



A GUIDE TO ROSH HASHANAH PRAYERS

Welcome to Temple Beth-El! Whether this is your first time with us or you're a Beth-El veteran, we are so glad you're here, and we hope you find today's worship uplifting.

Although the prayers recited on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are the lengthiest and most intricate of the year, their basic form follows the structure of the services said every day of the Jewish year.

Below you can find a schematic overview of the prayers (Adapted from a guide prepared by Rabbi Ethan Tucker) that will help you keep your place throughout the service and sensitize you to the rhythms of this liturgically complex day.

Any language is appropriate for prayer, which is why we will be moving between Hebrew prayers and English readings and even contemporary English music. Therefore, feel free to use the translations in your *Mahzor* (the High Holiday prayerbook), or the prayers in your own heart.

Shanah Tovah U'Metukah (May you have a happy and sweet New Year)!

P'sukei d'Zimra—Psalms of Praise

Starting on page 47, we begin P'sukei d'Zimra, a collection of psalms and verses intended to prepare us for the more central parts of the service we will encounter later. This is a time when you can feel free to read along, reciting the psalms and verses silently, either in their entirety or by focusing more intently on selections from this section. It is also a time just to collect our thoughts and meditate on the themes of Rosh Hashanah. The highlights of this section are: An opening blessing: Barukh She'amar (47); Psalm 145, "Ashrei," so esteemed by our sages that they declared that anyone who would recite this psalm three times daily would be destined for the world to come; A crescendo of five psalms beginning and ending with "Halleluyah" as we reach the end of the biblical book of Psalms; The song sung by the children of Israel as they crossed the Red Sea; A concluding blessing: Yishtabach.

On page 69, just before the end of this section, the wording and the music intensify in preparation for the end of this section. The word "Hamelekh," is highlighted on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in order to underscore our keen awareness of God's sovereignty at this time of year. The Kaddish once again marks the end of this section.

Sh'ma and its Blessings (71-80)

This section is anchored around the Sh'ma, the three paragraphs from the Torah that are recited every morning and evening. The Sh'ma is an affirmation of God's sovereignty, of the Jewish obligation to perform mitzvot and of our gratitude for being redeemed from slavery.

This section is made up of the following components: Barekhu: The call to prayer; The two blessings preceding the Sh'ma, touching on the themes of God's creation of light in the world and the giving of the Torah and our obligation to study it; The three paragraphs of the Sh'ma; The blessing following the Sh'ma, focusing on our redemption from slavery.

We rise towards the end of this last blessing in preparation for the Amidah, the silent prayer said while standing. We move directly from the blessing of redemption into the Amidah.

The Morning Amidah (81-91)

We recite the beginning of the Amidah together through page 86, and then continue silently from pages 88-91.

The Amidah itself is made up of 7 blessings. The first three and last three are common to all Amidot of the year, while the middle blessing focuses on this day of Rosh Hashanah.

Avinu Malkeinu (92-93)

We continue with *Avinu Malkeinu*, a series of requests said every morning and evening during the days spanning Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur, and then continue with the full *Kaddish* on 94.

Torah Service

As on all special days in the Jewish calendar, there are readings on Rosh Hashanah from the Torah. Given the unique nature of our service, we will instead engage in a group study of the readings rather than the traditional chanting. The traditional readings for Rosh Hashanah are as follows:

First day— How Sarah was remembered and gave birth to Isaac, Abraham's difficult task of sending out Ishmael and God's subsequent mercy on the expelled child and his mother Hagar.

Second day— The account of the binding of Isaac and God's last minute stay of the order to Abraham to sacrifice his son.

Prayers for healing and other prayers will also be offered during the Torah service.

Teki'at ha-Shofar—The Sounding of the Shofar

The central mitzvah of Rosh Hashanah is to hear the sounding of the shofar, which calls us to repentance, reminds us of God's revelation on Mount Sinai, and promises hope of future redemption. After reading some opening passages, we continue with the sounding of the shofar. The day's blasts are organized as follows:

- 30 blasts are sounded during the Torah Service.
- 30 blasts, in groups of 10 each, are sounded at the conclusion of each of the three central blessings of the Musaf Amidah.
- 40 blasts are sounded in the middle of the full Kaddish that concludes Musaf.

Whenever we sound the shofar, we always sound three types of blasts in equal numbers, each of which preceded and followed by a teki'ah, a long, clear blast. First, we sound shevarim-teruah, a double note that combines a wailing sound (shevarim) with a sharp, piercing blast (teruah). Second, we sound the shevarim alone, and third, the teruah alone. Since all of the day's blasts are connected, we try to focus on the continuity of the prayers from this point until the conclusion of the Kaddish that follows the Musaf Amidah. Following this first set of 30 blasts and the recitation of Ashrei, we would normally return the Torah scrolls to the ark.

The Musaf Amidah (125-174)

After a brief prayer by the leader and Kaddish, we continue with the Musaf Amidah, the silent prayer recited while standing, on pages 125-139. Musaf is the service that corresponds to the additional sacrifice that would have been offered in the Temple on a special day like Rosh Hashanah. On Rosh Hashanah, this Amidah contains 9 blessings and is the longest Amidah of the year. As always, the first 3 and last 3 are the same as in every Amidah on every day of the year. The 3 middle blessings each feature at least 10 verses that allude to a particular theme of the day: 3 from the Torah, 3 from the Writings, 3 from the Prophets, and a concluding verse from the Torah:

- Malkhuyot: God's sovereignty (this blessing also includes a focus on the sanctity of the day of Rosh Hashanah and its sacrificial offering.
- Zikhronot: God's memory.
- Shofarot: The shofar, as symbol of revelation, joy, and the call to serve God.

As this is a long Amidah, people will finish at different times, so please wait quietly for others to conclude.

The leader's repetition of the Amidah begins on 141. The repetition has four sections:

- The build-up to kedushah, culminating in "Un'taneh Tokef" on 143, the central liturgical poem of Musaf. This prayer attempts to convey God's great majesty on this day and reflects on how much is unknown to us about the year ahead, even as it asserts that the central activities of repentance, prayer and the pursuit of justice and righteousness always remain within our control.

- Kedushah on 145-151, where we once again stand and proclaim God's holiness as the angels are said to do in heaven. This is followed by the conclusion of the third blessing and the recitation of the day's sacrificial order.
- The three central themes of Malkhuyot, Zikhronot, and Shofarot. The first theme of Malkhuyot (sovereignty) begins in earnest with Aleinu on 154, a prayer said three times every day but originally composed for this service of Rosh Hashanah. When we reach the phrase "Va'anakhnu kor'im" (We bend the knee), the leaders, along with any others who wish to participate, fall to their knees and bend their bodies forward in a strikingly physical acknowledgement of God's sovereignty. Each of the three sections is followed by 10 blasts of the shofar, for which we rise.
- The final three final blessings. This section includes the priestly blessing, which at one time was offered by the *Kohanim*, the priests who used to serve in the Temple. (355-357)

Like all *Amidot*, the *Musaf Amidah* is followed by the full *Kaddish*. The service then ends with concluding prayers and songs.



Connecting people with Judaism.
 Nurturing sacred community.
 Inspiring tikkun olam.