

2020 - THE TEN DAYS - 5781

The High Holiday season, from the evening of Rosh Hashana on the first of the month of Tishrei through the afternoon of Yom Kippur on the tenth of Tishrei, is a time of pause, reflection and meaningful connection. These ideas and images are invitations to mark this time with renewed purpose. At the end you will find suggestions for creating a meaningful online High Holiday service experience. Our hope is that this process of self-examination will help lead to positive action in the world. L'Shana Tova – Happy New Year!

Rabbi Adam Chalom



Kol Hadash

HUMANISTIC  CONGREGATION

1 Tishrei – Starting Again

The Tree Sings to the River

He who carried off my golden autumn,
who with the leaf-fall swept my blood away,
he who will see my spring return
to him, at the turning of the year –

my brother the river, forever lost,
each new day, and changed, and the same
my brother the stream, between his two banks
streaming like me, between autumn and spring.

For I am the bud and I am the fruit,
I am my future and I am my past,
I am the solitary tree trunk,
and you – my time and my song.

by Leah Goldberg (translation M. Falk)



Which poetic image resonates with you more deeply – a river's timelessness or the time-bound memories of a tree?

What has most deeply touched you in the last year that you want to carry with you on your journey?

What difficult moments or experiences of the last 12 months would you prefer to store as long-term memories rather than keep active in your emotional present?

2 Tishrei – The Need for Change



Some people like the truth to be eternal. They want their beliefs to be guaranteed forever and ever. They hate change.

For most of human history, religion accommodated them. The proclamations of priests and rabbis resisted temporary endorsements. Only the stamp of eternal truth would do, and so dogma was born.

Science resists this game. It knows that no description of the world, no matter how insightful, no matter how profound, can be true forever. Every tomorrow brings the possibility of some new fact, some new piece of evidence, which may render the truth of today obsolete.

In the world of science, human energy is not wasted in defending old proclamations. It is invested in new and better ways to describe reality.

Human insights always need improvement. And the willingness to live with change is the heart of the scientific temperament.

Rabbi Sherwin Wine

How can this example of scientific knowledge encourage us to better understand ourselves and be willing to change?

What have you learned about yourself in the last year that has inspired you to make changes in your life?

What are the most important values you learned many years ago that still guide your choices?

3 Tishrei – The Hard Path of Repair

Repentance and the Day of Atonement only atone for sins between a person and God, such as one who ate forbidden food...; but violations between people (for instance, one injures a neighbor, or curses a neighbor or plunders them) are never resolved unless one makes restitution for what one owes and begs the forgiveness of the neighbor. Even if one makes restitution for monetary debt, one still must pacify them and ask for forgiveness. Even one only hurt the neighbor with words, one must appease them and ask them until one is forgiven. If the neighbor refuses, one should bring a committee of three friends to ask the neighbor; if they still refuse one should bring a second, even a third committee...

It is forbidden for a person to be cruel and unforgiving, for he should be easily appeased and slow to anger; when a sinner implores one for pardon, one should grant pardon wholeheartedly and deeply. Even if someone persecuted one and greatly sinned against one, one should not be vengeful and grudge-bearing, and instead follow the path of those of excellent heart.

Maimonides, "Laws of Repentance"



Do some relationships in your life need repair? What would you need to start that process?

How many attempts to apologize are you willing to

make if the relationship is important?

Why do we sometimes have trouble apologizing and making amends, even if we admit to ourselves that we were wrong?

4 Tishrei – Making Connections

Standing on the parted shores of history
we still believe what we were taught
before we ever stood at Sinai:

that wherever we are, it is eternally Egypt
that there is a better place, a Promised Land,
that the winding way to the promise passes
through the wilderness

that there is no way to get from here to there
except by joining hands and walking together.

Michael Walzer



*Why is it so important to us
to find connections with
other people?*

*Was there a moment this
past year when you
needed to be alone? Why?*

*How do we balance asking
others to help with the
knowledge that they have
their own burdens?*

*What connections do you
think you will need in the
year just begun?*

5 Tishrei - Finding Joy

I Do Not Ask

I used to mumble many words in the
prayerbook
without much thought
even *all wise all good all powerful God*
until dear Clara was felled by a stroke
She who always did for others
now helpless shorn of dignity

*What does it
mean to you to
“say yes” to joy
despite life’s
challenges?*

*When have you
found joy at
unexpected
moments?*

*What part of a
smiling face
appeals to you
the most?*

The contradiction of *those* words
struck me then
forced me to shake my head
over and over again

but saying no
and saying nothing are not for me

I need to say yes
—yes to a soap bubble afloat in sunshine
—to a newborn baby’s perfect fingernails
—to a child reading a first sentence
—to the look of love that lights a face

I do not ask Who or How
I just say yes

Estelle Nachimoff Padawer



6 Tishrei - Taking Comfort

Wild Geese

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting—
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

Mary Oliver



Why does sharing our troubles with other people, and listening to theirs, help us feel better?

Have you had experiences in the natural world that felt healing or clarifying?

To whom or to what do you turn for comfort when you despair?

7 Tishrei - Examining Yourself

Time

We use it—wisely or not. We fill it and mark it. We try to stop it, but there is no end to it. And yet, we never have enough.

It is a circle, and it is a line. Moving forward, day by day, year by year, we come round and round again. Again the spring, again the fall—but every leaf a new one, every fall a new shape falling.

Always starting, never finished, we live always in the in between.



No time, we say, we have no time. Yet we have all the time in the world.

And there is no time like now.

Marcia Falk

Why do we sometimes feel like we have no time for what is truly important?

How can we make the most of the time we have, for ourselves and in connection with others?

Have you ever felt time seemingly slow or stop in a moment of deep emotional meaning? How does it feel now to remember that moment?

8 Tishrei – Forgiving Yourself

Head of the Year

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

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

It is not too late. It is early and about to grow. Now is the time to do what you know you must and have feared to begin. Your face is dark too as you turn inward to face yourself, the hidden twin of all you must grow to be.

Forgive the dead year. Forgive yourself. What will be wants to push through your fingers. The light you seek hides in your belly. The light you crave longs to stream from your eyes. You are the moon that will wax in new goodness.

Marge Piercy

Why can it be harder to forgive ourselves than to forgive others?

What was the most difficult forgiveness you have given yourself?

How did you grow from a previous experience of self-forgiveness?

9 Tishrei – Forgiving Others

I am of Native American descent (Seneca, Iroquois, and Seminole) and have felt discrimination all of my life on this land. I have listened to the stories and read of the atrocities, executions, starvation, and genocide committed against my people. History gives us many accounts of these afflictions. . . . Many others around the world have suffered terrible indignities as well.

But the words of my Seneca mother to me when I was badly wronged and wanted revenge and retaliation stay with me: “Do not be so ignorant and stupid and inhuman as they are. Go to an elder and ask for the medicine that will turn your heart from bitterness to sweetness. You must learn the wisdom of how to let go of poison.”

Forgetting and forgiveness may seem to be two different things, but I believe they are of a piece. Every time you remember a wrong, you are asked to forgive it. From my experience, wrongs will return to the mind for years and years and years. Each recall asks for forgiveness, and you stay in the power of that act until you let go. Compassion is all embracing, extending to all creation – to plants and to animals, including the two-legged variety. Forgiveness is of the heart. . . . No one, no memory should have the power to hold us down, to deny us peace. Forgiving is the real power.

José Hobday

Have you ever forgiven another person in order to move forward with your own life?

Have you ever asked someone for forgiveness and NOT received it?

What do you find is the hardest aspect of forgiving someone else?

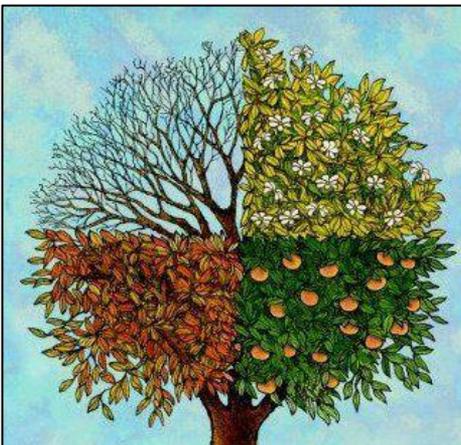
10 Tishrei - Treasuring Memories

A Song of Praise

I want to sing a song of praise to all that remains
Here with us, and does not leave,
and does not wander like the migrating birds
And does not flee to the North, and not to the South,
and does not sing,
"My heart is in the East, and I am at the edge of the West."
I want to sing to the trees
That do not throw out their leaves, and withstand
the blaze of summer and the cold of winter
And to those people who do not throw out their memories,
And withstand more than those people
who throw out everything.

But above all, I want to sing a song of praise
To lovers who remain together for joy, and for pain,
and for joy.
To make a home, to make children,
now and for the other seasons.

Yehuda Amichai



What will you remember most fondly from the year just ended?

Why do some memories stay with us and others fade?

What memories do you hope to make in the year just begun?

Suggestions for a meaningful High Holidays remote service experience

- Consider **where** you plan to experience the service. Where would be the most comfortable and most likely to put you in the right frame of mind? Consider decorating that space for the event with a tablecloth, runner, or flowers.
- What will you sit on? How can you make it as **comfortable** as possible for the time you will be sitting there?
- How can you make your screen feel **less like a work device**? Maybe push the laptop/computer screen farther away, or cover the keyboard, or arrange to have the display on a TV screen.
- If you are unable to be with **close family**, consider having pictures of them at hand to see. You can call them before services to engage those personal connections.
- Try to **limit distractions**: silence electronic devices as you would in the sanctuary and turn off email and social media notifications on the device you are using. Try not to open other programs or web browser tabs that will distract you. You can also leave other electronic devices in another room entirely!
- If others in your home are not participating in the service, ask them to **respect the time and space** set aside for this observance by not disturbing you.
- Wear **clothing** that will help you feel the personal meaning of the moment.
- Make sure you have a **printed copy** of our services – Kol Hadash members and High Holiday guests received these with our High Holiday gifts and/or by email as printable PDFs.
- The evening or day of the service, consider **what you can to do** put yourself in a good frame of mind before the experience – a walk, meditation, music, or simply a few moments of silence.
- **Be ready** for both new experiences and favorite memories.

Happy New Year!

Thanks to Rabbi Richard Hirsch & Rabbi Elyse Goldstein for ideas included here.