



**A Message about Narayever’s High Holy Days Services 5782/2021  
from Rabbi Ed Elkin and Rabbi David Weiss**

Dear Narayever Community,

This year, we are grateful that society seems to be coming out of the pandemic. It is heartening that so many people have gotten vaccinated and Covid case numbers are low in Ontario. However, we know that this pandemic is by no means over. As of this writing, Ontario public health regulations still affect both the number of people we can accommodate in-person, and our ability to offer the full High Holy Day liturgy that we always did in years past at the shul and the MNJCC.

We are delighted to be working together once again as co-officiants of our Narayever High Holy Days services this year in the chapel at Leo Baeck Day School. Ruth Rohn will be offering a parallel in-person service in the Leo Baeck gym, but this letter concerns the service we will be officiating in the chapel at Leo Baeck, the service that will be live-streamed out to those watching from home. Building on our long experience leading Narayever High Holy Day services, as well as our experience last year during the first pandemic High Holy Days, we have planned services for this year which we hope will be uplifting and meaningful, both for the people who will be present as we lead the services at Leo Baeck Day School and for those watching from home. The purpose of this letter is to share and explain some of the decisions we have made, so that everyone knows what to expect from our High Holy Days davening in the chapel this year.

The main driver of the changes we have made is the time factor. We will be davening at the Leo Baeck Day School together with a limited number of congregants. We know that while the virus is still circulating in society, one of the key risk factors around the spread is the amount of time groups of people spend together in an indoor space. Last year, in the absence of vaccines, and after consultation with infectious disease specialist Dr. Anne Matlow, our Resumption of Services committee concluded that none of our services should exceed 90 minutes in length. Given that our regular morning High Holy Days services typically exceed four hours, it was obvious that the 90-minute limit would require us to cut the services significantly, which we did. This year we are delighted to announce that, because the pandemic situation has improved significantly, we will be offering **two-hour services**. This extra half hour will allow us to include more of the traditional components of the High Holy Days liturgy than we were able to do last year, while still bearing in mind the public health protocols to ensure safety for in-person attendees.

To achieve a two-hour service, we identified some key principles and the implications for our services:

Key Principles	Implications for the services
Prioritize prayers and poems that are sung out loud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We are eliminating the entire first part of the service called Birkot hashahar and pesukei dezimra. After the opening song of Ma Tovu, we will go right to the HaMelech at the beginning of Shaharit and say select prayers.</li> <li>● A select few of the piyutim (liturgical poems) for the High Holy Days will be chanted, but many will be omitted.</li> </ul>
Honour the Torah reading but with a shorter version and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We will only chant a short part of the Torah reading each day and a short section of the haftarah.</li> </ul>

include a sermon that is abbreviated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This year we will include an abbreviated Mincha on Yom Kippur afternoon and include a brief section of the Torah and Haftorah readings.</li> <li>• Rabbi Elkin's sermon will be significantly shorter than in previous years, and Rabbi Weiss will not be delivering a sermon this year.</li> </ul>
Ensure we do not rush through Kol Nidre, and Yizkor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On Kol Nidre eve, we will begin our service with an abbreviated Minchah followed by the full Kol Nidre recited three times</li> <li>• Yizkor of Yom Kippur will be recited in its entirety during the afternoon service on Yom Kippur day, not in the morning.</li> </ul>
Include time for the silent Amidah in each service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For the Amidah – we will allocate 5 minutes for the Amidah to be prayed silently in each service.</li> </ul>

You can see that many features will be included and some parts will be missing from our services to allow us to present a two-hour service. However, our service will be filled with traditional prayers and melodies, and with learning as well in the form of Rabbi Elkin's sermons. You will hear the main tefillot of the yamim noraim, such as the Shema, the Amidah, Avinu Malkenu, Hineni, Unetaneh Tokef, B'rosh Hashanah Yikatevun, Kol Nidre, Ashamnu, Al Cheit, and Neilah and have time for the silent Amidah.

The shofar presents a particular challenge, in that as a wind instrument it is a very efficient spreader of virus. We will blow the shofar outdoors so that attendees both at Leo Baeck and watching the live-stream from home will be able to hear the sounding of the shofar.

In the Hineni prayer, the leader of the service asks forgiveness in advance for any errors or transgressions they might commit in the course of performing their function as shaliah tsibur. This year, we feel the weight of our responsibility as prayer leaders who have had to make difficult decisions to eliminate parts of the service that we, and many members of the community, cherish. As shlihei tsibur of a congregation that calls itself "traditional", we did not undertake this task lightly. In the spirit of the Hineni, we humbly ask your tolerance for any decisions that we made that you disagree with, and we pray that Hashem will be similarly forgiving, given the public health context

Just because we are not reciting a particular prayer out loud during our two hours does not mean of course that you can't recite that prayer at home. We hope that this year especially, members of the community will take responsibility for their own prayer lives and enrich their experience of these holy days with personal prayer before or after our live-streamed services – either together with friends and loved ones, or by individuals on their own. Silent prayer lends itself particularly well to individual spiritual work. Do consider taking some time either before or after our davening to engage in quiet reflection, either using the traditional words of the machzor, or the words that well up in your heart as we welcome a new year and pray to God for forgiveness.

Please join us from the start of the High Holy Days when we will welcome all of you at our Rosh Hashanah evening service (Monday, September 6 at 6 pm) with song and prayer.

We hope and pray that all of the High Holy Days services we have planned will enable our community to connect with our tradition and with Hashem.

We wish all members of the Narayever family a happy, healthy, and sweet new year.

Rabbi Ed Elkin

Rabbi David Weiss