

Congregation Shearith Israel's Guide to High Holidays In the Year of Pandemic

- I. Rabbi Kaiman's High Holiday Message
- II. Technical tips for a spiritual Zoom experience
- III. Readings for when the Machzor isn't enough

Rabbi Kaiman's High Holiday Message

Every year we are called to examine our souls and find the ways we can transform for the better. The goals of this year are no different. In some ways, Covid-19 has forced us to transform, and we are constantly struggling for that transformation to be for the better. Since all of this is unprecedented in our lifetimes, we are constantly experimenting and discovering as we go.

Every congregation has followed the path that is right for them. Some congregations have pre-recorded the entirety of the service. Other congregations are innovating totally new experiences in this new milieu.

For the services at Shearith Israel, we are constantly innovating to provide as traditional an experience as possible. The virtual "room" is our sanctuary. The services are live and mostly lay led. The Torah readings are chanted from the Torah. These choices mean that our services stay true to our participatory, multi-generational community, rather than appearing highly-produced.

We miss the sound of our voices joining together in imperfect harmony. We miss the handshakes and hugs. We miss the warm smiles from across the room. We miss schmoozing in the lobby and the sweets that follow services. We miss our children running through the aisles playing. We miss each other.

This guide is for all of us to create the best possible experience amidst this pandemic. We need prayer more than ever. We need hope and faith to carry us through. We need one another.

Let us enter these High Holidays with a spirit of love and open hearts and return to the best version of ourselves. May we emerge renewed and reinvigorated to take on whatever 5781 brings!

Technical Tips for Successful Zoom Services

MAKE YOUR SPACE HOLY

1. Think ahead about where in your home you wish to be ahead of time.
2. Consider proximity to your WiFi router and the strength of the internet connection.
3. Make sure the space is clean and tidy, free of distractions.
4. Hang the sign from your gift bag behind you in the frame to connect us together.
5. Dress in nice clothes, wear a Kippah and tallit.
6. Wear white on Yom Kippur.

SEE and HEAR

1. Consider connecting your streaming device to a large screen television to improve your video and audio experience

- a. Almost every television has an HDMI port.

- i. If your laptop has an HDMI port, you need an HDMI cable to connect.



- ii.

- iii. You can also purchase cables for your iPad, phone, or computer without an HDMI port. Just google - HDMI cable for (your device)

2. If you are using a mobile device, consider investing in a tripod and stand so you can enjoy services hand-free (or the clip you use to hold the phone in your car may be adaptable for home).
3. If you are using a laptop, consider a stand (or stack of books) to elevate the device to a comfortable position for sitting and standing.
4. If not too technically difficult, consider connecting external or bluetooth speakers if the internal speakers are not sufficient.

BE SEEN

1. Keep your video stream on unless heading to the bathroom or some other need. Just as if you were physically present in our sanctuary.
2. Be sure your "name" in the zoom matches you - especially if our Gabbaim need to find you in the crowd.
3. Consider the framing of your camera, both when you are seated and when you are standing.

4. Light sources like windows behind you prevent us from seeing your beautiful faces.
5. Bring the cards from your High Holiday gift bag that say "Amen" etc. and use them at appropriate times to create a sense of unity in the room.

INTERACT

1. Use the private chat function to "whisper" to your friends and community members, welcome them, shmooze a bit, and catch up as if you were sitting next to each other.
2. Sing along in your homes with the service. It doesn't feel nearly as strange as you might think.
3. Use the public chat function to say "Yasher Koach" or acknowledge publicly when appropriate.
4. If you wish, you can create your own zoom room to share with a friend to step into the "lobby" to have a more extensive conversation during the service - but don't miss too much!
5. Feel free to move between Rabbi Crane's Torah study and the service when both are being held at the same time. Be where your soul is engaged, and work to have a soul ready to engage wherever you are.

BE FORGIVING OF YOURSELF AND OTHERS

1. If you need to take a break, please feel free to do so, just as if you were in person. Show up when you need, leave when you need. Do what you need to do to be present wherever you are.
2. Technical problems will probably happen. Someone's internet might freeze at the wrong moment, their camera angle shows their belly instead of their face, or up their nose. Someone might have trouble unmuting at the right moment, or when they do, we hear their playful dog as well as their voices. We spotlight the wrong person by accident. Despite our best efforts to prepare, be prepared for some memorable mistakes. It's the season of forgiveness, take all these moments with cheer and enjoy the service!

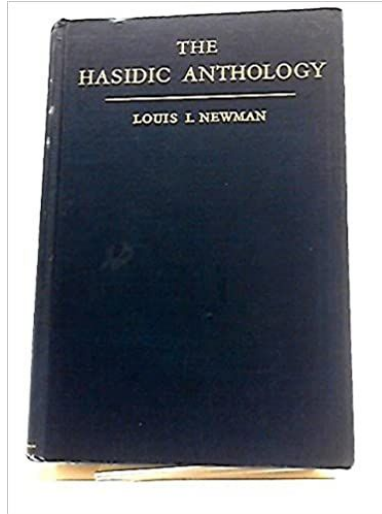
Readings for when the Machzor isn't enough

For Heaven's Sake We Pray From Home As One A Prayer for Patience and Restraint by Rabbi Naomi Levy

We miss our sanctuary
The comfort of community
Our voices joined together in prayer,
But for heaven's sake
We pray from home As one
For grandmothers and grandfathers
For mothers and fathers
For aunts and uncles
For the vulnerable and the frail
For this is God's prayer: Be safe my children

Your touch Your hug
Your breath Your song
Can cost lives right now.
It's tragic and heartbreaking,
But we will keep our sanctuaries closed for now
To stem this pandemic.
Your patience is praise
Your restraint is glory.
So reach out with all your heart
Join soul to soul
With a mighty love
That transcends all distance.
Take it in
Waves of blessings
Hands to heaven
We pray from home
As One

And God says,
Amen.



9:7 More Pleasing Than Fast-Days

The Sassover said: "If your neighbor offends you, refrain from wrath, and it will be more pleasing in the sight of God than a thousand fast-days; listen to revilings without retort, and it will stand you instead of a thousand self-inflictions."

10:12 The Control of Wrath

The Koretzer said: "Long ago I conquered my anger and placed it in my pocket. When I have need of it, I take it out."

11:17 The Bratzlaver on Anger

1. Break your anger by compassion.
2. Anger and cruelty arise from a deficiency of understanding.
3. He who is obsessed by anger covers his own image of God
4. God loves the one who forgives her offenders and shows them not an angry face
5. The one who is habitually obsessed by anger fails to enjoy his life and feels all the tortures of Purgatory.

22:8 Good in Evil

Said the "Yud" We read, "Behold I set before you this day Beracha, Ve'Klalah" God said: "I propose unto you Mitzvot as an investment, whereby you may enjoy during this life Beracha: the accrued interest, "Ve'Klalah. וקללה is an acronym for "והקרן קיימת לכם לעולם הבא" And the fund will be established for you in the World to Come

29:2 Three Characters

Said the Kotzker: "Three characters can be found in a man about to perform a good deed: if he says: 'I shall do it soon,' his character is poor. If he says: 'I am ready to do it now,' his character is of average quality. If he says: 'I am doing it,' his character is praiseworthy."

29:3 The Blanket

Said the Riziner: "Various types of people come to me, but not all are influenced by my counsel to improve themselves. If a man is covered by a blanket, his inner warmth is increased. But if a stone is covered in this way, it receives no warmth."

30:8 Undesirable Traits

The Maggid of Koznitz said: "There is an eternal lesson to be found in every tale of the Torah. For example: the story of Cain and Abel teaches us the consequences of jealousy; the story of the Flood: the result of lust; and the story of the Tower of Babel: the outcome of lacking a knowledge of our limitations. In every one of us can be found some of these undesirable traits, and the fate of those who allowed themselves to be overpowered by them, should be a warning to us."

30:9 Self-Analysis

Said the Gerer Rabbi: "Every Jew possesses some good trait, pleasing unto the Lord, but no one of us is able to diagnose himself adequately to discover which trait it is. You may be sure that the qualities which bring you self-satisfaction are not those which the Lord approves of in you."

31:13 Self-Praise

Said the Besht: "A man ought to be generous in his praise of a good man. But when he wishes to praise himself and remarks: 'Reuben is very wise, and no one has succeeded in outwitting him except myself,' such praise is unworthy. In this trait, as in others, we must practice discrimination. In love, we must love good and not evil; in fear, we must fear God and not poverty; in praise, we must praise God and not ourselves; in thirst for learning, we must learn Torah and not futile subjects"

31:14 Every Human Trait

Said the Besht: "Man should learn pride, and not be proud; he should learn anger, but not feel angry. For man should be a complete personality, possessing all human traits. Does not the Torah picture God as possessing both justice and mercy?"

57:5 Letting God off Easily

After Yom Kippur the Berditschever called over a tailor and asked him to relate his argument with God on the day before. The tailor said:

"I declared to God: You wish me to repent of my sins, but I have committed only minor offenses: I may have kept left-over cloth, or I may have eaten something I shouldn't without washing my hands.

"But you, O Lord, have committed grievous sins: You have taken away babies from their mothers, and mothers from their babies. Let's call it even, if you forgive me, I will forgive you.

The Berditschever replied: "Why did you let God off so easily? You might have forced God to redeem all of Israel!"

58:9 Give us our needs

Said the Savorner: "Rabbi Ovadia Bartenura, the famous commentator on the Mishnah, says: 'Even when we turn to transgressions, have mercy upon us, and let our needs be open before You. The meaning of these words is as follows: 'Even when we transgress, You should pity us, O Lord, for it is known to You that we do so because of our needs. Were we supplied with what we need, we would not transgress in our dealings.

62:5 For My Sake

The Bratzlaver said: "Declare at all times: 'The world was created for my sake.' Do not declare: 'Of what concern is this to me?' But do your share to add some improvement, to supply something that is missing, and to leave the world a little better for your sojourn in it.

79:5 No One is Superior

The "Yud" related the following: "When I was a child my father showed me in the Prayer Book the Hebrew letter "Yud - י" He then told me that when two "Yuds stand together -"י" they form a word by themselves. This word is the Holy Name of the Lord.

"I asked: 'Suppose one letter 'Yud' stands just above another 'Yud "י" Does this also form a Holy Name?'

"No,' replied my father.

"Then and there I learned a lesson: 'When two Jews (Yuden) associate on an equal footing and discuss a subject of Torah, the presence of God is with them. But when one of them holds himself superior to the other, God is not there."

80:7 The Tzaddik Must Lower Himself

The Pulnoer Rabbi said: "When the Tzaddik is on the high rungs of the ladder of righteousness, he has no communication with ordinary folk. He must descend to a lower rung if he is to prevail in elevating every-day people to a higher level. This is illustrated by the story of Jacob's Ladder, which stood on the ground though it reached to the Heavens."

80:10 Red Blood

Said Rabbi Bunam: "No Jew, however learned and pious may consider himself an iota better than a fellow-Jew, however ignorant or irreligious the latter may be. This is confirmed by the law that if a learned and pious Jew were commanded to slay the ignorant and impious one, or himself slain, he must accept death rather than kill the other. No one can tell whose blood is redder and whose life is more important in the eyes of God. If a man in this crucial moment has no right to deem himself superior to another, what right can he possibly have to do so on less critical occasions?"

124:3 Too Many Errors

Rabbi Bunam sought to cause a sinner to improve his ways. He invited him to a game of chess and, while playing, the Rabbi made an obviously false move. The man was about to take advantage of the error, but the Rabbi asked him to excuse the mistake. Soon the Rabbi made another wrong move. This time his opponent refused to overlook it. The Rabbi turned to him and said:

"You refuse to condone two false moves in a game of chess, yet you expect the Lord to pardon you regardless of the number of your own transgressions."

The sinner was stricken with remorse and promised to mend his conduct.

127:6 Concentrated Anxiety

Rabbi Leib Dimimles of Lantzut was a wealthy merchant, and very learned in the Torah. It happened that he lost his money and was reduced to poverty. Rabbi Leib paid no heed to this calamity and continued his studies. His wife inquired: "How is it possible for you to not show the least anxiety?" The Rabbi answered:

"The Lord gave me a brain which thinks rapidly. The worrying which another would do in a year, I have done in a moment."

172:1 The Diamond

The Riziner explained thus the verse (Ex. 10:23) : "But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings." "Each one of us possesses a Holy Spark, but not every one exhibits it to the best advantage. It is like the diamond which cannot cast its luster if buried in the earth. But when disclosed in its appropriate setting, there is light, as if from a diamond, in each one of us."

186:3 True and False Humility

The Belzer said: "There is a true and a false humility. The falsely humble believes himself and all others to be unworthy. He is worse than the one who believes himself and all others to be worthy. The truly humble man is he who feels sure that he is unworthy, but that everyone else is worthier than himself.

186:5 Dignity and Humility

The Kotzker Rabbi explained: "There are times when the leader must display dignity in order that the rank and file of the people may have the proper respect for him. This seeming pride, however, must be like an outer garment, and not for a moment must it subdue the humility of his inmost heart. We learn this from the verse (Psalm 93:1) 'The Lord reigns; He is clothed in dignity.' From this we learn that pride has its place only on the outside, never within."

212:7 The Alphabet

An ignorant villager, having heard it is a good religious deed to eat and drink on the day before Yom Kippur, drank himself into a stupor. He awoke late at night, too late for Kol Nidrei Services. Not knowing the prayers by heart, he devised a plan. He permeated the letters of the alphabet over and over, beseeching the Almighty to arrange them into the appropriate words of the prayers. The following day he attended the Kotzker synagogue. After Neilah, the Rabbi summoned him to inquire the cause of his absence at Kol Nidrei. The villager confessed his transgression and asked whether his manner of reciting the prayers could be pardoned. The Rabbi responded: "Your prayer was more acceptable than mine because you uttered it with the entire devotion of your heart."

221:1 The More Deserving

Said the Belzer: "Only the man of humility who believes that the other person is more deserving than he, can truly fulfill the commandment: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself' The man of humility will feel unable to disregard his comrade's request when he is in a position to grant it. There is a hint in the alphabet of this. The letters immediately following "your neighbor (רעך) are שפל - humble.

399:6 *Inscribe Us For Life*

When Rosh Hashanah occurred on Shabbat, the Berditschever exclaimed:

“O Lord, You have forbidden us to write on Shabbat, except to save life. Write us down, then, for life, as otherwise even You may not write on Shabbat!”

423:1 *The Hedge*

The Zoltzover Maggid commented upon the words (Deut 5:5) “I stand between God and you.” “A person who thinks of his own importance and of his own ego entertains an idea which stands between the Lord and himself. It places a barrier, a hedge between God and him. The word ‘I’ only God can utter.”

426:10 *Forgetting Our Existence*

Commenting on the “Ethics of the Fathers”: “If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And being for my own self, what am I?” The Besht said: “If at the time of worship, I do not feel any material existence, what foreign thoughts can come to me? But if I think of my own self at that time, what am I, seeing that I do not serve the Lord even for the duration of my devotion?”

457:5 *Study Without Teaching*

Rabbi Zevi Ezekiel Michelson explained the passage in “Pirkei Avot”: “If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I care only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?” He said: “If I am not learning for myself only, but teach others as well, then the pupils who profit by my teaching will be a credit to me; but if I study myself without teaching others, what profit is my learning? And though its futility may not be clear while I live, it will be discovered when I die.”

460:18 *The Palace Treasures*

Said the Besht: “Two persons went into the royal palace to see the king. At the entrance they were informed that the king would not see petitioners on that day. One left immediately, but the other obtained permission to view the beautiful paintings and other valuable objects in the palace.

“In the same fashion, since mortals cannot comprehend God, there are some teachers and philosophers who declare that there is no need to study and to keep the Torah and its commandments: no matter, they affirm, how much a man may study, he cannot know God. This is wrong. Even if we do not behold the King face to face, we may view His treasures in His palace, and enjoy them through observing the prescribed regulations. That is to say, we may study God’s world, God’s Torah, God’s creatures, and thereby at least be near to God’s presence.”

485:10 *Afflictions from Love*

Said the Porissover: “Some Hasidim are so proud of their piety that they cannot believe the Lord sends them hardships in order to awaken in them penitence for their sins. They affirm: “I am a perfect Jew, and I will accept these hardships as ‘afflictions from love.’ But afflictions from love are not sent in vain; they are intended as a means to arouse penitence. When the Riziner was imprisoned, he wept. He was asked: ‘Why do you not accept this affliction as intended in love?’ He answered: ‘When God sends bitterness, we ought to feel it.’”

525:6 The Gerer's Yom Kippur Sermon

"If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if not now, when?"

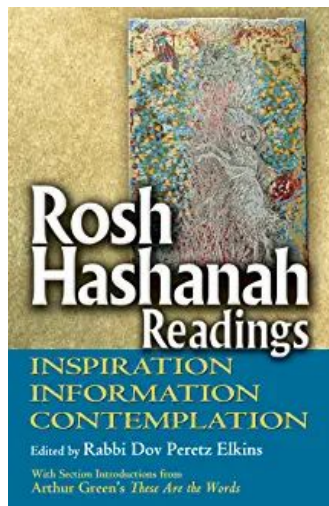
"If I do not perform ym service to the Lord, who will perform it for me? And if not now, at the present moment, when? When will the present moment, in which I have not served God, come back to me? The present moment, which was never here before, will never be here again. Before there was a different moment; later there will be a different moment. And every moment has a different service to perform in it.

"Therefore let us labor in the Torah. The Torah is the property of all Israel, and the laborer in it associates himself with all Israel. Let us work for the whole of Israel, and the whole of Israel will work for us. Someone in Israel has served God in the moment that we have wasted. By being associated with Israel, we have an association with the service done at that moment by one of Israel. But if we are for ourselves, what are we? If we are not associated with Israel, how can we atone for the wasted present moment? The next moment cannot atone for this moment.

"If anyone has committed a serious sin, let him beware thinking of it. For where our thoughts are, there we also are with our oil. Let not your soul sink into the mire of sin; it may not be able to extricate itself and repent.

"And even if a man has committed a minor offense, why should he think of it? Why should he place his soul in the mire? Turn mire hither and thither, and it remains mire. What good can come to Heaven from disturbing your sin in your mind? During the time thus consumed you may perform a good deed which will truly be like presenting God with a pearl.

"Turn away from evil; hold it not in remembrance; do good. If you have sinned much, balance it by doing much good. Resolve today from the depth of your heart and in a joyful mood, to abstain from sin and to do good. Hurry over the prayer: 'For the Sin', and meditate preferably on the prayer: 'And You, O Lord, shall reign.'"



Zochreinu Le-Hayim: To Life! - Rabbi Joseph Braver

What is the most important word in the entire *Mahzor*? I think everyone one would agree that the word is *hayim*. As we recite in every *Amidah* prayer “*Zochreinu L'chaim*... Remember us *L'Chaim*, for life, O Ruler who delights in life.”

But I believe that we are asking for much more than life. We are praying: “God, *Zochreinu L'chaim*, remember us in the year to come with many opportunities to say *L'chaim* - over a cup of wine at a *bris*, bar or bat mitzvah, a child’s wedding, the birth of a grandchild, upon the completion of a tractate of the Talmud, or on the success of an important charitable endeavor.

May it be Your will, O God, to let us shout *L'chaim* at a joyous family *simchah* - may this year truly be a year of joy, of Jewish family celebration and continuity as we lift our voices and cups in Your praise.

Zochreinu L'chaim - remember us in this year and grant us *L'chaim* at *simchas* of Jewish *nachas* in our families.

Jewish courage to Hope for Redemption - Rabbi Irving Greenberg

Where does Israel get the strength - the *chutzpah* - to go on believing in redemption in a world that knows mass hunger and political exile and boat people? How can Jews testify to hope and human value when they have been continuously persecuted, hated, dispelled, destroyed? Out of the memories of the Exodus!

“So that you remember the day you went out of Egypt all the days of your life” (Deuteronomy 16:3). The Jewish tradition takes this biblical ideal literally. The exodus is the most influential historical event of all time because it did not happen once but recurs whenever people open up and enter into the event again.

Footsteps of the Messiah - Rabbi Avraham Isaac Kook

Despite the grave faults of which we are aware in our life in general, and in *Eretz Yisrael* in particular, we must feel that we are being reborn and that we are being created once again as at the beginning of time. Our entire spiritual heritage is presently being absorbed within its source and is reappearing in a new guise, much reduced in material extent but qualitatively very rich and luxuriant and full of vital force. We are called to a new world suffused with the highest light, to an epoch the glory of which will surpass that of all the great ages which have preceded. All of our people believe that we are in the first stage of the Final Redemption. This deep faith is the very secret of its existence; it is the Divine mystery implicit in its historical experience. This ancient tradition about the Redemption bears witness to the spiritual light by which the Jew understands himself and all the events of his history to the last generation, the one that is awaiting the Redemption that is near at hand.

The Amidah: How Do We Find God? - Rabbi Dov Peretz Elkins

Hasidic tale: A child wandered in the woods so often that her father became worried. The father asked: Why do you go into the woods so often? The child replied: To find God. The father reacted, out of his logical thought process: But God is the same everywhere, in the forest, and right here at home!

The little girl countered with a wise and theologically sophisticated idea: "But, father, I am not the same everywhere!"

Not Just Today, but Every Day - Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 153a

Rabbi Eliezer said: "Repent one day before your death." His disciples asked: Does anyone know on what day he will die?" "All the more reason to repent today," answered the Rabbi, "in case you die tomorrow. Thus a person's whole life should be spent in repentance."

Hineini: Send Me - Rabbi Gerald I. Wolpe

Someone once cried to God: Adonai, the world is in such a mess - everything seems wrong. Why don't you send someone to help and change the world?

The voice of Adonai replied: I did send someone. I sent you!

We pray for life - we ask God for a year of health and happiness. We cannot merely ask. Tell the Almighty - tell the world - tell yourself: Send Me! *Hineni, sh'laheni!* Here I am, Send me!

Hineini: Here I am! - Rabbi Diane Cohen

"*Hineni*" means, simply, here I am. But there are so many ways to hear that word. We can hear it as Abraham must have said it when God called him. Abraham, old and tired, had just sent off Hagar and his first son Ishmael. When God calls him to require the offering of Isaac, "*Hineni*" must have sounded exceedingly weary and resigned. The subtext must have been "What does God want of me now?"

Or we might hear it eagerly, as Isaiah spoke it when God asked, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?" How many prophets have been so ready as to reply "*Hineni, sh'laheyeni* -here I am - send me." Or, we may hear it as we are about to hear it, with complete humility and awe at the task set before the speaker.

Weariness at yet another task to be completed at the command of the Creator; the sense of inadequacy that Moses expressed at the Burning Bush; or eagerness to do God's will. Each of us will hear God's voice in our lives. Each of us will respond *Hineni*, for there is nowhere to hide when God calls. The question is, how will we respond? What will God hear?

Le-taken Olam B'malkhut Shaddai - Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

Daily we should take account and ask:

What have I done today to alleviate the anguish, to mitigate the evil, to prevent humiliation?

Let there be a grain of prophet in every human being!

Our concern must be expressed not symbolically, but literally;

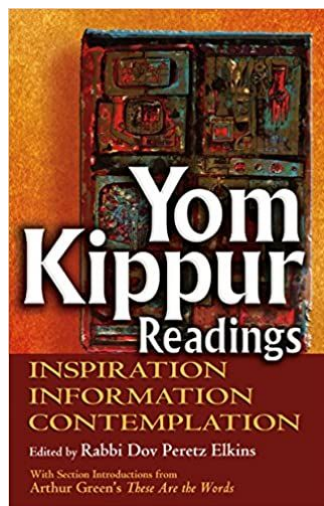
Not only publicly, but also privately;

Not only occasionally, but regularly.

What we need is the involvement of every one of us as individuals.

What we need is restlessness,

A constant awareness of the monstrosity of injustice.

***Gossip: A Chronic Infectious Disease - Hafetz Hayim***

Those who listen to slanderous gossip are just as guilty as the talebearers. Repeated use of the evil tongue is like a silk thread made strong by hundreds of strands. The foul sin of talebearing often results in a chain of transgressions.

Leprosy was regarded as a punishment for slander, because the two resemble each other: they are both slightly noticeable at the outset, and then develop into a chronic, infectious disease. Furthermore, the slanderer separates husband from wife, brother from brother, and friend from friend; he is therefore afflicted with the disease which separates him from society.

One sinful Jew can do harm to all his people, who are like a single body sensitive to the pain felt by any of its parts.

Al Het: The need for Community - Rabbi Dov Peretz Elkins

Recently, a new edition of Alexis de Tocqueville's masterpiece, *Democracy in America*, was re-issued, and a *New York Times* reviewer said this about the mid-nineteenth-century Frenchman's book, which was written after a visit to America

"It is Tocqueville's enduring observations about the American character... that most impress the contemporary reader. Americans' obsession with progress and self-improvement, our materialism, pragmatism and faith in the future: all are intelligently described and analyzed. The resulting portrait is an oddly melancholy one, a portrait of a people both idealistic and selfish, a people both liberated by and isolated by their own individualism.

In Tocqueville's words: "Thus not only does democracy make every man forget his ancestors, but it hides his descendants and separates his contemporaries from him; it throws him back forever upon himself alone and threatens in the end to confine him entirely within the solitude of his own heart"

Over a century ago, Tocqueville captured one of America's most serious problems: rampant individualism. *Al Het* reminds us, in its plural formulation, that we live as a community, in our glory and in our shame, and when we forget that, we lose everything.

Gossip - Based on Yehudah ben Attar, 17th-18th c. Morocco

Eleven of the 44 sins listed in the *Al Het* litany deal with sins of speech. The Torah commands: "Do not be a tale bearer among your people. Do not profit by the blood of your fellow: I am the Lord" (Lev 19:16)

The first part of this verse says "*lo telekh rekhil*," and is widely interpreted to mean: do not be a talebearer. A *rokhel* is a merchant, one presumed to be privy to secrets and gossip. And if you do, it is as if you are bringing about bloodshed, for gossip is as terrible as a sword.

Let's Forgive Each Other - Unlocking the Gates of Forgiveness: A Personal Prayer

Ribbono Shel Olam, Master of the universe - the universe beyond me and the universe within me - I want to learn how to cease punishing myself and torturing myself with unhappy memories that stab me when I wake and when I sleep; with self-accusation that comes back to me brazenly or in disguise; with guilt and reproach that attack me frontally or strike at me from ambush where I cannot detect them. I want to learn who I am, at least as much as I know and understand the processes by which I earn my bread. For in my ignorance of myself the whole tragedy of the world lies exposed. If I could but find my way back to myself, I would learn to make peace with myself, and others who are in my plight could learn to make peace with one another. If I could learn to forgive myself I might learn, and others might learn, to forgive each other. I know how painfully difficult this is. I know that the quest for inner peace is agonizing, but all that is precious is bought with anguish.

Help me to unlock the gates of self-forgiveness, the gates of salvation, even as the prisoner goes forth when the time of punishment is past. Amen.

U'Tzedakah - Adapted from Rabbi Geoffrey J. Haber

A cartman's horse suddenly stumbled and fell dead. To the cartman, this was a catastrophe. He depended on his horse for his livelihood. A crowd gathered, observed the poor man's predicament, shook their heads sympathetically, mumbling, "Too bad, too bad."

A rabbi amongst the observers took out a paper bag, placed ten dollars in it, and said, "Friends, I'm sorry for this man, ten dollars worth. How sorry are you?"

When the crowd followed suit, they moved from observers to doers, from people with feelings to givers of *Tzedakah*.

Together We Can Stand Anything - Rabbi Dannel I. Schwartz

Maybe some of you have seen California's magnificent Sequoias. Did you know that these trees, some of which are as tall as a skyscraper, have roots practically at surface level? A lone sequoia's roots are so shallow that it can hardly stand up to a strong breeze. So how do they grow so tall? They spring up in groves, and their roots intertwine. In other words, they hold each other up—they give each other the strength necessary to withstand the angriest winds. And it is the same with us. Alone we can *kvetch* and *hok me a chynick*... alone we will know pain. But when we are together... we can stand anything.

Hayom - Today - Rabbi Sidney Greenberg

Some of the saddest words too frequently spoken at the end of one's life go something like this: "He worked so hard all his life but never took the time to enjoy any pleasures. Now, when he could enjoy life, nit da kein yoren, he ran out of years." Whenever I hear this melancholy summary I always ask myself, "Why, why did he postpone the enjoyment of life? Why did he wait? Is it possible to enjoy at 60 the pleasures that are available only at 40? Does financial security enable us to retrace our steps and to do now what should have been done then and could only have been done then? Is there any way of rewinding and replaying the film of life?"

There is no future joy which can compensate us for the legitimate joys we needlessly deny ourselves today. God, our prayer book reminds us, is waiting - waiting for us to stop waiting and to proceed with all haste to begin to do now, this day, all the things for which this day was made.

A Communal “Al Chet” For the Sins of Racism

By Yavilah McCoy, 2016

It’s been a rough year for hearts and souls that dared to choose to love human dignity, justice and morality over greed, aggressive self-preservation, and avoidance of contact, mentally, emotionally, or physically, with the pain, suffering and death that have proliferated among the human family surrounding us.

I am awake this year to the particulars of what it has meant for me to travel as a Jewish soul in a black body and traverse the people, practices and culture that constitute Orthodoxy and the particular commitments that I was raised with around observance of the Torah and its mitzvot.... I wrote the following list of Al Chet to point my own and others’ attention to what the eradication of racism needs to look like in both Orthodox and broader liberal Jewish spaces, for our community to truly engage this transformative time and avoid “Tovel v’sheretz biyado,” an immersion in the mikvah of the month of Elul while still holding an unclean object in our hands...

In my observance of this ritual prayer, saying Al Chet in plural form welcomes my attention to the fact that in seeking truth and reconciliation for what has happened between us and our neighbors, we stand as one people commonly indicted and commonly responsible for doing what we must to repair ourselves and the brokenness that occurs in our world when any of our sins against humanity have not been rectified and eradicated.

So this year I am saying “Al Chet”...

For the sins we have committed through conscious and unconscious racial bias.

For the sins we have committed through hardening our hearts to the need for change.

For the sins of colluding with racism both openly and secretly.

For the sins we have committed through uttering racist words.

For the sins we have committed through acts of racial micro-aggression.

For the sins we have committed through the denial of the tzelem elohim (the divine spark) within Black bodies.

For the sins we have committed through segregating Jewish souls in Black bodies from participation and leadership within our institutions.

For the sins we have committed in deceiving others by not teaching our children the worth and value of Black people in Jewish space.

For the sins we have committed in not honoring and protecting the journeys of Black elders and Black children in Jewish space.

For the sins we have committed in exploiting Black people and Black bodies in our business dealings.

For the sins we have committed in not caring for the ways that race and class intersect in our effort to welcome Black people in Jewish space.

For the sins we have committed through turning Black bodies into objects of lust and sexual gratification.

For all these, we seek pardon, forgiveness and atonement

For the sins we have committed through confessing our commitments to ending racism insincerely.

For the sins we have committed that desecrate the divine name by allowing White Supremacy to shape and determine our practice of Judaism.

For the sins of racism that we have committed knowingly and unknowingly that continue to do damage to our siblings, children, families and community.

For the sins of racism we have committed through creating hierarchies of value between our siblings from Europe and those from the Middle East and Africa.

For the sins of racism we have committed through engaging in foolish racial talk and gossip in our places of worship.

For the sins of racism we have committed through haughty demeanor and proud looks.

For the sins of racism we have committed through the glances of our eyes.

For the sins of racism we have committed through passing judgement.

For the sins of racism that we have committed through baseless hatred.

For the sins of racism that we have committed through turning a blind-eye to pain and suffering around us.

For the sins of racism that we have committed by not seeing racism as an evil among us.

For the sins of racism that we have committed by not committing to end it.

For all these, we seek pardon, forgiveness, and atonement