Gleanings from The High Holy Day Texts

Torah and Haftarah Readings

Yom Kippur

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Yom Kippur Themes

- Names
  - Aseret Y’mei T’shuvah/Ten Days of Repentance
  - Hayamim Hanora’im/Days of Awe
  - Yom Hakippurim
  - Shabbat Shabbaton—The Sabbath of Sabbaths

- Themes
  - Vidui—Confession
  - T’shuvah—Repentance
  - Avodah—Sacrificial service
On Yom Kippur they read the portion of “After the death” (Leviticus 16), and they read as the haftara the portion of “For thus says the High and Lofty One” (Isaiah 57:14–58:14), which deals with fasting and repentance. And during the afternoon service they read from the portion detailing forbidden sexual relations (Leviticus 18) to convey the severity of these transgressions, so that if anyone transgressed any of these prohibitions he will repent on Yom Kippur. And they read as the haftara the book of Jonah, which mentions the repentance of the people of Nineveh.
Shacharit Torah
Readings

Traditional: Leviticus 16:1-34
Alternate: Deuteronomy 29:9-30:20
Maftir: Numbers 29:7-11
The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they drew too close to the presence of the LORD.

The LORD said to Moses: Tell your brother Aaron that he is not to come at will into the Shrine behind the curtain, in front of the cover that is upon the ark, lest he die; for I appear in the cloud over the cover.

Thus only shall Aaron enter the Shrine: with a bull of the herd for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering.
Leviticus 16:4-6

4. He shall be dressed in a sacral linen tunic, with linen breeches next to his flesh, and be girt with a linen sash, and he shall wear a linen turban. They are sacral vestments; he shall bathe his body in water and then put them on.—

5. And from the Israelite community he shall take two he-goats for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering.

6. Aaron is to offer his own bull of sin offering, to make expiation for himself and for his household.
Aaron shall take the two he-goats and let them stand before the LORD at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting;

and he shall place lots upon the two goats, one marked for the LORD and the other marked for Azazel.

Aaron shall bring forward the goat designated by lot for the LORD, which he is to offer as a sin offering;

while the goat designated by lot for Azazel shall be left standing alive before the LORD, to make expiation with it and to send it off to the wilderness for Azazel.
11. Aaron shall then offer his bull of sin offering, to make expiation for himself and his household. He shall slaughter his bull of sin offering,

12. and he shall take a panful of glowing coals scooped from the altar before the LORD, and two handfuls of finely ground aromatic incense, and bring this behind the curtain.

13. He shall put the incense on the fire before the LORD, so that the cloud from the incense screens the cover that is over [the Ark of] the Pact, lest he die.

14. He shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger over the cover on the east side; and in front of the cover he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times.
15. He shall then slaughter the people’s goat of sin offering, bring its blood behind the curtain, and do with its blood as he has done with the blood of the bull: he shall sprinkle it over the cover and in front of the cover.

16. Thus he shall purge the Shrine of the uncleanness and transgression of the Israelites, whatever their sins; and he shall do the same for the Tent of Meeting, which abides with them in the midst of their uncleanness.
17. When he goes in to make expiation in the Shrine, nobody else shall be in the Tent of Meeting until he comes out. When he has made expiation for himself and his household, and for the whole congregation of Israel,

18. he shall go out to the altar that is before the LORD and purge it: he shall take some of the blood of the bull and of the goat and apply it to each of the horns of the altar;

19. and the rest of the blood he shall sprinkle on it with his finger seven times. Thus he shall cleanse it of the uncleanness of the Israelites and consecrate it.
20. When he has finished purging the Shrine, the Tent of Meeting, and the altar, the live goat shall be brought forward.

21. Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat and confess over it all the iniquities and transgressions of the Israelites, whatever their sins, putting them on the head of the goat; and it shall be sent off to the wilderness through a designated man.

22. Thus the goat shall carry on it all their iniquities to an inaccessible region; and the goat shall be set free in the wilderness.
23. And Aaron shall go into the Tent of Meeting, take off the linen vestments that he put on when he entered the Shrine, and leave them there.

24. He shall bathe his body in water in the holy precinct and put on his vestments; then he shall come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people, making expiation for himself and for the people.
25. The fat of the sin offering he shall turn into smoke on the altar.

26. He who set the Azazel-goat free shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water; after that he may reenter the camp.

27. The bull of sin offering and the goat of sin offering whose blood was brought in to purge the Shrine shall be taken outside the camp; and their hides, flesh, and dung shall be consumed in fire.

28. He who burned them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water; after that he may re-enter the camp.
29. And this shall be to you a law for all time: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall practice self-denial; and you shall do no manner of work, neither the citizen nor the alien who resides among you.

30. For on this day atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you of all your sins; you shall be clean before the LORD.

31. It shall be a sabbath of complete rest for you, and you shall practice self-denial; it is a law for all time.
The priest who has been anointed and ordained to serve as priest in place of his father shall make expiation. He shall put on the linen vestments, the sacral vestments.

He shall purge the innermost Shrine; he shall purge the Tent of Meeting and the altar; and he shall make expiation for the priests and for all the people of the congregation.

This shall be to you a law for all time: to make atonement for the Israelites for all their sins once a year. And Moses did as the LORD had commanded him.
7. On the tenth day of the same seventh month you shall observe a sacred occasion when you shall practice self-denial. You shall do no work.

8. You shall present to the LORD a burnt offering of pleasing odor: one bull of the herd, one ram, seven yearling lambs; see that they are without blemish.

9. The meal offering with them—of choice flour with oil mixed in—shall be: three-tenths of a measure for a bull, two-tenths for the one ram,

10. one-tenth for each of the seven lambs.

11. And there shall be one goat for a sin offering, in addition to the sin offering of expiation and the regular burnt offering with its meal offering, each with its libation.
Alternative Readings

- Reform Movement, Parashat Nitzavim: בההרת בתייימ
14. [The Lord] says: Build up, build up a highway! Clear a road! Remove all obstacles from the road of My people!

15. For thus said He who high aloft forever dwells, whose name is holy: I dwell on high, in holiness; yet with the contrite and the lowly in spirit—reviving the spirits of the lowly, reviving the hearts of the contrite.

16. For I will not always contend, I will not be angry forever: Nay, I who make spirits flag, also create the breath of life.
17. For their sinful greed I was angry; I struck them and turned away in My wrath. Though stubborn, they follow the way of their hearts,

18. I note how they fare and will heal them: I will guide them and mete out solace to them, and to the mourners among them heartening, comforting words: It shall be well, well with the far and the near —said the LORD— and I will heal them.

19. But the wicked are like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters toss up mire and mud.

20. There is no safety —said my God— for the wicked.
1. Cry with full throat, without restraint; raise your voice like a ram’s horn! Declare to My people their transgression, to the House of Jacob their sin.

2. To be sure, they seek Me daily, eager to learn My ways. Like a nation that does what is right, that has not abandoned the laws of its God, they ask Me for the right way, they are eager for the nearness of God:

3. “Why, when we fasted, did You not see? When we starved our bodies, did You pay no heed?” Because on your fast day you see to your business and oppress all your laborers!

4. Because you fast in strife and contention, and you strike with a wicked fist! Your fasting today is not such as to make your voice heard on high.
5. Is such the fast I desire, a day for men to starve their bodies? Is it bowing the head like a bulrush and lying in sackcloth and ashes? Do you call that a fast, a day when the LORD is favorable?

6. No, this is the fast I desire: To unlock fetters of wickedness, and untie the cords of the yoke to let the oppressed go free; to break off every yoke.

7. It is to share your bread with the hungry, and to take the wretched poor into your home; when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to ignore your own kin.

8. Then shall your light burst through like the dawn and your healing spring up quickly; your Vindicator shall march before you, the Presence of the LORD shall be your rear guard.
9. Then, when you call, the LORD will answer; when you cry, He will say: Here I am. If you banish the yoke from your midst, the menacing hand, and evil speech,

10. And you offer your compassion to the hungry and satisfy the famished creature—then shall your light shine in darkness, and your gloom shall be like noonday.

11. The LORD will guide you always; He will slake your thirst in parched places and give strength to your bones. You shall be like a watered garden, like a spring whose waters do not fail.
12. Men from your midst shall rebuild ancient ruins, you shall restore foundations laid long ago. And you shall be called “repairer of fallen walls, restorer of lanes for habitation.”

13. If you refrain from trampling the sabbath, from pursuing your affairs on My holy day; if you call the sabbath “delight,” the LORD’s holy day “honored”; and if you honor it and go not your ways nor look to your affairs, nor strike bargains—

14. Then you can seek the favor of the LORD. I will set you astride the heights of the earth, and let you enjoy the heritage of your father Jacob—for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.
Additional Readings

Shacharit Texts
“Then when you call, Adonai will answer; when you cry, [God] will say hineini, here I am” (Isaiah 58:9).

On Rosh Hashanah, in the story of the binding of Isaac, we read of God’s call to Abraham and Abraham’s response, “Hineini, here I am.” Today, on Yom Kippur, it is we who call and God who responds, “Hineini, here I am.” Through our acts of righteousness, compassion, and repair of the world, we have the potential to bring the Divine Presence into the world.
The Torah envisions a community that is based on a sense of social solidarity and common humanity. We are commanded to open our hands to those who are in need. Isaiah’s words continue to resonate in our own day, as a warning to the prosperous: If you hide the poor and the working class from your sight, you are apt to forget about them. You become self-obsessed and callous in your personal lives. You make political decisions that suit your own interests and ignore their impact on the majority of your fellow citizens. You live in separate enclaves of privilege, rarely interacting with those who live with far less than you have. And that way of life impoverishes us all.

“Do not hide yourself from your own flesh and blood,” says the prophet Isaiah. Do not turn your back on the poor; recognize your kinship with them. For the prophet, we are all one family, united in our humanity; and without one another, our community is not whole.
Minchah Torah Reading

Traditional: Leviticus 18:1-30
Alternate: Leviticus 19:1-17
Maftir: Jonah 1:1-4:11, Micah 7:18-20
Leviticus 18:1-5

1. The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
2. Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: I the LORD am your God.
3. You shall not copy the practices of the land of Egypt where you dwelt, or of the land of Canaan to which I am taking you; nor shall you follow their laws.
4. My rules alone shall you observe, and faithfully follow My laws: I the LORD am your God.
5. You shall keep My laws and My rules, by the pursuit of which man shall live: I am the LORD.
6. None of you shall come near anyone of his own flesh to uncover nakedness: I am the LORD.

7. Your father’s nakedness, that is, the nakedness of your mother, you shall not uncover; she is your mother—you shall not uncover her nakedness.

8. Do not uncover the nakedness of your father’s wife; it is the nakedness of your father.

9. The nakedness of your sister—your father’s daughter or your mother’s, whether born into the household or outside—do not uncover their nakedness.

10. The nakedness of your son’s daughter, or of your daughter’s daughter—do not uncover their nakedness; for their nakedness is yours.
Leviticus 18:11-15

11. The nakedness of your father’s wife’s daughter, who has born into your father’s household—she is your sister; do not uncover her nakedness.

12. Do not uncover the nakedness of your father’s sister; she is your father’s flesh.

13. Do not uncover the nakedness of your mother’s sister; for she is your mother’s flesh.

14. Do not uncover the nakedness of your father’s brother: do not approach his wife; she is your aunt.

15. Do not uncover the nakedness of your daughter-in-law: she is your son’s wife; you shall not uncover her nakedness.
Leviticus 18:16-20

16. Do not uncover the nakedness of your brother’s wife; it is the nakedness of your brother.

17. Do not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter; nor shall you marry her son’s daughter or her daughter’s daughter and uncover her nakedness: they are kindred; it is depravity.

18. Do not marry a woman as a rival to her sister and uncover her nakedness in the other’s lifetime.

19. Do not come near a woman during her period of uncleanness to uncover her nakedness.

20. Do not have carnal relations with your neighbor’s wife and defile yourself with her.
Leviticus 18:21-25

21. Do not allow any of your offspring to be offered up to Molech, and do not profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.
22. Do not lie with a male as one lies with a woman; it is an abhorrence.
23. Do not have carnal relations with any beast and defile yourself thereby; and let no woman lend herself to a beast to mate with it; it is perversion.
24. Do not defile yourselves in any of those ways, for it is by such that the nations that I am casting out before you defiled themselves.
25. Thus the land became defiled; and I called it to account for its iniquity, and the land spewed out its inhabitants.
26. But you must keep My laws and My rules, and you must not do any of those abhorrent things, neither the citizen nor the stranger who resides among you;

27. for all those abhorrent things were done by the people who were in the land before you, and the land became defiled.

28. So let not the land spew you out for defiling it, as it spewed out the nation that came before you.

29. All who do any of those abhorrent things—such persons shall be cut off from their people.

30. You shall keep My charge not to engage in any of the abhorrent practices that were carried on before you, and you shall not defile yourselves through them: I the LORD am your God.
Leviticus 19:1-5

1. The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
2. Speak to the whole Israelite community and say to them: You shall be holy, for I, the LORD your God, am holy.
3. You shall each revere his mother and his father, and keep My sabbaths: I the LORD am your God.
4. Do not turn to idols or make molten gods for yourselves: I the LORD am your God.
5. When you sacrifice an offering of well-being to the LORD, sacrifice it so that it may be accepted on your behalf.
6. It shall be eaten on the day you sacrifice it, or on the day following; but what is left by the third day must be consumed in fire.

7. If it should be eaten on the third day, it is an offensive thing, it will not be acceptable.

8. And he who eats of it shall bear his guilt, for he has profaned what is sacred to the LORD; that person shall be cut off from his kin.
9. When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest.

10. You shall not pick your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I the LORD am your God.

11. You shall not steal; you shall not deal deceitfully or falsely with one another.

12. You shall not swear falsely by My name, profaning the name of your God: I am the LORD.

13. You shall not defraud your fellow. You shall not commit robbery. The wages of a laborer shall not remain with you until morning.
14. You shall not insult the deaf, or place a stumbling block before the blind. You shall fear your God: I am the LORD.

15. You shall not render an unfair decision: do not favor the poor or show deference to the rich; judge your kinsman fairly.

16. Do not deal basely with your countrymen. Do not profit by the blood of your fellow: I am the LORD.

17. You shall not hate your kinsfolk in your heart. Reprove your kinsman but incur no guilt because of him.

18. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your countrymen. Love your fellow as yourself: I am the LORD.
Additional Readings

Minchah Texts
Rabban Shimon Ben Gamliel said: There were no days as joyous for the Jewish people as the fifteenth of Av and as Yom Kippur, as on them the daughters of Jerusalem would go out in white clothes, which each woman borrowed from another. Why were they borrowed? They did this so as not to embarrass one who did not have her own white garments. All the garments that the women borrowed require immersion, as those who previously wore them might have been ritually impure.
Myjewishlearning.com, “Prohibited Sexual Relationships"

The passage condemns adultery and other immoralities. Following the announcement of forgiveness by the High Priest, at the conclusion of the Avodah service in the Temple, the maidens danced in the vineyards and betrothals were announced. The Torah reading of Leviticus was likely selected for Yom Kippur afternoon to impress upon the young people the need to maintain Israel’s high standard of family morality. Impurity in marriage, incestuous promiscuity among near relations, and other abominations were condemned and regarded as grave sins.

https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/prohibited-sexual-relationships/
This passage focuses on permitted and prohibited sexual unions, including the definition of incest. In pre-modern societies, privacy in the family rarely existed. A public recitation of the rules that define and protect the family was deemed important on this day—when the entire community gathered for prayer and reflection. For our generation, this recitation takes on additional meaning as an opportunity to think about the rules that should govern our sexual lives...

Aside from this verse (Lev. 18:22) and its parallel in Leviticus 20:13, the Bible mentions same-sex relationships only in the context of rape (Genesis 19:5, Judges 19:22) and with regard to what seems to be male prostitution (Deut. 23:18-19). In that vein, some commentators, noting that this verse’s prohibition follows the verse excoriating the worship of Molech, speculate that the only homosexual acts prohibited here are those connected to sacred worship...Sex with animals, mentioned in the next verse, likewise might have been part of ancient fertility rites, though obviously it is prohibited for other reasons as well.