not only will I not convert to Christianity, but in addition, my tongue should be cut out because it expressed a doubt as to the truth of Judasim.

Archbishop: THAT'S NOT GOOD ENOUGH! As you wish your tongue will be cut out. AND your hands will be cut off. AND your FEET will be cut off because it took you so long to get here!

Narrator: This was done. Amnon gave orders that he was to be carried to the synagogue. It was during the time of Rosh Hashanah, and the reader was about to begin the Kedushah, when Amnon called out for him to wait, and spontaneously recited the U'netaneh Tokef prayer. As he finished saying it, he died. Three days later he appeared to Rabbi Kalonymus in a dream, taught him the prayer, and asked him to broadcast it throughout Israel.

27. Fasting

MATERIALS: A BALL

Program adapted from North Suburban Synagogue Beth El

Core Concept: Getting our priorities straight on Yom Kippur

Using quotes from the Yom Kippur Haftara, from the Book of Isaiah, participants will explore the idea of "inside vs. outside," how we focus on our spiritual needs and not our physical needs on Yom Kippur.

Opener: ask participants to list everything they do each day to take care of their bodies (examples: brush teeth, shower, exercise). Next ask them to list everything they do each day that reflect their inside, what they believe, what they value, what contributes to their emotional health (examples could include getting a hug from our parents, writing in a journal or blog, expressing what may be on our minds to a trusted source).

Ask: Why do we spend so much more time on our physical selves and rarely focus on our inner selves?

Read the following text extracted from the Haftara read on Yom Kippur to the group:

Isaiah 58:3-5

<p>ג לָמָּה צָמַנּוּ וְלֹא רָאִיתָ, עֵינֵינוּ נִפְשָׁנוּ וְלֹא תִדְעַ; הֲוֵן בְּיוֹם צַמְכֶם תִּמְצְאוּ-תִקְפְּזוּ, וְכֹל-עֲצָבֵיכֶם תִּגְגֹּשׁוּ.</p>	<p>3 'Wherefore have we fasted, and You see us not? Why have we afflicted our souls, and You don't know it? Behold, in the day of your fast you pursue your business, and exact all your labors.</p>
<p>ד הֲוֵן לְרִיב וּמִצְחָה תִצְוּמוּ, וּלְהִכּוֹת בְּאֲגָרִיף יָשִׁיעַ; לֹא-תִצְוּמוּ כִּיּוֹם, לְהִשְׁמִיעַ בְּמָרוֹם קוֹלְכֶם.</p>	<p>4 Behold, you fast for strife and contention, and to smite with the fist of wickedness; Such fasting will not make your voice heard in the heavens.</p>
<p>ה הֲהִכָּה, יְהִיָּה צוֹם אֲבָחֶרְהוּ--יּוֹם עֲנוֹת אָדָם, נִפְשׁוּ; הֲלֹכֶיךָ בְּאֲגָמִין רֹאשׁוֹ, וְשָׁק וְאֶפְרַיִם--הֲלֹזָה תִקְרָא-צוֹם, וְיוֹם רִצּוֹן לִיהְנֶה....הֲלֹזָה תִקְרָא-צוֹם, וְיוֹם רִצּוֹן לִיהְנֶה.</p>	<p>5 Is such the fast that I have chosen? The day for a man to afflict his soul...Is that what you call a fast the Lord would accept?</p>

What is being said here? What does it mean? What is God's issue with fasting? What would be the kind of fast the Lord would accept? How does this help us understand why we fast on Yom Kippur?

Explain: nourishing the soul, not the body

Why do we fast on Yom Kippur? Our intentions when we fast are to give up taking care of our physical needs in order to turn inward to focus on our spiritual selves. On a day-to-day basis, we are concerned with fulfilling our physical requirements: hygiene, health affection, etc. On Yom Kippur God requires us to shift our priorities and focus from the inside-out...it's a shift of focus. We give up the physical for the emotional/spiritual.

Activity: Inside/Outside: What do you value?

Where should your priorities lie as you commit to self-improvement? Stand in a circle. Have each person think of something they value that is spiritual or emotional, something internal. Next, have them think of an action they would take to prioritize that value. Start their thinking with the following statement: "This is something I believe, therefore I'm going to..."

Have one person start by standing in the middle holding a ball. Ask him/her to fill in the blanks "I believe that (insert a value)...so I'm going to (insert action that reflects that value). He/she then tosses the ball into the air for someone else to catch it and take their turn doing the same thing.

EXAMPLES:

We choose our best friends, but I believe that my siblings are the best friends God gave me. Therefore I...

I believe that as humans, we are guardians of the earth. Therefore, I...

Summary: We are so concerned with our physical selves (what should I eat, what should I wear, what should I do with my hair today?), that we rarely take the time to consider our inner selves and how we can act on what we value. In order for our spiritual and emotional commitments of becoming a better person and prioritizing what matters most, we must do something in order to mark that commitment. It's not enough to say that we will improve ourselves, fasting, refraining from feeding our physical selves, helps us turn inward and truly consider what we value most.

28. Temptation

What causes us to sin? When we let our Yetzer Hara (evil impulse) get the best of us and also, when we give in to temptation and do not exercise self control.

“God created an evil impulse for purpose of testing man” (Zohar 1:27b)

B'reishit 4:7

ז הלוא אם-תיטיב, שאַת, נאם ל'א 7 If you do well, shall it not be lifted up? And if you
 תיטיב, לַפְתַּח חַטָּאת ר'בִּי; וְאַלְיָנָה, do not well, sin crouch at the door; and unto thee is its
 תְּשׁוּקָתוֹ, נֶאֱתָה, תִּמְשָׁל-בּוֹ. desire, but may you rule over it.'

Temptation: “May You Rule Over it”

Have someone read the 2 texts above. Explain: There used to be a horrible reality show called “Temptation Island,” where couples would go to “test” their loyalty and commitment to their partners by being teased and tempted by beautiful people. Besides the moral and ethical issues, the show did explore how natural it is to be tempted by evil and how challenging it is to resist the urge to give in.



High Holy Day activity: Discuss the idea of temptation and how the High Holy Days remind us that the source of some of our wrongdoings is lacking the self control to resist temptation, which is perfectly human! Have everyone grab a partner. This game is called “slaps.” Have them face each other. Person 1 will stand with palms up and person two will stand with his/her palms down over the other person’s palms. Person 1 tries to lightly slap the hands of person 2 before person 2 pulls his/her hands away. If Person 2 gives in to the temptation to pull his/her hands away before Person 1 moves his/her hands,

Person 2 loses the round. If person 1 moves his/her hands and Person 2 moves them away in time, Person 1 misses the “slap” and loses the round, having made the wrong judgment call.

Explain: Person 1 misses the slap- sometimes we make choices that aren't quite right and “miss the mark.”

Person 2- gives in to temptation to pull his/her hands away and loses the round. It's tempting to want to do something but it is up to you to judge when it is the right time to do it, if at all.

Take Home Activity: Ten Days

Are you addicted to something? Is there anything you do that you would be willing to give up for the 10 days of t'shuva? What about 30 days? Think about how much one particular thing dominates your every day: texting, TV, computer, candy, swearing, arguing with siblings/parents, etc. Your challenge is to spend the next 10 days (Aseret Y'mei T'shuva) turning away from temptation and refraining from one thing you may be addicted to (good or not). This will teach you that when faced with negative temptation, the impulse to do wrong, you will have trained your own self control and refrain from acting in a wrong way.

29. Taking it Home: Making Change for the remainder of the year

Day of materials: sticky mailing labels

Advance prep materials- butcher paper, construction paper, red and green construction paper for apples, glue, marker



Materials: In advance, create an etz chayim or “tree of life” using butcher paper, construction paper and red apple cut outs. Give each member of the group one apple and a sticker to create a tree of life illustrating self improvement and growth. At the roots, write the word “T'shuva” as T'shuva is the root of self improvement throughout the year.

Explain: introspection, self reflection and T'shuva should not be limited to the High Holy Day season but rather become part of your ongoing journey to self improvement and becoming your best self. *Give each person a blank mailing label sticker.* This blank sticker represents your blank slate. After the High Holy Days, you are given a fresh start. You have done T'shuva and have another chance at becoming a better person. You can choose to make T'shuva an ongoing, continuous process throughout the year. Imagine you were to jot down one commitment to ongoing self improvement on your “blank slate.” Think about it and come up with one commitment to ongoing T'shuva. Ideas include:

- Each night before bed, think about your actions during the day and whom you may have helped, hurt or offended. Could you have responded/reacted differently to anyone in particular? Is there a need to apologize at all? A nightly “accounting of the soul” can help you improve your actions and relationships.
- Who benefits from your actions during the day? Do you take time to help others at all each day? Make it a point to do one kind deed each day. Remember, the little things count!
- Admit to your mistakes and tell the truth when you’ve done something wrong. No one is perfect! Mistakes are another way of saying “I’m going to try again.”
- Make a check list for yourself and put it somewhere private. Every few months, read it over and see where you’ve gone.

Once they’ve thought of something, ask them to stand up so you know they’re ready. *Once everyone is standing, have them share their list or idea for ongoing T’shuva. If someone has an idea that was already mentioned, they can high five each other to show that no one is alone in their journey to change.*

Section 3: Holiday not Holy Day

Holiday Program Ideas for USY and Kadima (👤) on chol days

1. Apple Picking (SCUSY - St. Catherine's USY, ECRUSY)

Find a local apple farm and pick apples. Bring them back to the synagogue to bake into pies for a homeless shelter.

Option 2: Sell bags of apples and jars of honey as a fundraiser for Tikun Olam. Include a recipe for apple cake or honey cake inside each package and a blank Shana Tova card to send to a friend or relative!

Preliminary: Be sure to find a shelter who will accept baked goods



Make it Jewish- bring honey with you and teach the pri ha'etz bracha and the the bracha for tapuach b'dvash.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, בורא פרי העץ.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-eitz

יהי רצון מלפניך יי אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו שתחדש עלינו שנה טובה ומתוקה.

Y'hi ra-tzon mil-fa-necha—Adonai Eloheinu vei-lo-hei a-vo-tei-nu, shet'cha-deish a-lei-nu sha-na to-va um'tu-ka.

2. 5771 New Year's Eve Bash

Host a party for "New Year's 5771." Serve apple and honey slushies and celebrate the new year.



One Rosh Hashanah custom is to send New Year's cards to friends and family, wishing them a "Shana Tova." As a fundraiser, sell Shana Tova o-grams and home-made candy apples for people to send to their USY friends.

3. Wake Up! Time for Tzedaka

A major High Holy Day theme is that of Tzedakah. The shofar, another High Holy Day symbol, is a wake up call. The Sunday before Rosh Hashanah marks a great opportunity to start the day and year off right by giving. Plan a wake up breakfast where the board (with permission from parents) goes to USYers homes early in the morning and "kidnaps" the members to do a mitzvah such as assemble a pancake brunch for senior citizens.

Clean Slate, Clean Closet

*idea adapted from a program previously done by BEANS USY of North Suburban Synagogue Beth El
The Yamim Nora'im are about introspection, internal "housekeeping" and starting afresh. We clean our souls with reflection and T'shuva and can clean out our closets as an opportunity for Tzedakah. Ask USYers to bring their old shoes, clothes and books they no longer have use for to the synagogue. Host a "flea market" or clothing swap where everyone can come in and trade items. Charge a small entry fee for Tikun Olam. Another option is to auction popular items off for T.O. or extend the pool of items to include donations from synagogue members as well. Anything that does not get taken can be donated to a local used clothing bank. You can begin this activity with a "cleaning our souls out" with a pretend tashlich service. Before each person donates his/her clothing or closet items, have them "give away" any "baggage" they may be carrying by throwing bread into a water basin. Example: today I give away my sweatshirts and old jeans, as well as the anger and frustration I often feel toward my siblings." Now that you've released your inner baggage, dump your bags and "shop" for T.O.!



Create Your Own Ritual Judaica

* this program can be done in partnership with the congregational school and all items may be used to sell as a Tzedakah fundraiser. If you can do this at an artist studio or pottery studio, it will be more interesting for the participants than the synagogue space. Although expensive, you may want to purchase white pottery pieces from a "paint your own pottery" studio and buy your own paints.

*Try and find a local artist such as an artistic parent to donate his/her skills and time so that all you need to pay for/charge are supplies.

Ideas:

- Before or following the art activity, include a yummy food component to the program to entice participation such as making candy apples, candy pizza⁶ or regular pizza dinner (it may not be *minhag*, but one could argue that it's round shape is as symbolic as round challah!)
- Apple and honey holder bowl and saucer plate- include the bracha on the plate so you don't forget to say it! (Google Image search a cut out to trace or paste onto the plate).
- Honey spoon
- Honey cake/round challah plate
- Shofar stand or plate (for those who have a Shofar at home)
- bread bags for Tashlich bread bits
- stained glass Yizkor candle holder
- White parochet for the synagogue sanctuary
- Wine bottle "dress"- create a cover for your wine bottle that says "shanah tova"
- Machzor Inserts- create beautiful "Shanah Tova" laminated cards for the congregational machzors with love from Kadima or USY. Include an inspirational piece of Jewish text or favorite Jewish short story in a paragraph or *Midrash* for congregants to peek at during services.

⁶ Candy pizza- large pre-made cookie as "crust," coconut as "cheese," red and green Mike n' Ikes as green and red pepper, orange Sunkist jelly candies as veggie-roni.

The “Path” Toward a Better Year

Rosh Hashanah celebrates the birthday of the world. Enjoy nature a hike and picnic. Be sure to bring copies of brachot for beautiful sights of nature (Sim Shalom, pages 708-712).



If there happens to be a stream along the route of the hike, hold a mock Tashlich ceremony to review the rituals of Tashlich before Rosh Hashanah. Give each person an opportunity to reflect and to share their own list of “whoopsies”/regrets and “new year’s resolutions.”

Appendix 1: Mitzvah Meter

Challenge yourself to the Mitzvah Meter! Check off one mitzvah a day from the Mitzvah Meter between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur

Day 9: Mitzvot start and end in the home. Be a Household Helper! Spend an entire day helping with chores: make your bed, set the table, do the dishes, etc. _____

Day 8: offer to help your younger sibling learn something new or help with something he/she struggles with _____

Day 7: Ask some of your teachers to help you set up more recycling boxes around the school. _____

Day 6: Help a teacher clean up/put away supplies or set up. _____

Day 5- At school, sit beside someone who looks like he/she could use a friend.

Day 4 – choose a cause online that you believe in and give \$5 of your own money. Ask your parents if they'll match it. _____

Day 3- make some tea and a cookie plate for your mom/dad and bring it to him/her. _____

Day 2- Open the door for someone who could use a hand. _____

DAY 1: start with something simple- take out the trash!

ROSH HASHANAH

Appendix 2: *Zikaron*: a Service of Remembrance

We tell of Your love in the morning,
we recall Your faithfulness at night.

*Yet we remember other mornings, other nights
when love and faithfulness were torn by tragedy.*

We celebrate miracles of our people's past,
deliverance from peril into promised land.

*Yet we remember slaughter and destruction,
and questions born from ashes of the undelivered.*

In spite of Your silence, we reaffirm hope,
sustained by the certainty born of faith.

*Lamentation and bitter weeping have been ours,
refusing to be comforted for those who are no more.*

Yet we shall survive to sing, to flourish,
to turn our mourning into gladness.

*In spite of every obstacle we shall endure,
nurturing our children to overcome despair.*

In spite of every obstacle we shall praise,
sustained by Your promise of redemption.

*Our people has survived the sword,
finding favor even in the wilderness.*

Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy,
for You redeem our lives from destruction.

*Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy,
embraced by love and faithfulness forever.*

(Siddur Sim Shalom)

I believe in the sun even when it is not shining

I believe in love even when I do not feel it

I believe in God

Even when God is silent

(inscribed on a wall outside of Colgne, Germany)

Psalm 30

- א** מִזְמוֹר: שִׁיר-הַנִּכְנַחַת הַבַּיִת לְדָוִד. **1** A Psalm; a Song at the Dedication of the House; of David.
- ב** אֲרוּמְמֶךָ יְהוָה, כִּי דָלִיתָנִי; וְלֹא-שִׂמְחָתָא יְבִי לִי. **2** I will extol thee, O LORD, for You have raised me up, and have not made my enemies to rejoice over me.
- ג** יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי-- שָׁנַעְתָּי אֵלֶיךָ, וַתִּרְפָּאֵנִי. **3** O LORD my God, I cried unto You, and You did heal me;
- ד** יְהוָה--הֵעֵלִיתָ מִן-שְׂאוֹל נַפְשִׁי; חַיִּיתָנִי, מִיֹּרְדֵי- (מִיְרָדֵי-) בּוֹר. **4** O LORD, You brought up my soul from the nether-world; You did keep me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.
- ה** זַמְרוּ לַיהוָה חֲסִידָיו; וְהוֹדוּ, לְזִכָּר קִדְשׁוֹ. **5** Sing praise unto the LORD, God's godly ones, and give thanks to God's holy name.
- ו** כִּי רָגַע, בְּאַפּוֹ-- חַיִּים בְּרָצוֹנוֹ; בְּעָרֶב, יִלִּין בְּכִי; וְלִבִּי קָרַח בַּבֹּקֶר. **6** For God's anger is but for a moment, God's favor is for a life-time; weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes in the morning.
- ז** וַאֲנִי, אָמַרְתִּי בְּשִׁלְוִי-- בַּל-אֶמוּט לְעוֹלָם. **7** Now I had said in my security: 'I shall never be moved.'
- ח** יְהוָה-- בְּרָצוֹנְךָ, הֵעֲמַדְתָּה לְהִרְרֵי-עֵז; הִסְתַּרְתָּ פְּנֵיךָ; הֵייתִי נִבְהָל. **8** You had established, O LORD, in Your favor my mountain as a stronghold-- You did hide Your face; I was frightened
- ט** אֵלֶיךָ יְהוָה אֶקְרָא; וְאֵל-אֲדֹנָי, אֶתְחַנֵּן. **9** Unto You, O Lord, did I call, and unto the Lord I made supplication:
- י** מַה-בְּצַע בְּדַמִּי, בְּרִדְתִּי אֶל-שַׁחַת; הַיּוֹדֵךָ עֶפְרָר; הַיִּגִּיד אֱמֶתְךָ. **10** 'What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise You? Shall it declare Your truth?
- יא** שְׁמַע-יְהוָה וְחַנּוּנִי; יְהוָה, הִגִּיעַ-עֲזָר לִי. **11** Hear, O Lord, and be gracious unto me; Lord, be you my helper.'
- יב** הִפַּכְתָּ מִסְפָּדִי, לְמַחֹל לִי; פָּתַחְתָּ שִׂקִּי; וַתִּאֲזַנְנִי שִׂמְחָה. **12** You did turn for me my mourning into dancing; You didst loose my sackcloth, and gird me with gladness;
- יג** לְמַעַן, יִזְמְרְךָ כְּבוֹד-- וְלֹא יִדָּם; יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי, לְעוֹלָם אֲדַבֵּר. **13** So that my glory may sing praise to You, and not be silent; O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto You for ever.

Psalm 23

- א** מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד: יְהוָה רֹעִי, לֹא אֶחְסָר. **1** A Psalm of David. The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
- ב** בְּנְאוֹת דְּשָׂא, יִרְבִּיצֵנִי; עַל-מֵי מְנַחוֹת **2** God makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.

יְנִיחֵנִי.

- ג נַפְשִׁי יִשׁוּבָב; יְנַחֲנִי בְּמַעְגְלֵי-צֶדֶק, לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ. 3 He restores my soul; He guides me in straight paths for His name's sake.
- ד גַּם כִּי-אֵלֶךְ בְּגִיא צַלְמוֹת, לֹא-אִירָא רָע-- כִּי-אַתָּה עֲמֹדִי; שְׁבִטָתְךָ וּמִשְׁעֲנֹתֶיךָ, הִמָּה יְנַחֲמֵנִי. 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You art with me. Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
- ה תַּעֲרֹךְ לִפְנֵי, שְׁלֹחַן-- נִגְדַּ צ' רְרִי; דְּשִׁנְתָּ בְּשֶׁמֶן ר' אֲשִׁי, כּוֹסֵי רוּיָהּ. 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; You hast anointed my head with oil; my cup runs over.
- ו אַךְ, טוֹב נִחְסַד יְרַדְפוּנִי-- כָּל-יְמֵי חַיִּי; וְשִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית-יְהוָה, לֹא רָךְ יָמַיִם. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

A Special prayer for those not saying Yizkor for Parents

Almighty God, while those who have lost their parents and dear ones call to mind those who have gone to their eternal rest, I, at this solemn moment, raise my eyes unto You, the Giver of Life and from a grateful heart, thank You for your mercies in having preserved the lives of my father and mother.

May it be Your will Adonai my God and God of my ancestors, to bless them with health and strength so that they may be with me for many years to come. Bless them even as they have blessed me and guard them even as they have guarded me. In return for all the affection and sacrifices they have made for me, may I bring them joy and lighten their cares. May it be my privilege to help them in every way that lies within my power; may I learn to understand and recognize the duty I owe unto them, that I may never have cause to reproach myself when it is too late.

Shield my home from all sorrow. May peace and harmony and Your spirit ever reign within these walls. Keep me true to You and to all within whom I come in contact so that I may do Your will with a perfect heart, my Creator in Heaven. Amen.

Adapted from the South African Mahzor, qtd. In "Yom Kippur readings," page 189-190

Yizkor

We thank You, O God of life and love,

For the resurrecting gift of memory which endows Your children,

Fashioned in Your image, with the God-like sovereign power

to give immortality through love. Blessed are You, God, Who enables Your children to remember *Rabbi Morris Adler, qtd. in "Yom Kippur Readings," Page 201*

Appendix 3: On the Lighter Side...

HHD Humor!

This booklet contains some incredibly deep and meaningful discussion questions, activities for self reflection and deep inner soul searching. It is up to the leader running the teen/pre-teen services to include fun elements as well as humor to lighten what can be a very emotionally dense program. Adding your own humor, or these humor aids can help lighten the mood on High Holy Days!

- A reminder: to introduce some of the key liturgical pieces of the HHD, try out some of Uncle Eli's creative compilations...HHD Dr. Sues style: <http://people.ucalgary.ca/~elsegal/EliMahzor/index.html>

Top Ways Rosh Hashanah is like Purim:

Source: www.bangitout.com (adapted for youth settings)

10. Someone's always passing out by the end of both.
9. You wear a nice suit for both, except on Purim you call yourself Agent Smith from the Matrix
8. Flying chickens spinning around your head is considered completely normal.
7. On Yom Kippur you don't drink and on Purim there are people who really shouldn't ever drink.
6. One has Kol Nidre, the other has someone dressed up as Dr. Dre.
5. In both stories "Winning the lottery" is actually a death sentence.
4. The whale threw up Jonah.
3. The phrase the "The whole Megillah" was made for Yom Kippur Services!
2. Sneakers make any Rabbi look like he is in costume
1. Hanging Judgment finally makes sense.

Please, don't remind me!

Source: <http://www.harryc.com/j-jokes04-rh-yk.htm>

It was Rosh Hashanah evening. In the old Jewish neighborhood, everyone was heading to services. And on his way to synagogue, the Rabbi notices one of his neighbors - an old timer - sitting on a park bench.

"Sam. Aren't you going to services.?"

"Not this year, Rabbi."

"Why not Sam? Don't you think you should ask G-d for another year of good health?"

"Rabbi. I'm ninety-three years old. Most of my friends are gone. And I have a hunch. I think that in heaven they've forgotten about me. And the last thing I want to do... is remind them!"

Playing golf

Source: <http://www.harryc.com/j-jokes04-rh-yk.htm>

The rabbi was fed up with his congregation. So, he decided to skip the services on Yom Kippur, the holiest day on the Jewish calendar, and instead go play golf.

Moses was looking down from heaven and saw the rabbi on the golf course. He naturally reported it to God. Moses suggested God punish the rabbi severely.

As he watched, Moses saw the rabbi playing the best game he had ever played! The rabbi got a hole-in-one on the toughest hole on the course.

Moses turned to God and asked, "I thought you were going to punish him.

Do you call this punishment?!"

God replied, "Who can he tell?"

High Holy Day Services

Source: <http://www.jewishmag.com/95mag/humor/humor.htm>

On Rosh Hashanah morning, the Rabbi noticed little Adam was staring up at the large plaque that hung in the foyer of the synagogue. It was covered with names, and small American flags were mounted on either side of it.

The seven-year old had been staring at the plaque for some time, so the Rabbi walked up, stood beside the boy, and said quietly, "Good morning, Adam."

"Good morning, Rabbi," replied the young man, still focused on the plaque. "Rabbi Resnick, what is this?" Adam asked.

"Well, it's a memorial to all the young men and women who died in the service."

Soberly, they stood together, staring at the large plaque. Little Adam's voice was barely audible when he asked: "Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur service?"

HHD Services #2

Source: <http://www.jewishmag.com/95mag/humor/humor.htm>

A friend was in front of me coming out of the Synagogue one day, and as always the Rabbi was standing at the door shaking hands as the congregation

departed. He grabbed my friend by the hand and pulled him aside. The Rabbi said to him, "You need to join the Army of G-d!"

My friend replied, "I'm already in the Army of G-d, Rabbi."

Rabbi questioned, "How come I don't see you except for Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur?"

He whispered back, "I'm in the secret service."

Digital Davening

Source: <http://jewishjokes.tripod.com/vcr-kol-nidre.htm>

Gottlieb called his Rabbi and said, "I know tonight is Kol Nidre, but tonight the Yankees start the playoffs. Rabbi, I'm a life long Yankee fan. I've got to watch the Yankee game on TV".

The Rabbi responds, "Gottlieb, that's what DVR is for". Gottlieb is surprised. "You mean I can record Kol Nidre"?

You're Not Lost!

Source: http://kehillatisrael.net/chagim/yom_kippur/yom_humor.html

Meyer and Judith, an elderly Jewish couple, were traveling together to the Far East. Suddenly, over the aircraft's speaker system, the captain announced, "Ladies and gentlemen, I am afraid I have some very bad news. Our engines have developed a problem, and we need to put this plane down in a few minutes' time. The good news is that I can see an island below us that should be able to accommodate our landing. The bad news is that this island appears to be uncharted—I am unable to find it on our maps. So the odds are that we will have to stay on the island for a long time before any rescue comes, if ever."

Meyer turns to Judith, "Judith, dear, did we turn off the oven?"

"Of course."

"Are our life insurance policies paid up?"

"Of course." "Did we pay our pledge for the Kol Nidre appeal?"

"Oh my God, I forgot to send off the check."

"Thank Heavens! They'll find us for sure!!"

Tastes of Tashlich:

Source: <http://www.harryc.com/j-jokes04-rh-yk.htm>

On the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah, there is a ceremony called Tashlich. Jews traditionally go to the ocean or a stream or river to pray and throw bread crumbs into the water. Symbolically, the fish devour their sins. Occasionally, people ask what kind of bread crumbs should be thrown. Here are suggestions for breads which may be most appropriate for specific sins and misbehaviors.

For ordinary sins.....White Bread
 For complex sins.....Multigrain
 For twisted sins.....Pretzels
 For sins of indecision.....Waffles
 For sins committed in haste.....Matzoh
 For sins of chutzpah.....Fresh Bread
 For substance abuse.....Stoned Wheat
 For use of heavy drugs.....Poppy Seed
 For committing auto theft.....Caraway
 For timidity/cowardice.....Milk Toast
 For tasteless sins.....Rice Cakes
 For ill-temperedness.....Sourdough
 For silliness, eccentricity.....Nut Bread
 For not giving full value.....Shortbread
 For unnecessary chances.....Hero Bread
 For war-mongering.....Kaiser Rolls
 For excessive irony.....Rye Bread
 For erotic sins.....French Bread
 For particularly dark sins.....Pumpernickel
 For dressing immodestly.....Tarts
 For racist attitudes.....Crackers
 For causing injury to others.....Tortes
 For sophisticated racism.....Ritz Crackers
 For being holier than thou.....Bagels
 For abrasiveness.....Grits
 For dropping in without notice.....Popovers
 For overeating.....Stuffing
 For impetuosity.....Quick Bread
 For indecent photography.....Cheesecake
 For raising your voice too often.....Challah
 For pride and egotism.....Puff Pastry
 For sycophancy, brown-nosing.....Brownies
 For being overly smothering.....Angel Food Cake
 For laziness.....Any long loaf
 For trashing the environment.....Dumplings
 For telling bad jokes/puns.....Corn Bread
 For those who require a wide selection of crumbs, we suggest a Tashlich Mix available in three grades (Tashlich Lite, Medium, and Industrial Strength) at your favorite Jewish bookstore.

Bibliography

(And Other Useful Books for Teen High Holiday Programming)

High Holidays:

Agnon, Shmuel Yosef. *Days of Awe: A Treasury of Jewish Wisdom for Reflection, Repentance, and Renewal on the High Holy Days*. New York: Schocken, 1995.

Apisdorf, Shimon. *Rosh Hashanah Yom Kippur Survival Kit*. New York: K'hal Publishing and Leviathan Press, 2005.

Elkins, Dov Peretz, ed. *Yom Kippur Readings*. Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2005.

Elkins, Dov Peretz, ed. *Rosh Hashanah Readings*. Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2006.

Silberman, Shoshana. *Tiku Shofar: The High Holy Day Mahzor and Source Book for Students and Families*. New York: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, 1993.

Steinberg, Paul. *Celebrating the Jewish Year: The Fall Holidays*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2007.

*Gayer, Sheridan and Karen L. Stein, eds. *Moadim L'simcha: A Celebration of Jewish Holidays*. New York: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, 2006.

*a USY publication, highly recommended for teen holiday programming.

Other useful books to use on themes of judgment and ethical dilemmas (to explore the concept of heshbon hanefesh, a key HHD liturgical theme:

Cohen, Martine. *101 Ethical Dilemmas*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Humphrey, Sandra McLeod. *If You Had to Choose, What Would You Do?* Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1995.
[better suited for younger groups]



Grishaver, Joel Laurie. *You Be the Judge 1, 2 & 3*. Los Angeles: Torah Aura Productions, 2004.

Levalliant, Ted & Marcel Theroux. *What's The Verdict?: You're the Judge in 90 Tricky Courtroom Quizzes*. New York: Sterling Publishing, 1991.

Lewis, Barbara A. *What Do You Stand For? For Teens: A Guide for Building Character*. Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 2005.