

Selichot
Reflection
Booklet

Congregation Beth Israel
Colleyville, TX

As the High Holidays approach, Selichot reminds us that we are entering a sacred time of year. It is a fixed moment during the year when we take the time to examine our lives; we look at the events that have taken place and we look at how we have responded to those events.

This is our time to prepare for the Days of Awe, when we stand before God and pray that we will indeed be blessed with life for another year. As we turn inward, let us pause and look deep into our souls so that we can examine all aspects of our lives.

This booklet is designed to assist with your reflections. Please meditate or draw, write or color, or otherwise prepare for these Days of Awe in the best way that works for you.

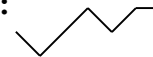
A Time of Reflection

A prince assigned a group of workmen the gigantic project of constructing imposing buildings and a spacious palace, among other edifices. Before turning the completed structures over to their owner, they carefully inspected every nook and cranny to make certain that nothing was overlooked and that the prince would find nothing lacking.

At this solemn season it is fitting for us, too, to search our ways and to take stock of our behavior... [During this season] it is incumbent upon us to inquire into and evaluate in retrospect our dealings during the past year so that we may repent lest God find that our performance was incomplete.

---Maggid of Dubno

To begin this reflection process, draw a line from “Birth” to “Today” and “Sept” to “Sept” that represents the ups and downs in your life. Example:



What does your life look like?

	Good Things	
Birth		Today
	Bad Things	

What does your past year look like?

	Good Things	
Sept.		Sept.
	Bad Things	

Circle three or more major events for each line.

Take a moment to think about the path that you're on and the choices that you've made.

The scale of our deeds

Our Rabbis taught: “A man should always regard himself as though he were half guilty and half meritorious. If he performs one good deed, happy is he for weighting himself down in the scale of merit. If he commits one transgression, woe to him for weighting himself down on the scale of guilt...

R. Eleazar son of R. Simeon said: “Because the world is judged by its majority, and an individual too is judged by his majority of deeds, good or bad, if he performs one good deed, happy is he for turning the scale both for himself and for the whole world on the side of merit; if he commits one transgression, woe to him for weighting himself and the whole world in the scale of guilt...

---Talmud Bavli, Kiddushin 40a-b

What do your scales look like this year?

How do you feel about your scales for this past year?

Teshuvah - Repentance

R. Eliezer said: “Repent one day before your death.” His disciples asked him: “How are we supposed to know the day of our death?” R. Eliezer replied: “You can’t, so all the more reason that you repent today, lest you die tomorrow...”

--- Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 153a

The gates of prayer are sometimes open and sometimes locked, but the gates of repentance are always open.

---Deuteronomy Rabbah 2:7

Who is truly repentant? Rav Judah said: The one who, when the temptation to sin is repeated, refrains from sinning.

---Paraphrased from Talmud Bavli, Yoma 86b

What are the mistakes that you make over and over again?

For what do you need to do teshuvah/repentance?

What can you avoid repeating?

Forgiving Others

Forgive your neighbor his wrongdoing;
Then your sins will be forgiven when you pray.
Shall one man cherish anger against another,
And yet ask healing from Adonai?
Does he have no mercy on a man like himself,
And yet pray for his own sins?
---Ben Sira 28:2-4

For transgressions against God, the Day of Atonement atones; but for
transgressions of one human being against another, the Day of Atonement does not
atone until they have made peace with one another.
---Gates of Repentance

From whom do you need to seek forgiveness?

Who do you need to forgive?

Our Relationship with God

Once, New Year's Day had dominated my life. I knew that my sins grieved the Eternal; I implored His forgiveness. Once, I had believed profoundly that upon one solitary deed of mine, one solitary prayer, depended the salvation of the world.

This day, I had ceased to plead. I was no longer capable of lamentation. On the contrary, I felt very strong, I was the accuser, God the accused. My eyes were open and I was alone – terribly alone in a world without God and without man. Without love or mercy. I had ceased to be anything but ashes, yet I felt myself to be stronger than the Almighty, to whom my life had been tied for so long. I stood amid that praying congregation, observing it like a stranger.

The service ended with the Kaddish. Everyone recited the kaddish over his parents, over his children, over his brothers, and over himself.

We stayed for a long time at the assembly place. No one dared to drag himself away from this mirage. Then it was time to go to bed and slowly the prisoners made their way over to their blocks. I heard people wishing one another a Happy New Year!

---Elie Wiesel, *Night*

What is your connection to God?

How has that connection changed over the years?

When have you been the accuser? When have you been the accused?

Connection with our past

Blessed are you, God of our matriarchs and patriarchs:

God of Abraham, God of Sarah, God of Isaac, God of Rebekah,
God of Jacob, God of Rachel, God of Leah...

It is a common practice to visit the graves of our relatives and loved ones during this time of year. The custom originated from the belief that we benefit from the merit of our ancestors and during the Days of Awe, our loved ones who have died can intercede on our behalf.

**From our ancestors of old to those recently departed,
Who would you like to intercede on your behalf and why?**

What are the aspects of your life in which they would take the most pride?

How have you or can you keep their memory alive?

Mitzvot in Our Lives

Surely this Instruction (Torah), which I enjoin upon you this day, is not too baffling for you, nor is it beyond reach. It is not in the heavens, that you should say, “Who among us can go up to the heavens and get it for us and impart it to us, that we may observe it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, “Who among us can cross to the other side of the sea and get it for us and impart it to us, that we may observe it?” No, the thing is very close to you, in your mouth and in your heart, to observe it.

---Deuteronomy 30:11-14

Which Mitzvot are “in your mouth and in your heart”?

Which Mitzvot are “beyond your reach”?

Which Mitzvot would you like to bring into your life in the year to come?

Life Lessons

I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day: I have put before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life – if you and your offspring would live – by loving Adonai your God, heeding God’s commands, and holding fast to God. For thereby you shall have life and shall long endure upon the soil that Adonai swore to your ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give to them.
---Deuteronomy 30:19-20

How have you chosen to live?

What lessons have you learned this past year?

**What are the lessons that were learned in years gone by
that you need to remember for your life today?**

Additional Reflections, Thoughts, and Questions: