THOUGHTS RE THE HIGH HOLY DAYS

Ever since I began Hebrew School at age nine and began participating in our Junior Congregation, Yom Kippur has been important to me. Even now, the music, songs, ceremonies and especially, the presence of all the other people also so engaged in the services, continue to provide an atmosphere highly conducive to my feeling absorbed in the personal meaning of the holiday.

However, most of the prayers no longer are personally meaningful to me. They are someone else's words and ideas, and the images of God they present no longer make sense to me.

Instead, during many of these prayers and during the Amidah I engage in deep introspection which is primarily influenced by three words: “T*'shuvah”*,*“T'filah” and “*Avodah”, the first two words being part of one of the Yom Kippur prayers. “*T'shuvah”, meaning “penitence”,*to me means realizing I have to make some changes in myself and must engage in doing so. “T'filah” means “*prayer,*” but in this context, for me, it means my deeply examining what it is that I need to change. For example, recognizing the signs that indicate I am about to express myself in a way I should not and stop myself in time. I include the third word, “*Avodah”,*whichmeans “work”, as a symbol to me that I need to actually put these ideas to work in my everyday life.

I also, of course, have other strong feelings throughout the day, such as feeling so grateful and blessed by having a wonderful family, friends and good health, but these deserve their own essay.

Al Sion