



## **A GUIDE TO YOM KIPPUR 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.

G'mar Hatimah Tovah (May you be inscribed for life)!

### **Kol Nidrei/Yom Kippur Arvit—Evening Service**

This service has four main components:

- The Kol Nidrei formula and the Shehechyanu blessing. (204-205)
- The recitation of the Sh'ma and its blessings. (207-212)
- The Amidah, the silent prayer said while standing. (213-221)
- Selichot, the special prayers for forgiveness recited on Yom Kippur. (227-249)

Yom Kippur is in many senses a timeless day, a full 25-hour period during which we try to use every moment to prod ourselves to renewal and repentance. This timelessness begins as we wear a tallit (prayer shawl) during the evening service, the only night of the year when we do so.

The leader begins by walking the Torah scroll around the room while chanting the verse on the cover of the Yom Kippur supplement packet. The Kol Nidrei formula is then recited three times. Even before we begin the process of repentance, we acknowledge that in the coming year we will make commitments to God that we will be unable to keep. We ask for forgiveness in advance for all of our shortcomings that are sure to follow us even as we begin the year anew.

We continue on page 207 with Barekhu, the call to prayer that always precedes the Sh'ma. The Sh'ma consists of three paragraphs taken from various parts of the Torah. It is recited twice daily, in the morning and in the evening. In the evening, it is both preceded and followed by two

blessings that highlight the themes of the coming darkness, the gift of the Torah and our obligation to study it, and God’s redemption of the Jewish people from slavery. The second line on 208 is normally recited silently, as it is an interpolation into the text of the Sh’ma found in the Torah, reportedly said by the angels when they recite the Sh’ma. As part of our aspiration towards an elevated status on Yom Kippur, on this night, we too recite this line aloud.

Kaddish divides the Sh’ma from the Amidah, which we recite silently from pages 213 through 221. The Amidah consists of 7 blessings. The first three and last three are the same as those in every Amidah throughout the year, while the middle blessing focuses on this day of Yom Kippur. The Amidah concludes with the Vidui, the confessional, as we attempt to enumerate the gamut of our failings through two alphabetical acrostics: Ashamnu and Al Cheit. It is traditional to beat one’s chest for each word of the first prayer and for each recitation of the word “chatanu” (we have sinned) in the second.

The core of the evening service is the Selichot, the prayers for forgiveness, which themselves have several components:

- Introductory verses, poems and readings.
- Four recitations of the Thirteen Attributes of God, revealed to Israel by God as a means for requesting forgiveness, preceded and followed by poems and readings.
- Verses relating to God’s remembrance of Israel and forgiveness, and pleas for God to hear our voice.
- Vidui, the confessional, now recited publicly after we recited it privately in the Amidah. This second recitation reflects our awareness that all failures represent communal shortcomings as well as individual ones. (235-238)
- Concluding prayers for mercy and forgiveness, as well as pleas for a response from God. (239-242)

Much of the Selichot section is recited while standing. In general, we stand more on Yom Kippur than during other days of the year, as a reflection of our higher spiritual plane. We are naturally at a higher state of attention when we stand, and we are told that the angels in heaven never sit.

After Selichot, we recite Avinu Malkeinu (on Shabbat, Avinu Malkeinu is omitted), and continue on page 245 with the full Kaddish. This is followed by Aleinu, Psalm 27 (said throughout the penitential period from Elul through Sukkot), and the mourners’ Kaddish. We conclude with Yigdal on page 250.

### **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 (252-257; 216-221)**

We recite the beginning of the Amidah together through page 257, and then continue silently from pages 216-221.

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 Yom Kippur. The Amidah culminates on Yom Kippur with a confessional prayer known as the *Vidui*.

### **Torah Reading (274-298)**

As on all special days in the Jewish calendar, there are readings on Yom Kippur 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.

- In the Torah reading, we read about the special service that was conducted on Yom Kippur in the ancient Holy Temple. The highlights of the service were the High Priest’s confession on behalf of the people Israel, his entry into the Holy of Holies amid a cloud of incense, the selection of a goat for God, and the dispatch of the scapegoat into the wilderness (278-281).
  - First Aliyah: After the demise of Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's two eldest sons, God instructed Aaron on the proper procedure for entering the Holy of Holies, once annually on Yom Kippur. On this day, the High Priest must don pristine white garments, and immerse in a mikvah (ritual pool). The High Priest's personal sacrifice, a bullock, was brought forth, and upon it he confessed, atoning for sins which he may have committed, as well as the sins of his household.
  - Second Aliyah: Two goats were then brought. Upon them the High Priest randomly placed two lots, one marked "For God," and the other "For Azazel." The one earmarked "for God" was designated as a sin-offering, while the other was prepared to be sent to "Azazel" (the wilderness). Aaron then confessed once

again over his bullock, this time for the sins of the priestly tribe of Levi, and offered the bullock as a sin-offering.

- Third Aliyah: The High Priest then entered the Holy of Holies chamber of the Holy Temple amid a cloud of burning incense. The bloods of the sacrificed bullock and goat were also sprinkled in the Holy of Holies as well as in the adjoining Holy chamber.
- Fourth Aliyah: The High Priest concluded his service in the sanctuary of the Holy Temple. He then confessed over the Azazel Goat for the sins committed by all of Israel. This goat, which carried on its shoulders the sins of an entire nation, was then dispatched to the desert. Aaron then donned his regular golden High Priest vestments, and offered two rams as burnt-sacrifices.
- Fifth Aliyah: The individual who took the Azazel Goat to the wilderness needed to purify himself and his garments before returning to the Holy Temple. The same applied to those who burned the sin-offerings outside the Temple confines. The Torah then establishes an "eternal statute": on the tenth day of the seventh month (Yom Kippur) we must practice self-denial and abstain from work. For on this day God atones for us, purifying us from all our sins.
- Sixth Aliyah: Yom Kippur is dubbed the "Shabbat of Shabbats," the once-a-year opportunity to atone for all our sins.
- Note: The same reading is read if Yom Kippur falls on Shabbat, however it is then divided into seven aliyot (sections) instead of six.

Prayers for healing and other prayers will also be offered during the Torah service. We will conclude with the recitation of *Ashrei*, we return the Torah scrolls to the ark.

### **Yizkor—Memorial Service (290-293)**

The practice of recalling those no longer with us on Yom Kippur is an old one, and it invokes several themes of the day: our awareness of our mortality, our plea that God hear our prayers for the merit of those who preceded us, and the recognition that even those already departed are in need of God's atonement and forgiveness. Some whose parents are still alive have the custom of leaving until the end of Yizkor. After introductory verses, we continue silently with personal remembrances. The leader continues aloud with additional readings, followed by Psalm 23 and Mourners' Kaddish.

### **The Musaf Amidah (300-359)**

After a brief prayer by the leader and *Kaddish*, we continue with the *Musaf Amidah*, the silent prayer recited while standing, on pages 300- 311. *Musaf* is the service that corresponds to the additional sacrifice that would have been offered in the Temple on a special day like Yom Kippur.

On Yom Kippur, this *Amidah* contains 7 blessings. The first 3 and last 3 are the same as in every *Amidah* on every day of the year. The middle blessing, which addresses the holiness of Yom Kippur and of Shabbat, spans the last paragraph on 302 through page 305. At the conclusion of

the Amidah is a special section recited on Yom Kippur known as the *Viddui*, a confessional prayer in which we list all our moral and religious failings from the past year. We confess these sins in the hope that, properly penitent this Yom Kippur, God will absolve us of them. The *Viddui* begins at the bottom of page 307 and continues through page 310. It is recited while standing, and it is customary to softly strike at our chest with a closed fist at the mention of each sin, to show our contrition.

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

The leader will offer her own private prayer, seeking God's guidance in leading us in worship. She will then begin the leader's repetition of the Amidah on 313. The repetition has four sections:

- The build-up to *kedushah*, including the *U'netaneh Tokef* poem (315-316).
- *Kedushah* on 317-323, where we 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. (323)
- The blessing for Yom Kippur. This blessing has three sub-sections:
  - The *Avodah*. A description of the service of the High Priest on Yom Kippur in the ancient Holy Temple. This section begins in earnest with *Aleinu* on 325, a prayer said three times every day but originally composed for 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. The leader then continues with the descriptions of the priestly service. Periodically, these descriptions are broken up as the congregation exclaims "*Barukh Shem Kevod Malkhuto L'olam va-ed*" ("Praised is the name of the One whose glorious sovereignty will be forever and ever"). (326-336).
  - The Martyrology. A description of periods in Jewish history characterized by martyrdom and destruction. Periodically, these descriptions are broken up with the refrain "*Eilleh Ezk'rah*" ("These I recall") (337-344)
  - The *Viddui*. A public confessional prayer. The *Viddui* begins on page 346 and continues through page 353. It is recited while standing, and it is customary to softly strike at our chest with a closed fist at the mention of each sin, to show our contrition.
- 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.

### **Yom Kippur Minhah—Afternoon Service**

This service has three main components:

- The reading of the Torah and the Haftarah. Three people are called to the Torah as we read from the Torah's code of sexual conduct. This choice of reading is quite ancient, though commentators are divided over the reason. It is interesting to note that this portion almost immediately follows the account of the High Priest on Yom Kippur that

we read this morning, perhaps suggesting that atonement requires that we reform even our most private actions, ones that may only be known to God. The Haftarah consists of the book of Jonah and a few verses from Micah. This account of the repentance of the people of the non-Jewish city of Nineveh shows how the day's themes of sin and forgiveness are truly universal. (363-371)

- The silent Amidah for Minhah, said silently while standing. Like other Amidot of Yom Kippur, this one contains 7 blessings, after which there is a Vidui, a confessional. (213-221)
- The repetition of the Amidah (377-388), including kedushah on and the public confessional. The Amidah is followed by the full Kaddish. (390)

### **Yom Kippur Ne'ilah—Closing Service**

Ne'ilah means “locking” and is recited late in the day, about the time that the gates to the Temple would be locked for the night. This memory metaphorically evokes the closing of the heavenly gates to our prayers as Yom Kippur draws to a close. Ne'ilah is our last chance to focus intently on our prayers and commitments to improve ourselves before the start of a new year of opportunity. Many of the melodies are distinctive, composed for this service alone. Ne'ilah begins with opening prayers on 392-397 and continues with the silent Amidah from 398-406. In keeping with the fact that Yom Kippur is ending, we no longer speak of being inscribed, but rather of being sealed for life. The lengthier Vidui, or confessional, that we have been reciting all day is now abridged and replaced by distinctive Ne'ilah paragraphs. These passages speak of God's desperation for us to repent above all else and call upon God to forgive us so that we can be partners in improving the world.

After an introductory song on 410, we continue with the repetition of the Amidah on 459. The ark remains open for the duration of the repetition, and all who are able to stand should do so. Those too weak to remain standing should of course sit, but should make an effort to stand for the kedushah and the recitation of the Thirteen Attributes of God.

The repetition can be divided into five parts:

- The opening two blessings of the Amidah. (408-409)
- The kedushah on 411-412, followed by the conclusion of the third and the beginning of the fourth blessing of the Amidah. (412-413)
- Seven recitations of the Thirteen Attributes of God, revealed to Israel by God as a means for requesting forgiveness, preceded and followed by poems and readings. This almost frantic use of this passage reflects the urgency of the hour and our hopes for forgiveness even up until the last minute of Yom Kippur.
- Vidui, the confessional, recited publicly in its abridged form for Ne'ilah, followed by the distinctive paragraphs for Ne'ilah and the end of the fourth blessing. (421-422)
- The remainder of the repetition. (423-424)

After the Amidah, Avinu Malkeinu is recited a final time on 425-426 (even on Shabbat, when we otherwise skip Avinu Malkeinu). Here too we modify our language to speak of being sealed for life.

### **Arvit/Havdalah—Evening Service/ End of Yom Kippur**

This short service features the call to prayer, Berekhu on 445, the three paragraphs of the Sh'ma and the four blessings that precede and follow it. We recite the weekday Amidah silently, omitting the special additions we have included for the past 10 days (but adding a paragraph for the end of a holiday). After full Kaddish, we conclude with Aleinu, Psalm 27, and mourners' Kaddish.

Immediately following the conclusion of Yom Kippur, we recite Havdallah (459), the prayer that formally marks our separation from the sanctity of Yom Kippur and our release from the prohibitions of the day. It is also traditional to recite the monthly blessing over the renewed moon outdoors. This blessing highlights our awareness of the cycles always present in God's world and is rich in the symbolism of renewal that is especially poignant as we attempt to begin a new year of good deeds and righteousness.

After Havdallah, we continue on 429, with the responsive recitation of several verses indicating our acceptance of God's sovereignty and the sounding of the Shofar. We conclude Ne'ilah by singing together with hope that next year we may be in a rebuilt Jerusalem.

Temple Beth-El's purpose is to lead people  
into growing relationships with Jewish community, wisdom, and practice  
that help them thrive intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually,  
and that inspire them to build a more compassionate, just, and peaceful world.