



2024 HIGH HOLIDAY TOOL KIT

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TESHUVA

INTRODUCTION

On Rosh Hashanah, we do not welcome the new year with celebration alone but also through introspection. We reflect on how we have acted in the past year and resolve to do better and not make the same mistakes we made in the past. This process of repentance in Hebrew is called *Teshuva*. This literally means Returning. This could be interpreted as returning to God or perhaps returning to the person we are really meant to be. But how does one practically go about this process of Teshuva? And can we truly restore ourselves to the same person who we were before we sinned?

OVERARCHING DISCUSSION POINTS

- Why do you think it is important to do Teshuva?
- What is the best way to do Teshuva?
- Can we really make up for the sins we have committed in the past?

TEXT STUDY

Rabbi Moshe Ben Maimon (known as the Rambam or Maimonides) in his Jewish legal work The Mishne Torah spells out for us two very different approaches on how to practically go about the process of Teshuva.

TEXT 1

Rambam's first way of doing Teshuva (Laws of Repentance Chapter 1, Law 1)

If a person transgresses any of the mitzvot of the Torah, whether a positive command or a negative command and whether willingly or inadvertently, when he repents, and returns from his sin, he must confess before God. He references the Torah by recalling:

"If a man or a woman commit any of the sins of man... they must confess the sin that they committed." [Numbers 5:6-7](#)

This refers to a verbal confession. This confession is a positive command. So, how does one confess? He directs the reader on what to say:

"I implore You, God, I sinned, I transgressed, I committed sin before You by doing the following. Behold, I regret and am embarrassed for my deeds. I promise never to repeat this act again." [Laws of Teshuva, 1:1](#)

These are the essential elements of the confessional prayer. Whoever confesses profusely and elaborates on these matters is worthy of praise.

Text 1 Discussion points:

- According to this law how does one carry out Teshuva?
- What do you think is difficult about doing this?
- How do you think a person changes when carrying out this process?

FUN FACT

Born in Cordoba Spain in 1138. He grew up to be a major leader of the Sefardi Jewish community. He wrote a summary of the Talmud (Mishna Torah) and a comprehensive philosophical work called The Guide to the Perplexed. He is renowned by nearly all Jewish communities as being one of the greatest legal and philosophical Jewish scholar.

TEXT 2**Rambam's second way of doing Teshuva (Laws of Repentance Chapter 2, Law 2)**

Who has reached complete Teshuva? A person who confronts the same situation in which that person sinned when he/she has the potential to commit the sin again, and, nevertheless, abstains and does not commit it because of Teshuva alone and not because of fear or a lack of strength.

Say two people who once engaged in illicit sexual relations with one another want to repent and reach complete Teshuva. If, after repenting, they were able to meet under the same conditions as before (in love, in privacy, in the same country, and of sound body and mind) and managed to abstain from repeating the same sin, they would be considered as having performed a complete Baal-Teshuva.

Discussion Points:

- According to this law what is the true test of carrying out Teshuva?
- What do you think is difficult about this?
- What is the difference between this process and the Teshuva described in the previous source?
- Which do you think is a more genuine process of Teshuva?

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

- How do you think Rambam's laws are relevant to us today?
- Is Teshuva a state of mind or something you practically need to do?
- Do you find the High Holidays a good time to reflect on our lives?
- The prophets of the Bible suggest that the correct response to tragedy is Teshuva.
 - Do you think we, as the Jewish people, need to do Teshuva after the events of October 7?
 - How do you think we, as the Jewish people, need to do Teshuva?

FUN FACT

Baal-Teshuva literally means the person/owner who has completed the process of Teshuva

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

INTRODUCTION

Over the High Holidays, one of the aspects that comes most into focus is our relationship with God. On Rosh Hashanah, we crown God as the King of the Universe, and on Yom Kippur, the liturgy is full of crying out to God for forgiveness. But do we stop to think about God and how we relate to Her/Him? This program will give us an opportunity to think about our relationship with God and also give us an opportunity to think about different models of how to understand God.

ACTIVITY 1

The God Interview

Split up into pairs and answer the following questions. Your partner should be someone you feel comfortable to talking to about your relationship with God.

- Is there a God? How do you picture God?
- Do you talk to God?
- Have you ever felt God talking to you, or have you ever felt God's presence?
- What are some of the doubts you have about God?
- Is God good? How can God permit evil in the world?
- Is there anything that makes you angry about God?
- Has God ever answered your prayers?
- Why don't you think or talk about God more than you do?
- Does God still act in the world as described in the Bible?
- What is a miracle? Do you believe in miracles?
- Do you believe in life after death?
- Do you believe God punishes the sinners and rewards the righteous?
- Do you think the Jewish people have been chosen by God for something special?
- If you were God, what would you do differently?
- Do you pray to God more when you are sick or in trouble? Do you think more about God when someone you love is in trouble or in danger?
- Has October 7 and its aftermath made you think about God differently? Do you feel closer or further away from God?
- Do you thank God for the good things in your life?

5 Models of God

Divide the participants into 5 groups. Have the group read a different belief in God. Have them discuss their belief and present it in a skit for the entire group.

- **The Puppet Master**

- God pulls strings. God controls the world and sets everyone's future. God carries out miracles.

- **The Watchmaker**

- A watchmaker makes a watch. The watchmaker puts the watch together, winds it up and then leaves it running. God works in the same way. God created the world, and then leaves it running.

- **The Big Brother**

- God takes notes on what we do. Later we will get rewarded or punished for what we have done.

- **Jiminy Cricket**

- God is the small voice that whispers in our ear, that feels what we are doing is right or wrong. God is our conscience, or God works through our conscience.

- **The Ruler of Nature**

- God is all the laws of nature, scientific truths, all the truths about humans, life, the world, the universe etc. God is order and gives order.

After the presentations, discuss as a group which model they relate to the most / least and why? Are there any other models for belief in God?

CONCLUSION

Read the following quotes. Which do you relate to the most?

"And God said to Moshe, I am that I am...." Shemot 33:17

"Free will is bestowed on every human being." Maimonides

"Modern people will no longer accept the idea of a supernatural God." Mordecai Kaplan

"Human action is truly significant only when it takes place in accordance with God's will." Eugene Borowitz

"God is in search of man..." Abraham Joshua Heschel

SIMANIM ROSH HASHANAH SEDER

INTRODUCTION

There is a Kabbalistic idea that through eating certain foods with the correct intentions, we can make a difference to the world. Throughout the Jewish world, different communities have eaten certain foods connected with an intention so that the coming will be blessed with goodness. Often, the intentions are a play on the Hebrew words for the type of food. You can carry out your own Rosh Hashanah Seder eating the food and reciting the intentions.

Dates = תמר (Tamar) --- תם (Tam) = to cease to exist

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְפָּנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שְׁיִתְמוּ אוֹיְבֵינוּ וְשׂוֹנְאֵינוּ וְכָל־מִבְקְשֵׁי רָעָתֵנוּ

May it be Your will, ADONAI our G-d and the G-d of our fathers, that our enemies will cease to exist, and our haters and those who wish evil upon us.

Pomegranate = רמון

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְפָּנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שְׁנִהֲיֶה מְלֵאִים מִצְוֹת כְּרָמוֹן

May it be Your will, ADONAI our G-d and the G-d of our fathers, that we be filled with mitzvot like a pomegranate [is filled with seeds].

Apple and Honey – תפוח בדבש

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְפָּנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שְׁתַּחַדֵּשׁ עָלֵינוּ שָׁנָה טוֹבָה וּמְתוּקָה

May it be Your will, Lord our G-d and the G-d of our fathers, that You renew for us a year good and sweet year.

Head of a Fish or Sheep (You can use jelly fish)

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְפָּנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שְׁנִהֲיֶה לְרֹאשׁ וְלֹא לְזָנָב

May it be Your will, Adonai our G-d and the G-d of our fathers, that we be a head and not a tail.

Invite participants to think of their own ideas for foods that can be connected to a blessing for the New Year.

DISCUSSION

What blessings do the Jewish people need, especially this year?

AKEIDAT YITZCHAK

This is a text-based session in which one can read the text together as a group and discuss. Or, the group can split into chavrutot, study partners, and read through the text individually.

INTRODUCTION

The Torah reading on the second day of Rosh Hashanah tells one of the most difficult stories in the whole Bible: *Akeidat Yitzchak* or the Binding of Issac. We read it on Rosh Hashanah because it is connected to the sounding of the Shofar and deals with the extreme level of devotion that Avraham demonstrated towards God. That being said, it is still one of the most challenging stories to understand.

As background to the story, one must take a few things into consideration. Firstly, Avraham was chosen by God because he was described as an *Ivri*, someone who was set apart from the rest of society. Unlike the other peoples of ancient Mesopotamia, Avraham was a monotheist; he believed in the wholeness and goodness of the one God. The people of Avraham's time believed in multiple gods who were in conflict with each other. In order to appease these violent gods, these ancient people took part in barbaric rituals such as child sacrifices. Avraham and Sarah are our ancestors because they rejected such beliefs and practices.

Secondly, the promise of the covenant made by God to Avraham is that he will be the father of a great nation living in the Land of Israel. Avraham and Sarah's only child, Yitzchak, who was born to them in old age, will be the father of this great nation.

It is at this point in the narrative of Avraham's life that we encounter the story of the Binding of Issac. Let's take a deep dive into the text of the story, and perhaps we will end up with more questions than answers.

THE TEXT

Bereshit (Genesis) Chapter 22

Some time afterward, God put Avraham to the test, saying to him, "Avraham." He answered, "Here I am," and God continued, "Take your son, your favored one, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the heights that I will point out to you."

Discussion Questions

- Why does God use 4 different ways to describe Isaac?
- What do you find surprising about this request by God?
- What do you think Avraham's response should have been to this request?

So early next morning, Avraham saddled his donkey and took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. He split the wood for the burnt offering, and he set out for the place of which God had told him.

Discussion Question

- What do you find surprising about Avraham's response?

On the third day, Avraham looked up and saw the place from afar. Then Avraham said to his servants, "You stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go up there; we will worship, and we will return to you."

Discussion Questions

- Why do you think Avraham says, "We will return to you"?
- Do you think that Avraham believes he will sacrifice Yitzchak?

Avraham took the wood for the burnt offering and put it on his son Isaac. He himself took the firestone and the knife, and the two walked off together. Then Isaac said to his father Avraham, "Father!" And he answered, "Yes, my son." And he said, "Here are the firestone and the wood, but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?" And Avraham said, "It is God who will see to the sheep for this burnt offering, my son." And the two of them walked on together.

Discussion Question

- Why do you think Avraham does not tell Yitzchak what God has asked him to do?

They arrived at the place of which God had told him. Avraham built an altar there; he laid out the wood; he bound his son Isaac; he laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. And Avraham picked up the knife to slay his son.

Discussion Questions

- At this stage of the story, do you think Avraham was prepared to kill his son?
- What does this tell you about the faith that Avraham has in God?

Then a messenger of God called to him from heaven: "Avraham! Avraham!" And he answered, "Here I am." "Do not raise your hand against the boy, or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God since you have not withheld your son, your favored one, from Me."

Discussion Questions

- Who do you think was testing who in this story?
- Why do you think God sent a messenger to stop Avraham and did not do it Himself?

When Abraham looked up, his eye fell upon a ram, caught in the thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering in place of his son. And Abraham named that site *Adonai-yireh*, whence the present saying, "On the mount of God there is vision." The messenger of God called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, "By Myself I swear, God declares: Because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your favored one, I will bestow My blessing upon you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven and the sands on the seashore; and your descendants shall seize the gates of their foes. All the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your descendants, because you have obeyed My command."

Discussion Questions:

- According to the messenger why is Avraham blessed?
- Do you think he is deserving of this blessing?
- Do you think Avraham did the right thing?

Abraham then returned to his servants, and they departed together for Beer-sheba; and Abraham stayed in Beer-sheba. Some time later, Abraham was told, "Milcah too has borne sons to your brother Nahor: Uz the first-born, and Buz his brother, and Kemuel the father of Aram; and Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel"— Bethuel being the father of Rebekah. These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother.

Discussion Question

- Why does the story end with the news of the birth of Rivkah?

CONCLUSION DISCUSSION

- What do you think is the message of the story?
- What do you think is difficult about this story?
- According to the narrative of the text, after the Akeida, Avraham never again speaks to his wife Sarah, his son Yitzchak and not even to God. Why do you think this is so?
- Aside from the mentioning of the Ram's horn, why do you think it is important that we read this story on Rosh Hashanah?
- Do you think this story is particularly relevant to read this year after October 7 and the subsequent war?

ROSH HASHANAH SHOFAR AND SILENCE

This is a text-based session in which one can read the text together as a group and discuss. Or, the group can split into chavrutot, study partners, and read through the text individually.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How does silence affect us and those around us?
- How does the sound of the shofar call us to action?

SUPPLIES

- Shofar
- Printout of the DC Metro ad
- Copies of the Martin Niermoller quote
- Copies of the 4 different text sheets
- Copies of the Kitty Genovese text

OPENING ACTIVITY

If you have someone who is able to blow shofar, have them blow the series of notes (Tekiya - 1, Shvarim - 3 medium blasts, and T'ruah - 9 short blasts). Then, go around the room asking for reactions to hearing the shofar or what the sound of the shofar makes people feel. If there is no one who can blow shofar, just pose the question of what the sound of the shofar makes people feel.

5 min: Metro Campaign Picture

Pass around the Metro Campaign picture.

Discussion Questions

- What are your reactions to this photo?
- Why does Metro have this campaign?
- What might this have to do with a shofar?
- What is so important about speaking up?



10 min: Martin Niemöller quote

Learning from the Metro Campaign, there are consequences to our actions and to our inactions. The following text helps put this into focus a bit more clearly. Pass out the quote and have someone read it.

First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist.
Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist.
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

—Martin Niemöller

Discuss the following questions:

- Has anyone heard this quote before?
- What is the context of this quote?
- What are the reasons for not speaking up?
- What are the consequences?

**The context of this quote is that it was written by Pastor Martin Niemöller, a prominent Protestant pastor who spoke out against the Nazis during World War II and was detained and placed in Nazi concentration camps as a result.*

20 min: Groups and present

We're going to explore the idea of not speaking up, not using our voices as a "shofar," a bit further in groups. Each group will get a different text. After discussing your text in small groups, find a way to present a short summary of what happened in your text and what might have happened differently in the story if someone had spoken up.

Each group gets a text about not speaking up.

Discussion Questions:

- What is going on in this text?
- Why is there a need for speaking?
- Why isn't someone speaking up?
- What would have happened differently in the story if someone did speak up? Find a way to present this.

15 min: Kitty Genovese

On March 13, 1964, Kitty Genovese was assaulted as she made her way from a parking lot to her apartment in Kew Gardens. When he was arrested, Mr. Moseley confessed to the police that he had set out that night to find a woman to kill, that he had stalked Miss Genovese, and that, after sticking a knife into her 17 times, he had returned to sexually attack her. It soon became clear that any number of neighbors had heard the woman's screams or seen her attacker, and it became a widely accepted fact that no one had so much as telephoned the police. Thus, the outrage over the murder itself eventually was dwarfed by the sense of regret and embarrassment about a city's collective failure of will. The Kitty Genovese Syndrome became an entry in sociology textbooks. Today, the specifics of the neighborhood's reaction to the murder are in dispute, and several residents who were alive at the time of the attack maintained yesterday that the screams were not that easy to hear and that in fact, some people did call for help or seek to find out what was going on.

Twice their chatter and the sudden glow of their bedroom lights interrupted him and frightened him off. Each time he returned, sought her out, and stabbed her again. Not one person telephoned the police during the assault; one witness called after the woman was dead. That was two weeks ago today.

Still shocked is Assistant Chief Inspector Frederick M. Lussen, in charge of the borough's detectives and a veteran of 25 years of homicide investigations. He can give a matter-of-fact recitation on many murders. But the Kew Gardens slaying baffles him--not because it is a murder, but because the "good people" failed to call the police.

"As we have reconstructed the crime," he said, "the assailant had three chances to kill this woman during a 35-minute period. He returned twice to complete the job. If we had been called when he first attacked, the woman might not be dead now." This is what the police say happened at 3:20 A.M. in the staid, middle-class, tree-lined Austin Street area: Twenty-eight-year-old Catherine Genovese, who was called Kitty by almost everyone in the neighborhood, was returning home from her job as manager of a bar in Hollis. She parked her red Fiat in a lot adjacent to the Kew Gardens Long Island Railroad Station, facing Mowbray Place. Like many residents of the neighborhood, she had parked there day after day since her arrival from Connecticut a year ago, although the railroad frowns on the practice.

She turned off the lights of her car, locked the door, and started to walk the 100 feet to the entrance of her apartment at 82-70 Austin Street, which is in a Tudor building, with stores in the first floor and apartments on the second. The entrance to the apartment is in the rear of the building because the front is rented to retail stores. At night the quiet neighborhood is shrouded in the slumbering darkness that marks most residential areas. Miss Genovese noticed a man at the far end of the lot, near a seven-story apartment house at 82-40 Austin Street. She halted. Then, nervously, she headed up Austin Street toward Lefferts Boulevard, where there is a call box to the 102nd Police Precinct in nearby Richmond Hill.

She got as far as a street light in front of a bookstore before the man grabbed her. She screamed. Lights went on in the 10-story apartment house at 82-67 Austin Street, which faces the bookstore. Windows slid open and voices punctuated the early-morning stillness. Miss Genovese screamed: "Oh, my God, he stabbed me! Please help me! Please help me!" From one of the upper windows in the apartment house, a man called down: "Let that girl alone!" The assailant looked up at him, shrugged, and walked down Austin Street toward a white sedan parked a short distance away. Miss Genovese struggled to her feet.

Lights went out. The killer returned to Miss Genovese, now trying to make her way around the side of the building by the parking lot to get to her apartment. The assailant stabbed her again. "I'm dying!" she shrieked. "I'm dying!" Windows were opened again, and lights went on in many apartments. The assailant got into his car and drove away. Miss Genovese staggered to her feet. A city bus, 0-10, the Lefferts Boulevard line to Kennedy International Airport, passed. It was 3:35 A.M. The assailant returned. By then, Miss Genovese had crawled to the back of the building, where the freshly painted brown doors to the apartment house held out hope for safety.

The killer tried the first door; she wasn't there. At the second door, 82-62 Austin Street, he saw her slumped on the floor at the foot of the stairs. He stabbed her a third time--fatally. It was 3:50 by the time

the police received their first call, from a man who was a neighbor of Miss Genovese. In two minutes they were at the scene. The neighbor, a 70-year-old woman, and another woman were the only persons on the street. Nobody else came forward. The man explained that he had called the police after much deliberation. He had phoned a friend in Nassau County for advice and then he had crossed the roof of the building to the apartment of the elderly woman to get her to make the call. "I didn't want to get involved," he sheepishly told police.

Six days later, the police arrested Winston Moseley, a 29-year-old business machine operator, and charged him with homicide. Moseley had no previous record. He is married, has two children and owns a home at 133-19 Sutter Avenue, South Ozone Park, Queens. On Wednesday, a court committed him to Kings County Hospital for psychiatric observation. When questioned by the police, Moseley also said he had slain Mrs. Annie May Johnson, 24, of 146-12 133d Avenue, Jamaica, on Feb. 29 and Barbara Kralik, 15, of 174-17 140th Avenue, Springfield Gardens, last July. In the Kralik case, the police are holding Alvin L. Mitchell, who is said to have confessed to that slaying.

The police stressed how simple it would have been to have gotten in touch with them. "A phone call," said one of the detectives, "would have done it." The police may be reached by dialing "0" for operator or SPring 7-3100. Today witnesses from the neighborhood, which is made up of one-family homes in the \$35,000 to \$60,000 range with the exception of the two apartment houses near the railroad station, find it difficult to explain why they didn't call the police.

A housewife, knowingly if quite casually, said, "We thought it was a lovers' quarrel." A husband and wife both said, "Frankly, we were afraid." They seemed aware of the fact that events might have been different. A distraught woman, wiping her hands in her apron, said, "I didn't want my husband to get involved."

One couple, now willing to talk about that night, said they heard the first screams. The husband looked thoughtfully at the bookstore where the killer first grabbed Miss Genovese.

"We went to the window to see what was happening," he said, "but the light from our bedroom made it difficult to see the street." The wife, still apprehensive, added: "I put out the light and we were able to see better."

Asked why they hadn't called the police, she shrugged and replied: "I don't know."

A man peeked out from a slight opening in the doorway to his apartment and rattled off an account of the killer's second attack. Why hadn't he called the police at the time? "I was tired," he said without emotion. "I went back to bed." It was 4:25 A.M. when the ambulance arrived to take the body of Miss Genovese. It drove off. "Then," a solemn police detective said, "the people came out."

The above reported events are true and took place on March 14, 1964. The brutal murder of Kitty Genovese and the disturbing lack of action by her neighbors became emblematic in what many perceived as an evolving culture of violence and apathy in the United States. In fact, social scientists still debate the causes of what is now known as "the Genovese Syndrome."

Discussion Questions:

- How does the author understand the consequences of not speaking out?
- Is there an acceptable distance for not speaking out?
- What are the fears of speaking out?
- How can one eliminate those fears?

UNETANEH TOKEF

INTRODUCTION

(Based on the commentary of Rabbi Sacks)

Unetaneh Tokef is one of the most famous and emotive prayers from the High Holidays. It is said just before *Kedushah* in the repetition of the Amidah of Musaf on both days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. For hundreds of years, some of the most beautiful Jewish music has been set to its words as it represents the most solemn expression of the meaning of these holidays.

It is comprised of four sections. The first sets the scene of the heavenly court in which God sits in the seat of judgement. In front of God is a book in which all our deeds, good and bad are written. The second section deals with the consequence of the judgement. Who will live? And who will die? Who will have a year of blessing? And who will suffer? It is on Rosh Hashanah that this judgement will be written and on Yom Kippur it will be sealed.

The climax of the prayer comes in the third section. We proclaim our most basic of beliefs. Nothing is set in stone. Our fate is not sealed without us being able to affect it. Through our actions we can change our fate. Through repentance, prayer, and *Tzedekah*, we can avert any decree made out against us.

The conclusion of the prayer deals with the fragility of being human compared to the greatness of God.

THE PRAYER:

(The prayer can be read in a group or in pairs. Those who know how to sing it should be encouraged to sing it for the rest of the group)

וְנִתְּנָה תְּקוּף קִדְשֵׁת הַיּוֹם. כִּי הוּא נוֹרָא וְאִיּוֹם. וּבּוֹ תִּנְשָׂא מַלְכוּתְךָ. וַיְכּוֹן בְּחֶסֶד כְּסֶאֱךָ. וַתִּשָּׁב עָלָיו בְּאַמֶּת. אֲמֵת כִּי אַתָּה הוּא
דֵּין וּמוֹכִיחַ וְיֹדֵעַ וְעֹד. וְכוֹתֵב וְחוֹתֵם וְסוֹפֵר וּמוֹנֶה. וְתִזְכֹּר כָּל הַנִּשְׁכָּחוֹת. וְתִפְתַּח אֶת סֵפֶר הַזְּכוֹנוֹת. וּמֵאֱלֹו יִקְרָא. וְחוֹתֵם
יָד כָּל אָדָם בּוֹ. וּבִשְׁוֹפֵר גָּדוֹל יִתְקַע. וְקוֹל דְּמָמָה דָּקָה יִשְׁמַע. וּמֵלֶאכִים יִחַפְּזוּן. וְחִיל וְרַעְדָּה יֵאֲחָזוּן. וַיֹּאמְרוּ הִנֵּה יוֹם הַדֵּין.
לְפָקֵד עַל צָבָא מְרוֹם בְּדִין. כִּי לֹא יִזְכוּ בְּעֵינֶיךָ בְּדִין. וְכָל בָּאֵי עוֹלָם יַעֲבִירוּן לִפְנֶיךָ כַּבְנֵי מָרוֹן. כְּבִקְרַת רוּעָה עֹדְרוֹ. מַעֲבִיר
צֹאנוּ תַּחַת שְׁבִטוֹ. כֵּן תַּעֲבִיר וְתִסְפֹּר וְתִמְנֶה. וְתִפְקֹד נַפְשׁ כָּל חַי. וְתַחֲתֶיךָ קִצְבָה לְכָל בְּרִיּוֹתֶיךָ. וְתִכְתֹּב אֶת גְּזַר דִּינָם:

Let us describe the great holiness of this day, for it is awesome and frightening. On this day, Your Kingship is uplifted, and Your throne is established with kindness, and You sit upon it in truth. True that You are judge, admonisher, knower, and witness; and You inscribe, seal, record and count, and recall all forgotten things. You open the book of records and it reads of itself; and the signature of every man is in it. A great shofar is sounded, and a silent, gentle voice is heard; and the angels are alarmed, pangs of fear and trembling seize them, and they declare, "Behold the Day of Judgment." The heavenly host is arraigned in judgment, for they are not guiltless in Your eyes in judgment. All mankind pass before You like young sheep. As a shepherd inspects his flock, making his sheep pass under his rod, so do You cause to pass, count, number, and review the soul of every living being, determining the life span of every creature; and You record the decree of their judgment.

בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה יִכְתָּבוּן וּבְיוֹם צוֹם כְּפוּר יִחְתָּמוּן. כְּמָה יַעֲבִרוּן. וְכָמָה יִבְרָאוּן. מִי יִחְיֶה. וּמִי יָמוּת. מִי בִקְצוֹ. וּמִי לֹא בִקְצוֹ. מִי בַמַּיִם. וּמִי בָאֵשׁ. מִי בַחֲרֵב. וּמִי בַחֲיָה. מִי בָרָעַב. וּמִי בַצָּמָא. מִי בָרָעַשׁ. וּמִי בַמַּגָּפָה. מִי בַחֲנִיקָה וּמִי בַסְּקִילָה. מִי יָבוֹחַ. וּמִי יָנוּעַ. מִי יִשְׁקֹט. וּמִי יִטָּרֵף. מִי יִשְׁלֹו. וּמִי יִתִּיּוֹסֵר. מִי יַעֲבִי. וּמִי יַעֲשֶׂר. מִי יִשְׁפֹּל. וּמִי יָרוּם:

On Rosh Hashanah, their decree is inscribed, and on Yom Kippur, it is sealed. How many will pass away and how many will be created, who will live and who will die; who will come to his timely end, and who to an untimely end; who will perish by fire and who by water; who by the sword and who by beast; who by hunger and who by thirst; who by earthquake and who by the plague; who by strangling and who by stoning; who will be at rest and who will wander about; who will have serenity and who will be confused; who will be tranquil and who will be tormented; who will become poor and who will become wealthy; who will be brought to a low state and who will be uplifted.

וּתְשׁוּבָה וּתְפִלָּה וְצִדְקָה מַעֲבִירִין אֶת רוּעַ הַגְּזֵרָה:

Congregation followed by Chazzan:

But repentance, and prayer and charity annul the evil decree.

כִּי כְשֶׁמָּהְךָ כֵּן תִּהְיֶה. קִשָּׁה לְכַעַס וְנוֹחַ לְרָצוֹת. כִּי לֹא תַחֲפֹץ בְּמוֹת הַמֵּת. כִּי אִם בְּשׁוּבוֹ מִדֶּרֶכּוֹ וְחִיָּה. וְעַד יוֹם מוֹתוֹ תַּחֲכֶּה לוֹ. אִם יָשׁוּב מִיָּד תִּקְבְּלוּ:

For as Your Name, so is Your praise, You are slow to anger and easy to pacify; For You do not desire death [for the sinner] but that he turn from his evil way and live. And even until his dying day, You wait for him—if he repents, You immediately accept him.

אֱמֶת כִּי אַתָּה הוּא יוֹצֵרָם. וְאַתָּה יוֹדֵעַ יוֹצֵרָם. כִּי הֵם בֶּשֶׁר וָדָם: אָדָם יִסּוּדוֹ מֵעֶפֶר וְסוּפוֹ לְעָפָר. בְּנִפְשׁוֹ יָבִיא לְחֵמוֹ. מִשּׁוּל כְּחָרָס הַנִּשְׁבֵּר. כְּחֹצִיר יָבֵשׁ. וְכָצִיץ נוֹבֵל. כְּצֶלַע עוֹבֵר. וְכַעֲנַן כֹּלֵה. וְכָרוּחַ נוֹשֶׁבֶת. וְכָאֶבֶק פּוֹרֵחַ. וְכַחֲלוֹם יַעוּף: וְאַתָּה הוּא מֶלֶךְ אֵל חַי וְקַיִם:

True, You are their Creator, and You know their impulse that they are [but] flesh and blood. Man, his beginning is from dust and ends in dust; risking his life, he gets his bread, he is like a potsherd that is breakable, like grass that withers, like the flower that fades, like the shadow that passes, like the cloud that vanishes, like the wind that blows, like the dust that flies, and like a fleeting dream. But You are the King, the Almighty, the living and everlasting God.

DIFFERENT OPINIONS ON UNETANEH TOKEF

The group should be divided into 5 groups. Each group will be given a different view on the prayer. Read the quote and then report back to the group

Rabbi Delphine Horvilleur "Is Un'taneh Tokef Palatable?"

Un'taneh Tokef is undoubtedly one of the most challenging pieces of Jewish liturgy. The problem is that it is also one of the most famous, as it seems to embody the traditional liturgical messages of the season: on this day, your fate is sealed, your future determined.... "How can modern Jews accept the fatalistic theology of Un'taneh Tokef?"

As a rabbi in a Reform congregation, I teach, all year long, the most precious ideas of our theology. Being a Jew is about being empowered to act as God's partner. I teach a nonfatalistic attitude to life, an approach that addresses our ability - indeed, our responsibility - to change the world at large and our personal world within it. In modern Jewish thought and teaching, I find comfort. In my Judaism of responsibility and covenant, humanity is engaged in a face-to-face dialogue with the divine.... Un'taneh Tokef assumes a vertical relationship between God, the king, and human beings, his servants... The climactic line *Ut'shuvah, utfillah utz'dakah ma'avirin et ro'a hag'zerah* is usually taken as a claim that "repentance, prayer, and charity" can nullify a decree from on high. Surprisingly, these words come at the end of a text that just claimed the opposite: that our fate was already irrevocably determined. Paradoxical! It seems, actually, that Un'taneh Tokef is a masterpiece of theological contradiction as if to say, "Beware! Everything is written ... but everything can be changed. And remember that your thoughts (*t'shuvah*), your words (*tefillah*), and your deeds (*tzedakah*) can save you."

Rabbi Brent Spodek and Ruth Messinger "God's Hands"

Un'taneh Tokef is not about bribing God with our repentance, nor is it about magic. It is about facing mortality and seeking the redemptive power of God's presence through lives of spiritual seriousness and moral goodness. We are capable of submitting our lives to judgment, but judgment should not be understood as an alien and arbitrary force; rather, it is the process of personal insight and inner renewal that initiates redemption of ourselves and of our world. There is reciprocity here. God calls on us, and we call on God. Our partnership puts a human face on the divine as we proclaim the awe-filled holiness of this moment.

Dr. Joel Hoffman "How Was Your Flight?"

Some of us didn't make it through the year gone by. Others will likely not make it to the end of the next. Faced with this combination of terror and horror, we naturally ask what those who died did to deserve their fate, what we did to merit the unbearable longing for those we miss, and what we might already have done that will spell the end of our own lives.

But Un'taneh Tokef demands that we look more closely at our first instinctual reaction. Job is woven throughout the prayer and, by extension, throughout our lives. We must overcome our natural inclination to look for a cause for every negative effect.

Piece by Amy Eilberg, adapted (Mishkan HaNefesh p. 211)

Unetaneh tokef, the prayer that imagines God inscribing in the heavenly book who shall live and who shall die in the year to come, has become for many a riveting and troubling image of the High Holy Days. As I say its words, I remember a friend's baby that did not make it, health scares and diagnoses, lives lost far too soon.

In a sense, Unetaneh tokef invites the whole community into the truth which sick and grieving people live every day. Rosh Hashanah assaults the denial of the healthy, so that on this day, the ill—beset with clear awareness of mortality—are at one with the whole community, all of us knowing the fundamental uncertainty of life. We are made of dust, as the Unetaneh tokef concludes, and to dust we return; like clay vessels we can break. Life flowers, we fade and like shadows we pass and like a dream we will someday pass from sight. This is the truth, and there can be comfort in standing in the sacred circle of community affirming it, at the same time committing to savor the fragile gift of life we are given.

Arthur Green in his forward S.Y. Agnon's Days of Awe, page ix.

If "in foxholes there are no atheists," the Days of Awe powerfully remind us that all of life is a sort of extended foxhole and that each of us will have our final moment. We are not a morose people, and through the year we consider healthy those who spend their time on something more constructive and cheerful than brooding the inevitability of death. But we come together on the Yamim Noraim (Days of Awe), skeptics and agnostics along with the pious believers and earnest seekers, to gratefully acknowledge that we are still here, and to admit that our survival has not been all our own doing. We look around us at the community of Jews in whose midst we have come to celebrate that fact and see old and young, strong and weak, vigorous-looking and those of sickly-seeming pallor. Yet all of us have lived too long and seen too much to think we can know which of these faces we will see next year."

Discussion

- Which of the opinions do you most identify with?
- How does Untane Tokef make you feel?
- Why do you think it is important / not important to say it on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur?
- How do you feel about saying this Tefillah after the events of October 7 and the subsequent war?

TASHLICH

INTRODUCTION

(based on the commentary of Rabbi Sacks)

Tashlich is a custom that goes back hundreds of years. It is a symbolic act of throwing away one's sins from the past year into a body of water, which is based on the verse from the prophecy of Micah:

ישוב ירחמנו, יכבש עונותינו ותשליך במצולות ים כל חטאתם

You will again have compassion on us, suppress our iniquities,
And cast into the depths of the seas all their sins. (Micah 7:19)

There are many other interpretations of this custom:

- It reminds us of the story of the Binding of Issac that we read on Rosh Hashanah. According to the midrash, a heavenly accuser placed a river in the way of Avraham to prevent him from fulfilling God's test. (Rabbi Jacob Moellin d. 1425)
- The water reminds us of fish that never close their eyes, like God's eyes that are always open, watching our actions. (Rabbi Isaiah Horowitz)
- Rosh Hashanah commemorates the day the world was created by God. The first living creatures created were fish, and thus they were the first beings to be witness to God's creation. (Matteh Moshe)
- Water is symbolic of the Torah.
- Rivers are a symbol of tears.
- Flowing water symbolizes time and mortality.
- Jews of the Diaspora have always felt a connection to rivers since the time of the Babylonian Exile.

ACTIVITY

Carry out the custom of Tashlich with your group. Go to an easily accessible body of water or a view of the sea. (If you are not near a body of water, you can create your own - many Hasidic groups create their own body of water – you can decorate a bucket of water)

Some people have the tradition of throwing breadcrumbs into the water. (However, this is not environmentally friendly, and therefore, some have changed the tradition to throwing small pebbles into the water.) This is purely a symbolic act.

When reaching the water recite the following verses:

מִי אֵל כְּמוֹךָ: נִשְׂא עוֹן: וְעָבַר עַל פְּשָׁע: לְשֹׂאֲרֵית נִחְלָתוֹ: לֹא הִחְזִיק לְעַד אָפוֹ: כִּי חִפֵּץ חֶסֶד הוּא: יָשׁוּב יִרְחֲמֵנוּ: יִכְבֹּשׁ
עוֹנֵתֵינוּ: וְתִשְׁלִיךְ בַּמַּצְלוֹת יָם כָּל־חַטָּאתָם: תִּתֵּן אֱמֶת לִיעֲקֹב: חֶסֶד לְאַבְרָהָם: אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לְאַבְתְּחֵנוּ: מִיְמֵי קֶדֶם: מִן הַמִּצָּר
קִרְאתִי יְהוָה עֲנֵנִי בְּמִרְחַב יְהוָה: ה' לֹא אֵירָא מֶה יַעֲשֶׂה לִּי אָדָם: ה' לִי בְּעֹזְרִי וְאֲנִי אֶרְאֶה בְּשׁוֹנְאֵי: טוֹב לַחֲסוֹת בְּה' מִבְּטָח
בְּאָדָם: טוֹב לַחֲסוֹת בְּה' מִבְּטָח בַּנְּדִיבִים:

Who is an Almighty like You Forbearer of iniquity, and forgiver of transgression for the remnant of His heritage? He does not maintain His wrath forever, for He desires to do kindness. He will again show us compassion, He will suppress our iniquities; and You will cast into the depths of the sea all their sins. You will grant truth to Yaakov, kindness to Avraham, as You swore to our fathers from the days of old. From the narrowness [of distress] I called [to] God; He answered me with the breadth of Divine relief. Adonoy is with me, I will not fear, what can man do to me? Adonoy is with me, to help me, and I will see my enemies' [defeat]. It is better to take refuge in Adonoy than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in Adonoy than to trust in nobles.

Discussion Questions

- Why do you think symbolic are / are not important?
- How do you think symbolic acts can alter reality?

OPTIONAL READINGS FOR TASHLICH

A Prayer for Tashlich by Rabbi Rachel Barenblatt

Here I am again ready to let go of my mistakes.

Help me to release myself from all the ways I've missed the mark.

Help me to stop carrying the karmic baggage of my poor choices.

As I cast this bread upon the waters lift my troubles off my shoulders.

Help me to know that last year is over, washed away like crumbs in the current.

Open my heart to blessing and gratitude.

Renew my soul as the dew renews the grasses.

And we say together: Amen.

It Takes an Act of Will

It takes an act of will.

For us to make a turn.

It means breaking with old habits.

It means admitting that we have been wrong;

And this is never easy.

It means losing face;

It means starting all over again;

And this is always painful.

It means saying: "I am sorry."

It means admitting that we have the ability to change;

And this is always embarrassing.

These things are terribly hard to do.

But unless we turn, we will be trapped forever In yesterday's ways.

God, Help Us To Turn

From callousness to sensitivity,
From hostility to love,
From pettiness to purpose,
From envy to contentment,
From carelessness to discipline,
From fear to faith.

Turn us around, O God, and bring us back toward You.

Revive our lives, as at the beginning.

And turn us towards each other, God, For in isolation there is no life.

Let us cast away

Let us cast away vain ambition, which prompts us to strive for goals
that bring neither true fulfillment nor genuine contentment.

Let us cast away stubbornness, so that we will neither persist in foolish
habits nor fail to acknowledge our will to change.

Let us cast away indifference, so that we may be sensitive to the sufferings
of others and responsive to the needs of our people everywhere.

Let us cast away pride and arrogance, so that we can worship God and
serve God's purposes in humility and truth.

Let us cast away envy, so that we will neither be consumed by desire
for what we lack nor grow unmindful of the blessings that are already ours.

Let us cast away the sin of selfishness, which keeps us from enriching our
lives through wider concerns, and greater sharing, and from reaching out in
love to other human beings.

Tashlich Crumb List

A variation on a theme of breads for Tashlich by Richard Israel.

For ordinary misdeeds - White Bread

For dark misdeeds – Pumpernickel

For twisted misdeeds – Pretzels

For misdeeds committed in haste - Matzah

For misdeeds committed in less than eighteen minutes - Shmurah Matzah

For misdeeds ofchutzpah - Fresh Bread

For substance abuse/marijuana - Stoned Wheat

For substance abuse/heavy drugs - Poppy Seed

For arson - Toast

For high-handedness - Napoleons

For not giving full value - Short bread

For jingoism - Yankee Doodles

For being money-hungry - Enriched Bread or Raw Dough

For telling small lies - Fudge

For promiscuity - Hot Buns

For unfairly up-braiding others – Challah

For provocative dressing - Wonton Wrappers

For indecent photography - Cheese Cake

For trashing the environment – Dumplings

For the sin of laziness - Any Very Long Loaf

For over-eating - Stuffing Bread

For pride - Puff Pastry

For recurring slip ups - Banana Bread

For impetuosity - Quick Bread

For auto theft - Caraway

For risking one's life unnecessarily - Hero Bread

For excessive use of irony - Rye Bread

For exotic misdeeds - French Bread

For complex misdeeds - Multi-grain

For misdeeds of indecision – Waffles

For timidity - Milk Toast

For being sulky – Sourdough

For silliness - Nut Bread

For telling bad jokes - Corn Bread

For war-mongering - Kaiser Rolls

For racism – Humble Pie

For being holier-than-thou – Bagels

For snobbery - Upper Crusts

For being hypercritical - Pan Cakes

For political skullduggery – Bismarcks

For gambling - Fortune Cookies

For being snappish - Ginger Bread

For davening off tune - Flat Bread

For silliness - Nut Bread

SELICHOT

INTRODUCTION

According to the Sefardi tradition, we begin reciting the Selichot services on Rosh Chodesh Elul. (Ashkenazim start on the Saturday night before Rosh Hashanah). The reason is, according to the tradition, Moses came down from Mount Sinai to the site of the sin of the Golden Calf on the 17th Tamuz. He begins the process of praying for the people's forgiveness forty days later, on the first day of Elul. God eventually forgives the Jewish people forty days after that on the 10th Tishrei: Yom Kippur. The central method of prayer used by Moses to appeal to God for forgiveness is the reciting of the 13 attributes of mercy of God, that were revealed to Moses on Sinai. To this day, the reciting of the 13 attributes of mercy plays a central role in the Selichot and Yom Kippur services.

What are the 13 attributes of mercy, and why do they play such a central role in our prayers at this time of year?

The 13 Attributes

In the book of Exodus, we read the story of the sin of the Golden Calf and Moses beseeching God to forgive the people. This is perhaps the closest that Moses feels to God. Moses, therefore, asks God to reveal His face to Moses. God replies that a human can not see God's face and live, but God does allow Moses to see God's back. It is in the context of this strange conversation that God reveals to Moses His 13 attributes of mercy. There are different traditions of how to derive the 13 attributes from the verses, but this is the most accepted counting:

Adonai – God is merciful before a person sins! Even though aware that future evil lies dormant within him.	י'ה
Adonai – God is merciful after the sinner has gone astray.	י'ה
El – a name that denotes power as ruler over nature and humankind, indicating that God's mercy sometimes surpasses even the degree indicated by this name	אל
Compassionate (<i>raham</i>) – God is filled with loving sympathy for human frailty does not put people into situations of extreme temptation and eases the punishment of the guilty.	רחום
Gracious (<i>v'hanun</i>) – God shows mercy even to those who do not deserve it consoling the afflicted and raising up the oppressed.	וחנון
Slow to anger (<i>ereh apayim</i>) – God gives the sinner ample time to reflect, improve, and repent.	ארך אפים
Abundant in Kindness (<i>v'rav hesed</i>) – God is kind toward those who lack personal merits, providing more gifts and blessings than they deserve; if one's personal behavior is evenly balanced between virtue and sin, God tips the scales of justice toward the good.	ורב חסד
Truth (<i>v'emet</i>) – God never reneges on His word to reward those who serve Him.	ואמת

Preserver of kindness for thousands of generations (<i>notzeir hesed la-alafim</i>) – God remembers the deeds of the righteous for the benefit of their less virtuous generations of offspring (thus we constantly invoke the merit of the Patriarchs).	נצח חסד לאלפים
Forgiver of iniquity (<i>nosei avon</i>) – God forgives intentional sin resulting from an evil disposition as long as the sinner repents.	נשא עון
Forgiver of wilful sin (<i>pesha</i>) – God allows even those who commit a sin with the malicious intent of rebelling against and angering Him the opportunity to repent.	ופשע
Forgiver of error (<i>v'hata'ah</i>) – God forgives a sin committed out of carelessness, thoughtlessness, or apathy.	וחטאה
Who cleanses (<i>v'nakeh</i>) – God is merciful, gracious, and forgiving, wiping away the sins of those who truly repent; however, if one does not repent, God does not cleanse.	ונקה

Translation and explanation for the 13 attributes taken from:

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-13-attributes-of-mercy/>

Discussion Questions:

- Which attribute of God do you relate to the most?
- When thinking of God, do any of these attributes come to mind?
- Do you think humans can forgive in the same way God does?
- Are there any sins that you believe can not be forgiven?
- Do you think that God should forgive for even the most evil actions?

CAPAROT

INTRODUCTION

There is an almost universal tradition of Caparot on Erev Yom Kippur. Originally, a live chicken was rotated around one's head as one recited a statement saying that the life of the chicken will be an atonement for sins. The chicken would then be slaughtered, and the meat donated to the poor. Most people today do not use a live chicken anymore but use money that will be given to charity or Tzedakah.

Why is the giving of Tzedakah so important? And why especially so on the day before Yom Kippur? The word Tzedakah comes from the word *Tzedek*, meaning justice. Within the Jewish tradition, we do not give to a poor person because we feel sorry for them or have pity on them. Rather, it is the most basic human right to have access to food and shelter. A just society must provide for the poor.

TEXT STUDY

These texts can be studied either together as a full group or in smaller groups. They can be studied all together or separated. You can also choose the order in which they are to be studied. The aim of the texts is to give some general impressions of what our tradition has to say about the meaning of Tzedakah.

"Poverty is a kind of death " (Nedarim 7b)

Discussion Questions:

- Why do you think the Talmud says this?
- Do you agree with the statement?

Text 1:

"And this is the question that Turnus Rufus the wicked asked Rabbi Akiva: If your God loves the poor, for what reason does He not support them Himself? Rabbi Akiva said to him, 'He commands us to sustain the poor, so that through them and the charity we give them we will be saved from the judgment of hell.' Turnus Rufus said to Rabbi Akiva, 'On the contrary, it is this charity which condemns you, the Jewish people, to Gehenna because you give it. I will illustrate this to you with a parable. To what is this matter comparable? It is comparable to a king of flesh and blood who was angry with his slave and put him in prison and ordered that he should not be fed or given to drink. And one person went ahead and fed him and gave him to drink. If the king heard about this, would he not be angry with that person? And you, after all, are called slaves, as it is stated: 'For the children of Israel are slaves to Me.' If God decreed that a certain person should be impoverished, one who gives him charity defies the will of God."

Rabbi Akiva said to Turnus Rufus, "I will illustrate the opposite to you with a different parable. To what is this matter comparable? It is comparable to a king of flesh and blood who was angry with his son and put him in prison and ordered that he should not be fed or given to drink. And one person went ahead and fed him and gave him to drink. If the king heard about this once his anger abated, would he not react by sending that person a gift? And we are called sons, as it is written: 'You are sons of the Lord your God' (Bava Batra 10a)

Discussion Questions:

- What is the difference between the Roman understanding and the Jewish understanding of giving to the poor?
- Do you think that giving Tzedakah really saves someone from hell?
- What do you think Rabbi Akiva meant by this?
- What kind of a society allows for people to suffer in poverty?

Text 2:

There are eight levels of tzedakah, each one greater than the other. The greatest level, higher than all the rest, is to fortify a fellow Jew and give him a gift, a loan, form with him a partnership, or find work for him, until he is strong enough so that he does not need to ask others [for sustenance].

One level lower than this is one who gives tzedakah to the poor and does not know to whom he gives, and the poor person does not know from whom he.

One level lower is one who gives tzedakah and the giver knows to whom he gives but the poor person does not know from whom he takes. Such did the great sages who would go in secret and throw money onto the doorways of the poor

One level lower is when the poor person knows from whom he takes but the giver does not know to whom he gives. Such was the way of the sages who would tie coins to their garments and would throw the bundle over their shoulder so the poor could come up [behind them] and take [them] without being embarrassed.

One level lower is to give to him with one's own hand before he can ask.

One level lower is to give to him after he has asked.

One level lower is to give him less than one should but with kindness.

One level lower is to give to him begrudgingly.

(Maimonides – Laws of giving to the poor 10-14)

Discussion Questions:

- Do you think that it is better to give to poor people begrudgingly or not at all?
- From having these different levels, who is the main concern for Tzedakah – the giver or the receiver?
- What does Maimonides care about aside from ensuring that the poor are provided for?

Text 3:

In Mar Ukba's neighborhood, there was a poor man into whose doorframe Mar Ukba used to [secretly] place four coins every day. One day the poor man said, "I will go and see who does this kindness for me. "It so happened that on that day Mar Ukba stayed late at the house of study, and his wife accompanied him [on his way home]. As soon as the poor man saw the two bending down over the door [to put the money in], he ran out after them. They fled from him and entered a furnace from which the fire had just been swept [so that it was still very hot]. Mar Ukba's feet were scorched [but not his wife's], and so she said to him, "Place your feet on mine [and I will save you from being burnt]." He was upset [because she appeared to be worthy of a miracle but he was not] so she explained it to him, "I am

usually at home and so my care for the poor is direct [because I give directly to those who come to the door, while you give money or other help in a more indirect way].”

(Ketubot 67b)

Discussion Questions:

- Why do you think Mar Ukba gave anonymously?
- Why do you think his wife gave directly to the poor?
- Do you think the receivers of the Tzedakah preferred receiving from Mar Ukba or his wife?
- The Gemara seems to suggest that the wife was more righteous than her husband. Why do you think this is so?

Text 4:

Ten strong entities were created in the world, one stronger than the other.

A mountain is strong, but iron, which is stronger, cleaves it.

Iron is strong, but fire melts it.

Fire is strong, but water extinguishes it.

Water is strong, but clouds bear it.

Clouds are strong, but wind disperses them.

Wind is strong, but the human body withstands it.

The human body is strong, but fear breaks it.

Fear is strong, but wine dispels it.

Wine is strong, but sleep drives it off.

And death is stronger than them all,

but charity saves a person from death, as it is written:

“And charity delivers from death” (Proverbs 10:2, 11:4).

(Bava Batra 10a)

Discussion Question:

What do you think is the message of this poem in the Talmud?

DISCUSSION CONCLUSION:

- How do you think one can carry out Tzedakah without giving money?
- What Tzedakah projects should we take on as a group for this year?

VIDDUY CONFESSION

INTRODUCTION

One of the central elements of the Yom Kippur liturgy is *Vidduy*, in which we confess our sins from our previous year to God. From Mincha on Erev Yom Kippur until Neillah as Yom Kippur is about to end, we recite the *vidduy* 11 times! Interestingly, the text for the confession is fixed for everyone and is said in the plural. We do not say, "I have sinned;" rather, "We have sinned." That being said, the *vidduy* process is also personal, and often we don't give enough time to really think about the mistakes we have made and how we want to act differently in the coming year.

PART 1 PERSONAL VIDDUY

Give the group the following list of areas of life that we need to improve on this year. (Print the list and cut each individual line.) Individually and in private, each person in the group should choose the area of life that they feel they need to improve on and read it out for themselves during *Vidduy* service. You can add more items to the list.

- *Not being generous with my time or money to help others*
- *Wasting time scrolling on my phone*
- *Talking to someone or looking at them in a degrading way*
- *Making a mean comment on social media*
- *Not being helpful or respectful to my parents*
- *Not giving my all into my schoolwork*
- *Excluding people socially*
- *Using foul language*
- *Taking a sick day when I don't need it*
- *Not eating enough healthy food*
- *Not respecting other people's boundaries*
- *Lying to someone about where you are*
- *Gaslighting – making people doubt themselves*
- *Lying*
- *Not keeping up to commitments you have made for other people*
- *Wasting my parent's money*
- *Not doing enough exercise*
- *Skipping time with my community*
- *Not celebrating Shabbat*
- *Eating non-Kosher food*
- *Not praying*
- *Not putting on my Tefilin*
- *Watching content online that I wish I had never seen*
- *Acting in a way just to fit in with the group, even though I do not like what I am doing*
- *Smoking*
- *Drinking alcohol when I should not have*
- *Not standing up for what I believe in*

PART 2 COMMUNAL VIDDUY

After the individual time, bring everyone together and discuss how we can do things better collectively. This can include the following:

- How do we behave as a group?
- What does our community need to do better? (Only talk about things that the people in the group can effect change)
- What does the Jewish community in North America need to do better?
- What do the Jewish people as a whole need to do better?
- What should Israel be doing better?

THE YOM KIPPUR WAR

INTRODUCTION

At 2 pm on the afternoon of Yom Kippur in 1973, Israel was hit by a surprise attack by two Arab armies. The forces of Egypt attacked Israel from the south in the Sinai desert, and the Syrians attacked from the north in The Golan Heights, in a coordinated strike. As a result of failures by Israeli intelligence, the IDF was caught totally by surprise. The front-line troops were depleted because it was Yom Kippur; and, as a result, the Israeli casualties in the first hours of the war were extremely high. At a time before mobile phones, messages were relayed in synagogues and door-to-door as Israel mobilized reserves as quickly as possible. Despite this, in the first 48 hours of the war, the very existence of the State of Israel was put under threat.

In just under three weeks, the Israeli army managed to push the invading armies back to their original positions. However the damage caused by the initial failures of the war left a huge scar for Israeli society. Over 2,500 Israelis were killed, and 8,000 were wounded. For a small country like Israel, these losses were huge. After the previous war in 1967, Israel emerged as a confident regional power who, against all odds, had defeated three Arab armies in 6 days. After the Yom Kippur War, Israel emerged traumatized as the confidence in Israel's government and army to defend the country was severely damaged.

If this sounds familiar, it is the same feelings that are being felt in Israel today, after the tragedy of October 7. (Some would argue that the tragedy of October 7 was even greater as the tragedy took place in civilian areas and not on the military battlefield.)

So, what was the effect of the Yom Kippur on Israeli society? What can we learn from the way Israeli society responded to crisis in 1973 that help us today in 2024?

We will investigate this by examining the lyrics of different songs that emerged from the Yom Kippur War.

THE SONGS

If you are doing this session not on Yom Kippur itself, you can play the different songs on YouTube while looking at the lyrics. If it is Yom Kippur, you can print out the lyrics and discuss the questions posed for each song?

Song 1: You have nothing to worry about By Talma Alyagon Roz

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pmFpjBUhPA4>

*You have nothing to worry about
I'm careful and wear a sweater too
you have nothing to worry about
it's pointless, everything is alright
you have nothing to worry about it's wonderful here
bombarding in decent amounts
indeed, not a thing is missing.*

Send me underwear and undershirts

*here everyone is already (is living) like animals
fighting like lions
a truly high morale
and in our division
we ask for a bit of a break
sweety, don't send me a cake.*

*You have nothing to worry about
There's a summer camp here and we have fun
and yesterday there was even
time to shower
You have nothing to worry about I'm sleeping
and dreaming of you
when I'll get back to the city we'll get married*

Send me...

*You have nothing to worry about
I'm in a secure place
and between shelling and bombardment
there's time to rest
You have nothing to worry about
a sweet artillery shell
patience little girl
really there's no reason to worry.*

Send me...

Discussion Questions:

- What is the message of the song?
- Do you think it is funny? What is the dark humour being used here?
- How do you think the song reflects on the difference between how soldiers feel on the front as opposed the families back at home?
- How do you think things have changed today?

Song 2: The Last War By Dubi Selzer and Chaim Hefer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDMAjn3UOu4>

Verse:

*For all the tank corps soldiers with their dusty faces
Who survived all the enemy fire and grueling fighting,
For all the sailors who attacked the ports,
Their eyes caked heavy with salt from the seas.*

Chorus:

*I promise you - my little girl,
That this will be the last war.*

Verse:

*For the pilots who broke through the deadly battle
And were hit by rocket fire and ac-ac guns,
For the paratroopers who, amid lead and smoke,
Saw you overhead, like an angel.*

Chorus:

Verse:

*For the artillerymen who, in the hailstorm of mortars
Stood like a pillar of fire along the frontline,
For the medics [and] doctors who, with all their soul and strength
Restored breath and life itself, returning blood.*

Chorus:

Verse:

*For the signalmen whose voice cut through the nights,
For all the forces and women soldiers,
For all the fathers who went into battle
And want to return home to you...*

Chorus:

*I promise you – my little girl,
That this will be the last war.*

Discussion Questions

- What is the promise made by the father to his little girl?
- What is difficult about the message?
- How do you think the younger generation responds to this promise made by the older generation?

Song 3: Lu Yehi (Let it Be) By Nomi Shemer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c6zN9U7mxrM>

*There is still a white sail on the horizon
Opposite a heavy black cloud
All that we ask for – may it be*

*And if in the evening windows
The light of the holiday candles flickers
All that we seek – may it be*

*May it be, may it be – Please – may it be
All that we seek – may it be.*

*What is the sound that I hear
The cry of the shofar and the sound of drums
All that we ask for – may it be*

*If only there can be heard within all this
One prayer from my lips also
All that we seek – may it be*

May it be...

*Within a small, shaded neighborhood
Is a small house with a red roof
All that we ask for, may it be*

*This is the end of summer, the end of the path
Allow them to return safely here
All that we seek, may it be*

May it be...

*And if suddenly, rising from the darkness
Over our heads, the light of a star shines
All that we ask for, may it be*

*Then grant tranquillity and also grant strength
To all those we love
All that we seek, may it be*

May it be...

Discussion Questions:

- What is the message of the song?
- Why do you think this became the anthem of Yom Kippur War?

CONCLUSION DISCUSSION

- What have you learned about Israel in 1973 from these popular songs?
- How is the trauma of 1973 similar or different to the trauma of 2023?
- How do you think Israel has changed since then?

YIZKOR

INTRODUCTION

One of the most emotive parts of the Yom Kippur service is the *Yizkor*, or memorial prayer. Just before we return the Sifrei Torah to the Ark, we take time to remember our loved ones who have passed away. We do this for our personal loved ones, our community's loved ones, and for those who were killed in the Holocaust and in Israel's wars.

This year in particular, Yizkor will be especially challenging emotionally because of the tragedy of October 7 and the subsequent war. Since October 7, 1,621 Israelis or people staying in Israel have been killed. This makes the war one of Israel's bloodiest wars, especially in terms of Israeli civilian casualties. To put into context, roughly the same number of Israelis were killed on October 7 itself as in the three years of the Second Intifada (2000-2003)

ACTIVITY

Take some time to talk amongst yourselves about how we reflect on these devastating losses for the Jewish people and Israel. Then, take time to read these 8 stories to personalize who we have lost. All the stories are taken from the Times of Israel website and reflect a cross-section of Israeli society, including Jews and non-Jews.

After you have read the stories, you can recite the Yizkor prayer for the tragedy of October 7 and include their names.

YIZKOR PRAYER FOR THE TRAGEDY OF OCTOBER 7

יִזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַנִּשְׁמֹת הַטְּהוֹרוֹת עַל וּלְלֵי טָבוֹ
 שִׁמְחַת תּוֹרָה תַּשְׁפִּיד.
 אֶת הַנִּרְצָוִים וְהַנִּרְצָווֹת, אֲנֵשִׁים, נָעִים, וְקָנִים וְטָף,
 וּבָהֶם נִם הָיָר וְהַתּוֹשֵׁב, בְּקִבּוּצִים, בְּמוֹשָׁבִים וּבְעָרִים,
 בְּבָתִּים, בְּמִסְכָּה וּבְדַרְכִּים.
 אֶת אֲמִינֵי הַלֵּב, אֲרוֹזִים וּזְלִיחִים, שֶׁנִּזְלְצוּ לַהֲגֵת
 הַיְעוּבִים. אֶת לִוְזוֹמֵי כִתּוֹת הַכּוֹנֵנוֹת וּמַגְבֵי הַגָּדָר, אֶת
 לִוְזוֹמֵי הַמִּשְׁטָרָה וְכוֹזְזוֹת הַבְּטוּחִין, וְאֶת אֲנֵשֵׁי כּוֹזְזוֹת
 הַזּוֹלִיחִין וְהַהֲצֵלָה.
 יִזְכֹּר יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּאָכֵל עַל זִכְמַת הַזְּקֵנִים, עַל אֲהֲבַת
 הַהוֹרִים, עַל זֵיו הַיַּעֲלֹבִים, וְעַל תְּמִימוֹת הַיְלָדִים.
 זָכַר לָנוּ יַעֲקֹב וְתַעֲמֹד לָנוּ וְלִכְלֵ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכוֹתֵם,
 אֲרִין אֵל תַּכְסִּי דָבָם. יִנּוּחוּ בְּשָׁלוֹם עַל מִשְׁכַּבּוֹתָם,
 וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן.

May God remember the pure souls of the victims of the massacre of Simchat Torah 2023 and the subsequent war.

Those who were murdered, men, women, the elderly and the young and among them guests from abroad, in the Kibbutzim, the communities and the towns. In their homes, at a party or on the roads. The brave civilians and soldiers that tried so hard to defend the communities. The fighters of the home guard, the defenders of the borders, the fighters of the police and the defense forces and the members of the search and rescue teams.

And amongst them:
Ayala Hetzroni, 73
Liel Hetzroni, 12
Yannai Hetzroni, 12
Vivian Silver, 74
Danit Cohen, 19
Ari Zenilman, 32
Aviya Genut, 22
Suhaib Abu Amer Razeem, 22
Amit Mann, 22
Dipesh Raj Bist, 24

Israel will remember and mourn over the wisdom of the elderly, the love of the parents, the splendour of the youth and the innocence of the children. We will remember their sacrifice and may their memory be a merit for all of Israel. May the land no longer be covered in blood. May they rest in peace, and let us say Amen.

Ayala, Liel, and Yannai Hetzroni



Ayala Hetzroni, 73, and her great niece and nephew, 12-year-old twins Liel and Yannai Hetzroni, were murdered on October 7 in Kibbutz Be'eri as Hamas terrorists were holding them hostage. The twins' grandfather, Aviya Hetzroni, was also murdered in Be'eri during the Hamas onslaught. On the day of the attack, terrorists killed Aviya while taking Liel, Yannai and Ayala to another building on Kibbutz Be'eri, where they had gathered a number of the community residents, Ynet reported. There they were killed in amid an intense firefight between Hamas and IDF troops. Only two survivors emerged from those held captive in the home. Yannai and Aviya's bodies were discovered in the weeks following the attack, and the pair were buried together on October 23 in Kibbutz Revivim. Ayala's body was located weeks later, and the family decided to hold a funeral on November 15 for both Ayala and Liel, burying personal items belonging to Liel instead of waiting for her remains, since they believed she had no chance of still being alive. A few days after the funeral was held, some remains of Liel were also identified. Aviya and his late wife, Eva — who died earlier this year — together with Ayala, raised the twins after their mother, Shira, suffered complications during their birth and was paralyzed. Shira, who could not attend the funeral, sent words to be read by someone else at the ceremony: "Ayala, I was lucky that you were a role model to my children, and now you are together. You gave up so much without ever asking for anything in return." One mourner at the funeral said, "Ayala was an aunt in the job of mom, and Aviya was a grandfather and dad. Liel grew up surrounded by love. She was mature and childish, she was strong and tough, but she had her own fears she dealt with bravely and honestly." They said the twins had a close and special relationship with Ayala, and a unique bond with each other. Omri Shifroni, Ayala's nephew, wrote on Facebook that his aunt was "pure, pleasant, beloved, like a second mother to me, and always accepted everyone and tolerated everything and was responsible for everyone... our beloved Ayalush, who raised with endless love two incredible twins who she got as a gift for her 60th birthday and were murdered with her just 12.5 years later. "Liel was eulogized at the funeral as "friendly and sensitive to all, both children and adults. Liel blossomed outside of the classroom. Her peers described her as a great girl who loved to go crazy with her friends — a troublemaker with a pure heart, a girl with a huge laugh. "After his death, Yannai's teacher described him as "a leader among his peers and an amazing friend. He was funny and amicable, always ready to brighten the room with his humor and warmth." Another said he "never failed to brighten every day with his infectious joy and laughter. He was a wonderful friend and also the class's resident entertainer, spreading smiles to everyone around."

Vivian Silver



Canadian-born peace activist Vivian Silver, 74, was killed by Hamas terrorists in her home in Kibbutz Be'eri on October 7. For more than a month, she was declared missing, and believed to be captured and held hostage in Gaza. But on November 14, her family confirmed that her remains had finally been identified via DNA. One of her sons, Yonatan Zeigen, was on the phone with his mother when gunmen arrived in Be'eri. When he heard gunshots outside her window, he told her to hang up so she could stay quiet, he told the BBC. They began to text one other on WhatsApp. He last heard from her around 11 a.m. that Saturday, as Silver hid inside a closet in the house, and told her son that the terrorists were inside the house. She believed that a massacre was happening and told her son that she loved him. "She wrote me, 'They're inside the house, it's time to stop joking and say goodbye.'""And I wrote back that 'I love you, Mum. I have no words, I'm with you.'" Vivian responded, "I feel you." That was the last message, Zeigen told the BBC. Zeigen told a Canadian news outlet that her house had been burned to the ground but a body had not been found at that time, nor signs of a struggle, leading the family to believe she was being held hostage in Gaza. "She was a very busy woman doing good, and she was also a wonderful mother and grandmother," Zeigen told CBC News last month. Silver was known for her peace activism, including her involvement in the organization called Women Wage Peace, as well as The Road to Recovery, driving sick Palestinians from Gaza to Israeli hospitals. She held a meeting of international supporters of Women Wage Peace just a few days before the Hamas attacks. Anat Saragusti, a feminist activist, mourned the loss of Silver in a post on X. "A woman of compassion and humanity, with an endless, deep and ongoing commitment to Jewish-Arab partnership and peace," she wrote. "Yes, peace." Silver's friend, Shifra Bronznick, a prominent Jewish social justice activist, eulogized her to JTA shortly after her death was confirmed. "Vivian was always persistent in the pursuit of peace and justice," Bronznick said. "She was a lifelong feminist, a committed activist, a fearless leader, an exceptional friend and a loving mother, wife and grandmother."

Sgt. Danit Cohen



Sgt. Danit Cohen, 19, a soldier in the IDF Southern Command, from Sderot, was killed on October 7 while battling a Hamas invasion of the IDF Urim Base in southern Israel. Danit and others on base, including Sgt. Shir Shlomo, headed to the base's war room when the attack began, believing it to be the safest place. There, along with Cpt. Alina Pravosudova and Sgt. Maj. Aharon Farash, they attempted to prevent the terrorists from storming the war room but were unsuccessful. All but two of the soldiers inside were killed, with the only survivors being those who were wounded but played dead. In total, eight soldiers were killed at the Urim base on October 7. Danit is survived by her parents, Yishai and Hana, and her seven siblings, Tamar-Or, Shirel, Eliya, Lior, Taliya, Shenhav and Meshi. She was buried on October 9 in Noga. Her uncle, Master Sgt. Shimon Barami, was killed during his service in the Border Police in 2011. She was a graduate of the prestigious Mae Boyar High School in Jerusalem, where she resided in the dorms throughout her time there. In a post announcing her death, the school described Danit as a "brave girl, sensitive, with high self-awareness. Behind her quiet figure, stood a young woman with a rich internal world, high capabilities and an aspiration for excellence." A eulogy posted on the Dvora Forum site, which promotes the integration of women into national security positions, noted that Danit excelled in her army role and had even been asked by her superiors to consider taking an officer's course. The post noted that she had dreams of one day being an actress, and had always played an active role in school plays, dance competitions and had hosted her own stand-up routines for her friends in the dorms. She also loved to cook and bake, in particular alongside her mother, who always made her favorite foods when she returned home from the army. Danit's sister, Taliya, 14, wrote online that when she was home from the army, "We got to do so many things, Danit loved to bake so we always baked her something different... I loved to just watch from the side and see her preparing things with love and joy, and to know that at the end it was for me too." "When Danit was with us for the weekends, there was always laughter, not a minute without laughter," Taliya continued. "She was so funny and laughed at everything, even when it was aimed at her." Amid the large family, she said, Danit "was someone who you could tell everything to, and always get good advice... With everyone in the family she shared a unique language and she understood everyone, all nine of us." Her mother, Hana, told Yediot Aharonot that "Danit loved the army and also the job she chose... I knew that her job was to sit in the war room and report if there was an attack or something else. She never told me any more than that." Instead, Hana said, Danit would send videos of herself on the job playing happy music in the background and write, "See, I'm listening to good music and everyone is happy." Danit, she said, was extremely close to Shir and to Cpl. Lior Levy, who were both slain on the base that day: "Danit was the one who united everyone. Even if she had finished her shift and one of her friends was still on duty, she would stay with them instead of going to sleep." She recalled dropping Danit off at her base every Tuesday, after "ironing and arranging her uniform and her suitcase. This was our quality time — 25 minutes from Sderot to the base, we would play happy music... A 19-year-old girl, with so many dreams that were shattered."

Master Sgt. Ari Zenilman



Zenilman, an American-Israeli who made aliyah with his family during his adolescent years, was described by his loved ones as a thoughtful and hard-working father who cared deeply about his family. "Ari, at this stage of his life, was first and foremost a husband and a father, that was the most important thing to him," said his mother, Lisa Weinsoff, to The Times of Israel. On the morning of October 7, Zenilman hurried to Israel's south to help fend off Hamas's invasion with the rest of his reserve unit. He and his fellow soldiers initially fought in Kissufim, and were later deployed to Kibbutz Re'im, Kfar Aza and Nahal Oz. Zenilman's unit was sent into Gaza soon after the negotiated truce between Israel and Hamas expired at the start of December. On December 3, Zenilman called his wife and parents to let them know that he was handing in his cell phone, with the implication that he would soon be deployed to Gaza. A week later, Zenilman was killed in Khan Younis. He was buried at the Mount Herzl military cemetery in Jerusalem on December 11 and left behind his widow, Chava, and three children, Achiya, Tali and Maayan. The couple's youngest child, Maayan, was born only a week before Hamas launched its devastating attack on Israel. Born in New York to Robert and Lisa Weinsoff Zenilman, Ari was the eldest of five siblings. His family moved to Ma'ale Adumim as he was entering 9th grade, and he quickly mastered Hebrew. Weinsoff recalled that her son would often tell people, even other English-speakers, to talk to him only in Hebrew so that he could learn the language. "Everyone seemed to know really early on that Ari was blessed with a brilliant mind," she said. "He loved to read, he read from when he was a child. As a teenager and adult he always had a book with him whether it was a sefer mishna, gemara or his Kindle." Though he was exceptionally intelligent, those close to Zenilman added that he was also humble and down to earth. "Ari was pretty much always the smartest person in the room. For anyone else, that fact would have been a defining character trait. Not for Ari. It's not that he didn't care about his intelligence, he just never wore it as a badge. It was just a tool he used to be a better person and a better Jew," noted Ilan Mintz, his longtime friend. After finishing high school, Zenilman enrolled in a hesder program at Har Etzion yeshiva, enabling him to combine his army service in the Nahal Brigade with Torah study. "He wanted to go to yeshiva, he wanted hesder and he wanted a combat role," Weinsoff said. "That really mattered to him." Zenilman met his wife, Chava, in his sixth and final year at yeshiva. The two got married during his first year at Hebrew University, where he studied philosophy, political science and economics while working as a research assistant at the Kohelet Policy Forum. After their marriage, the two moved to Jerusalem, where they raised their children. Zenilman began working at the Central Bureau of Statistics after graduating with his bachelor's, and later on made the switch into the high-tech industry working for Mobileye, a vehicle tech company. Chava Zenilman, his widow, recalled that despite working in high-tech, a demanding industry which requires long hours from employees, her husband would always make time for family. "Ari always made the effort. He brought the kids to gan [preschool] in the morning... He made the effort to leave work a little earlier to see the kids every day, to eat dinner with them and read them a goodnight book," she said. She added that even when he started his master's degree while working a full-time job, he still found time for his children. "He was my inspiration. When we met, I knew that I married someone who will be my best friend, the love of my life... but also he was so inspiring to me," Chava said. "I experienced him as a role model, that's why I wanted him to be the father of my kids."

Aviya Genut



Aviya Genut, 22, from Tzufim, was murdered by Hamas terrorists at the Supernova music festival on October 7. Her funeral was held on October 15 in Kfar Saba. She is survived by her parents, Elad and Yifat, and her younger siblings Aniam, Tahel and Sinai. Friends and family said she loved yoga, hula hooping, nature and watching sunsets, and was addicted to drinking coffee. During her mandatory army service, she served as an instructor on the Iron Dome battery, and after she finished she worked as a waitress to save up money for a trip. She had returned to Israel just a few months before she was killed from six months of traveling around the world. Aviya grew up in a religious family, but moved away from that lifestyle as a young adult. Her maternal grandmother, Tzipi, told Israel Hayom that the two were notably close, and she even visited Aviya during her trip to South America: "Aviya would go to festivals and come and sleep by me, she would always say to me, 'Don't worry about me, when I come home I'll come to cuddle with you.' I miss her so much." Her aunt, Yael, was just a few years older than Aviya and the pair would call each other "half," as shorthand for "my other half." "A ray of sunshine in the body of a person," she wrote on Instagram. "You would connect to other people within seconds, you drew people together, you were so alive, dancing with happiness, your presence was so felt. It was impossible to miss you when you entered a room... I will always remember your huge smile and your joy. My heart is burning. Now I have been left just a half." Her paternal grandmother, Noga, wrote on Facebook a day before her funeral to "my Aviya, beloved, diligent, with a lust for life... How will we say goodbye to you? How will we not see you anymore? We received a gift for 22.6 years, and tomorrow we will give it back. Tomorrow, God will heal your wounds, and we will cry and cry, and we will die from the sadness and pain." At her funeral, her mother, Yifat, noted that she was born right before Pesach, and killed on Simhat Torah: "We always said that you had a lofty soul," she said, pointing out that they learned of her death on Shabbat Bereishit, the Shabbat where they read the first book of the Torah, but "we don't want to start from the beginning [Bereishit] without you." "For 22.5 years I would admire you, watch you with amazement," she continued. "This wasn't all you were blessed with, my love, but with inner beauty and a special goodness, wisdom, knowledge and maturity. This too I would watch with incredulity, how a girl, a young lady, woman who was so young spoke to me with such maturity... I marveled at it in every conversation." Yifat thanked Aviya, "that your soul chose us to be your parents. We tried so hard to fulfill that role in a good and correct manner — we didn't always succeed, sometimes we really failed, you know how it is with a firstborn. I'm sorry my beautiful, sorry for the mistakes, for the times it wasn't enough and we didn't know how. The truth is we tried. Thank you my girl, thank you for the time with you, that you raised us, all of us, and taught us how to be better."

Suhaib Abu Amer Razeem



Suhaib Abu Amer Razeem, 22, from East Jerusalem, was killed in Kibbutz Be’eri on October 7 after he was kidnapped by Hamas from the Supernova music festival and brought there to serve as a translator. Razeem, a minibus driver, was waiting near the site of the festival to bring partygoers home when Hamas attacked. Footage from that day shows Hamas accosting Razeem and demanding to know who he was. Some of the terrorists in the video suggest letting him go, nevertheless they kidnapped him and brought him to Be’eri. In Be’eri, the terrorists brought Razeem to the home of Pessi Cohen, where he and 14 other civilians were held together, while Hamas attempted to negotiate with IDF soldiers who had arrived on the scene. The terrorists used the hostages as a bargaining tool to demand safe passage to Gaza, intending to bring the hostages with them. They threatened to kill the hostages if the IDF opened fire. According to the two survivors from inside the house, the terrorists positioned the hostages between themselves and advancing IDF troops as a gun battle blazed. One terrorist surrendered, using one of the survivors, Yasmin Porat, as a human shield as he exited the house, thus saving her. The gunfire between the sides continued for several hours, until, near dusk, the terrorists launched a rocket-propelled grenade toward the troops, according to reports. IDF commander Brig. Gen. Barak Hiram ordered troops to fire two tank shells at the house. Only one civilian emerged alive from the carnage. It is not clear who inside the home was killed from IDF fire and who was slain by the terrorists, and the family members of those killed inside the house have demanded an investigation. Razeem’s body was only identified 12 days later, during which time his family searched frantically for news, unaware of his whereabouts. Ultimately they announced the confirmation of his death “with great sadness and grief... we had hoped that you would return.” He was buried on October 19 in Jerusalem. The circumstances and location of his death were not known until weeks after he was killed. His family said that they were originally mistreated by the police when they tried to track down his whereabouts, and told to “go ask Hamas.” His brother, Abed, told the Kan public broadcaster that “all day I think [about him], I can’t sleep at night, I’ve had enough of life.” In December, Abed and another brother, Mahmood, retraced Suhaib’s footsteps with The New York Times while attempting to uncover his true fate. “If they knew he was Arab,” said Abed, “why didn’t they let him go?” Mahmood said, “People ask me who killed him, but I don’t know how he died. I decided to come here to try to find out, hoping that if I know more about his last moments, the pain will ease.”

Paramedic Amit Mann



Magen David Adom paramedic and paramedic course instructor Amit Mann, 22, was murdered by Hamas terrorists when they stormed the clinic in Kibbutz Be'eri where she was treating the wounded from the devastating attack from Gaza on October 7. Mann was trapped in the clinic with the injured and dead for many hours before the terrorists succeeded in breaking in. A resident of Be'eri, Mann was buried in the cemetery in Netivot. The funeral was attended by hundreds of her family members, friends and colleagues. "Amit sacrificed herself while trying to protect the lives of the patients. her priority was only what was best for them. Her untimely passing left us shocked and in pain," said MDA director-general Eli Bin. "Magen David Adom cherishes all that Amit has done, and our employees and volunteers bow their heads and hug her family. May her memory be blessed," said Bin. Mann's fellow paramedic and best friend Oshrit Haddad said she could always be depended upon. "Amit was someone who was simply always there, you could always trust her. On Saturday she continued to help patients under fire and tried to save their lives. She fought for their lives until the last moments," said Haddad.

Dipesh Raj Bist



Dipesh Raj Bist, 24, a Nepali student from the village of Lekum in Darchula, was murdered by Hamas in Kibbutz Alumim on October 7. He is survived by his mother, Parwati, and his younger siblings; he was predeceased by his father, Ashok. His body was sent back to Nepal and arrived there on October 22. He was cremated and his ashes were scattered in the Mahakali River in the Kanchanpur district in a religious ceremony a day later. Bist was one of 10 Nepali students studying and working in Israel who were murdered that day. The group ran to a bomb shelter when the rocket fire began, and were slaughtered inside by a group of Hamas terrorists. Survivor Dhanbahadur Chaudhari told the Guardian that the terrorists threw grenades inside the bunker and fired volleys of bullets: "When I woke up I was covered in blood and I could see my friends dead and injured around me. One friend didn't have legs, another didn't have hands. There were dead bodies of my friends in the door of the bunker."

Another survivor, KC Pramod, told the Guardian: "We started shouting 'We are Nepali, we are Nepali' but they didn't listen to anyone, they just kept firing and threw two grenades into the bunker." Bist was among 265 Nepali students studying in Israel under an 11-month "Learn and Earn" program, who had all arrived only a few weeks before the Hamas onslaught, though they were not all situated near the Gaza border. According to the Nepali Times, Raj was his family's sole caregiver after his father Ashok died of cancer. He was pursuing a degree in agriculture at Far-Western University in Tikapur Kailali, Nepal. The newspaper reported that his mother, Parwati Bist, fainted after hearing the news of his death. "He used to call our mother every evening," Dipesh's sister Mamata told the news outlet. "But when we called him on Saturday we could not reach him and started getting really worried." Mamata recalled her late brother as being "brilliant and studious," and seeking to earn money to help their younger brother pay for medical school. His grandfather, Hariraj Bist, told the Naya Patrika Daily that his grandson "had a desire to pursue public service in his country." "Dipesh Raj thought that he should do something in his country rather than abroad," his grandfather added, noting that "he went to a foreign land" to gain experience and skills before his return home. "Our family has been hit by thunder."

SEFER YONAH

We read the book of Jonah on the afternoon of Yom Kippur. It is a strange story that has no historical context and reads as a parable. God calls on Jonah to call on the people of Nineveh to repent. Jonah, however, rebels and tries to run away by sea in the opposite direction to Nineveh. A storm forces the sailors on Jonah's ship to throw him into the waters. Jonah is then swallowed by a big fish! Inside the fish, Jonah repents, prays to God, and then the fish spits him out onto dry land. Jonah then goes to Nineveh, where he succeeds in convincing the city to repent. After the city is saved, Jonah escapes to the desert and is saved by a tree miraculously appearing for him. As you can see, it is a strange story!

But what is the message of the story, and why do we read it on Yom Kippur?

ACTIVITY

The Art of Jonah

Print in color these different artistic impressions of the story of Jonah. Put them out in front of the group. Ask members of the group to choose their favorite and least favorite. Look at each picture in turn and ask the group what they think the artist is saying about the story of Jonah.

Themes that can be discussed:

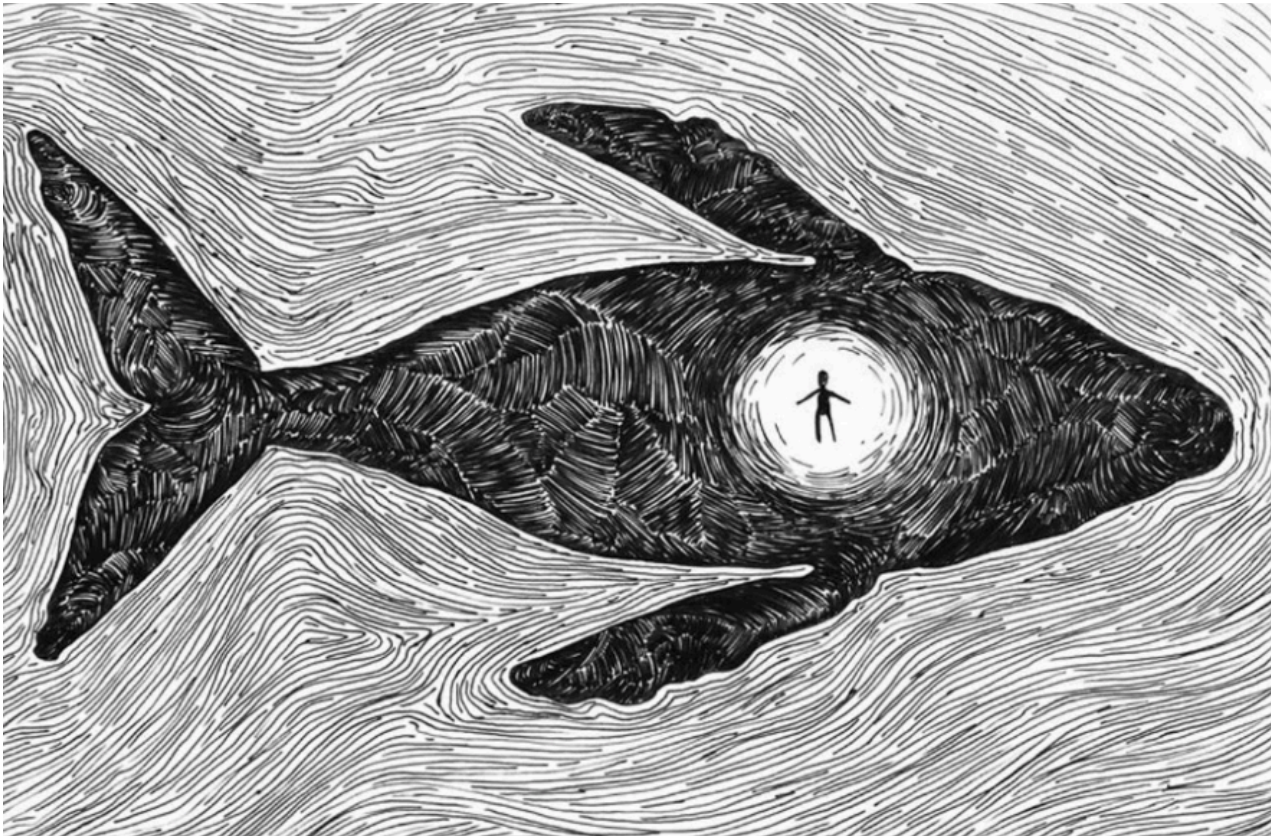
- Justice versus mercy
- Loneliness versus solitude
- The power of prayer
- Concern for all beings
- Fulfilling one's mission
- The power of repentance



Jonah and the Cave of the Earth, Creator Unknown



Jonah and the Whale, by Art and Clay Studio



Jonah and the Whale, by Alma Sheppard-Matsuo



Jonah, by Granger



Jonah and the Whale, by Polly Castor



Jonah in the Whale, by Brooke Sendele



Jonah and the Whale, by Salvador Dali



Jonah and the Whales, by Bill Bell



Jonah on the Beach at Nineveh, by Daniel A. Lewis

