



Kavanot / Intentions

ANSHE EMET SYNAGOGUE
HIGH HOLY DAY COMPENDIUM 5781



from: Rabbi Michael S. Siegel

Friends,

The Mahzor, the prayerbook that accompanies us each year on our journey through the High Holy Days, remains largely unchanged since it was first committed to writing. Because our lives change from year to year, as does the world around us, the Mahzor may speak in different ways than last Rosh HaShanah. In a year that has been so very tumultuous, this document is designed to encourage members of our community to look at our prayers anew, guided by the thoughtful comments and insights of clergy and educators who are presently serving Anshe Emet Synagogue or who have in the past. This compendium was created to bring new insights that are meaningful and thought-provoking to you and your loved ones. We hope that you will take the time to reflect upon and ponder the wisdom that our tradition offers on the eve of a new year with a group of remarkable teachers and friends.

I send my immense gratitude to all of the fine contributors and educators of Kavanot and editor Tamar Brooks, creator Rabbi David Russo and designer Emilie Weisberg.

May we all be blessed with a true Shana Tova.

Michael



Rosh Hashanah

MA'ARIV FOR EREV ROSH HASHANAH - NAOMI RICHMAN

An alumna of Drisha Institute (NYC), Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies and The Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem, Naomi Richman has worked at Anshe Emet Synagogue as Executive Assistant to the Executive Director for nearly thirteen years.

As a child many years ago, my mother's family would descend from three different states upon Rehobeth Beach, Delaware regularly for family vacation. I still remember exiting off the highway and seeing the sign of Jack Radley real estate, the name in beautiful dark green script on a yellow background. It was this sign, not the crash of the surf of the Atlantic Ocean or embracing my far away cousins, which I yearned for all year, which announced we had returned to a place entered only once a year.

Rosh HaShanah Ma'ariv is the Jack Radley sign for the Ten Days of Repentance, the Aseret Yimey Teshuvah. The word *teshuvah* comes from the root word *shuv* - "return", and the way to say "welcome back" in Hebrew is "*B'ruchim HaShavim*", literally "Blessed are those who are returning." Ma'ariv says "welcome back" to this holy place in time not with the piercing sound of the shofar, but with simpler music which invites our voices to join. It gently receives us with simple liturgy and structure, reminding us that this time is a retreat where we "focus beyond the ordinary" (1) on becoming closer to God and repairing our relationships with each other and the world.

Yes, the awe and majesty and closeness to God are coming. But first, welcome to this time that has been reserved for you, the entire Jewish people, all year, and every year. Welcome back.

Notes

1. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, *Introduction: The Koren Rosh HaShana Mahzor*, page xiii.



Rosh Hashanah

SHACHARIT - JESSICA FISHER

Assistant Rabbi at Beth El Synagogue Center in New Rochelle, NY and former member of Anshe Emet

Poet Marilyn Nelson believes that “poetry comes out of silence and leads us back to silence... [P]oetry consists of words and phrases and sentences that emerge like something coming out of water. They emerge before us, and they call up something in us, but then they turn us back into our own silence.”

The prayers lining the pages of our machzorim, too, are a kind of poetry that rise up out of silence and bring us back to the quiet, open spaces that allow us to explore our inner selves. The messages contained in the words and the melodies we use to give them life guide us through the waters; they humble us and help us sift through what emerges.

It is with this posture of modestly awaiting what might come that we enter into the Rosh Hashanah liturgy. Shifting the focus from the typical Shabbat Shacharit service, we begin Rosh Hashanah Shacharit with a bold proclamation: HaMelech! God is the Sovereign, sitting enthroned over the universe, over us; human subjects struggling to grasp what such majesty might even mean for us, trying to imagine how to truly submit to such an authority.

And then, on the next page we find an answer with another departure from Shabbat: the insertion of Psalm 130 before the Barechu. “Out of the depths I call to you, Adonai.” It is not just that God is high, but that we are low. Prayer happens when we feel our humility and humanity. “I wait for Adonai. I wait, yearning for God’s response.” To paraphrase Nelson, prayer comes out of the silence of waiting for God’s response and the act of praying leads us back to humbling silence.

Where do you fill the silence? When does silence fill you up?



Rosh Hashanah

HINENI - ELIZABETH SIMON BERKE

Hazzan Liz Berke is the Interim Hazzan at Anshe Emet Synagogue as well as the Director of Adult Education and the AES Jews by Choice program.

Every year, I have the privilege of saying a few words of introduction for the Hineni. It is a personal prayer, meant for the Hazzan, but through its recitation I always like to have the congregation be a part of the moment. My practice is to have the congregation join me on a refrain of the word Hineni at the beginning, in between each paragraph, and at the end. I hope the melody is going through your head as you read this.

Standing alone in a space to pray,
We are all presenting ourselves individually this year.
Can we bridge the distance to feel together?
Feel through and beyond your walls.

How can you be in the moment?
Our minds are swarming with news and distractions -
Hineni can help us focus on the here and now.

Feel your chair
Feel the air
Feel your breath
Hineni - here I am, here you are.

Feel the texture of your clothes
Feel your feet on the floor
Feel your fingers on the pages
Hineni, here I am, here you are.

Close your eyes
Open your eyes,
See your space
See through your space
Hineni, here I am, here we are.

Be here
Be present
Be open
Be now



Step up ---
Step in

Here we are.



Rosh Hashanah

TEKIYAT SHOFAR – JUDY FINKELSTEIN-TAFF

Judy Finkelstein-Taff is the Head of School at Chicago Jewish Day School

Every year at Chicago Jewish Day School, our students sound the Shofar each day of Elul to prepare us for the Yamim Noraim. The students are always excited to bring a shofar of their own to school and to serve as a baal tokeah in their classroom or in an all-school gathering. There is something so inspiring about seeing children carrying on this ancient tradition that brings even greater meaning to this ritual.

This year, the sounds of the shofar were muffled by the necessity of covering the opening of the horn with a mask, one that was eerily similar to the masks we are all wearing in the year of COVID-19. At first it felt a bit sad, but then I realized it just needed reframing. This year, the sound of the shofar is a call to action like never before. This year, we are called to rise up to answer a call to protect ourselves and by extension, our community.

Tikeah . . . think about our actions and how the decisions we make for ourselves will affect others.

Shevarim what can we do to help if we hear someone has contracted this virus? Bringing them a challah is a good first step.

Truah how can we use social media in a positive way and not contribute to hurting someone's feelings?

The sounds of the shofar may be muffled this year, but the message is still loud and clear: We have survived wars, persecution, anti-Semitism, bigotry and hatred. We have learned the lessons of Noah's Ark, the Tower of Babel, King Pharoah, King Achashverosh, Haman and Hitler. We can get through this.

Listen to the sounds of children sounding the shofar, listen to the muffled sounds of our Baal Tikayah and understand that as we pray for a time when we can unmask ourselves and unmask our shofar, we are simultaneously answering the call. We will once again open our hearts to the calls of the shofar and thank God for our families, friends and community. This year more than ever, we will think of the words of Rabbi Hillel as we prepare to hear the sound of the shofar: If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?



Rosh Hashanah

UNETANEH TOKEF – D’ROR CHANKIN-GOULD

Rabbi D’ror Chankin-Gould is one of the fine members of the Anshe Emet Clergy.

UneTaneh Tokef is a little heavier this year. A little sadder. A little more raw. The prayer talks about how we don’t know our fate. The prayer talks about how life could end in an instant. The prayer talks about how we are fleeting, temporal beings.

And this year, that Eternal Truth, hits a little closer to home, not just in our individual lives, but also in our collective lives.

This is the year of COVID-19, a pandemic that has ruthlessly robbed us of so many precious souls, and has especially devastated the most vulnerable amongst us: communities of color, and those with low income.

This is also the year when George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and so many others were betrayed by those meant to protect. The cries of their mothers and their children reverberate in our ears. The injustice and disparity, which has always been present, is laid bare before our eyes.

This has been a heavy year.

UneTaneh Tokef reminds us that we do not know how long we have. This year has brought that reminder rather too close to home.

But UneTaneh Tokef also offers us a way forward; a path. The prayer says, we can alleviate the harshness of our Fate, through teshuvah, tefillah, and tzedakah. We can make life *better, more holy, more loving*. We can make every minute count. We can do so if we change our ways and make right our wrongs. Teshuvah. We can do so if we turn to prayer and contemplation and reflection. Tefillah. And we can do so if we do justice - if we see a broken world, and rather than accepting it for what it is, if we fight to make it safer and more just and more whole. Tzedakah.

We *cannot* predict the future. We *can* do everything in our power to make the future brighter.

UneTaneh Tokef calls out to us today, with the memory of those we’ve lost, and with a



message for those who remain: make *each* day count. *You* have the power to alleviate pain, to bring in the light.



Rosh Hashanah

MALCHUYOT – GARY PORTON

Dr. Gary Porton was Professor of Jewish Studies, Religion, History, and Comparative Literature at University of Illinois - Urbana-Champaign. Gary and his family have been members at Anshe Emet for over a decade.

Rosh HaShanah's Musaf Amidah is the longest of the year. Its three middle "blessings" contain biblical verses representing the three parts of the Hebrew Bible—Torah, Prophets, and Writings. These verses underscore the three central themes of Rosh Hashanah—God's sovereignty, God's remembering, and sounding the shofar—as they appear throughout the TaNaKh.

God's Sovereignty, malkuyot, is absolute. God alone has power. God, as sovereign, may seek advice, but only God makes the ultimate decision. Egypt's Pharaoh, Judah's David, Rome's emperor, or the pre-modern monarchs of Europe and Asia are the models. God as our monarch has total control over life and death, poverty and riches, famine and abundance. The Roman emperor's thumbs up or thumbs down that decided a gladiator's fate informs the liturgy's image of God as Sovereign.

Zikronot, remembrances, ask God to remember the covenant. God promised our ancestors that if they worshipped only God and followed God's instructions, God would grant their descendants their own land and make them as numerous as the stars in the sky. Our ancestors' acceptance of the covenant means that God must set aside any anger at our sins and shortcomings. We need God to remember that the original promise to our ancestors holds and overrides any anger God may feel towards our generation or us as individuals. The Zikronot remind God that no matter our faults, the promise to our ancestors requires God to think kindly of us.

Shofarot reminds us that the Shofar's sound echoes throughout our history. It was heard on Mount Sinai; it praises God; it awakens us to battle; and it will announce the world-to-come. The Shofar's sound points to Sinai and our obligations; to our praising God; and to our final redemption.



For centuries, Jews have understood that God alone has absolute control of the world. They understood that whatever happened in their age or to them as individuals, God's promise to our ancestors guarantees that eventually, millions of Jews will hear the sound of the Shofar as people declare, "God is One and God's name is One." Our reciting the Musaf Amidah thus places each of us within the history of our people. While we may forget it in our day-to-day lives, we are part of a larger sacred story.

Some of us are unsure about God and God's power. Even for us, this Amidah has meaning. The Malkuyot remind us that much of significance that happens on earth we cannot explain or control. These verses teach us that actions have consequences, whether immediate or long term. They assert that we are responsible for what we do or fail to do, that our actions affect us and those who come after us.

The Zikronot remind us that we did not create ourselves. We are who we are because of people and events that came before us. Turning to the matriarchs and patriarchs in Genesis reminds us that no one is perfect and that imperfect individuals can reveal important, life-changing truths and embark on world-altering journeys.

The Shofarot teach us to pay attention, to stay alert, to recognize the possibilities around us. They awaken us to see what people are doing, what people need, and what is fair or unjust in the world. The Shofarot remind us to pay attention not only to ourselves, our families, and friends, but also to everyone and everything around us.



Rosh Hashanah

ZICHRONOT - JACOB CYTRYN

Executive Director, Camp Ramah in Wisconsin/Ramah Day Camp, Member of AES

I imagine it is jarring for all of us who are invested in transformative Jewish summer camp and Israel experiences to deal with their absence this year. In late May of the last eight years, I departed Lakeview to head up to Camp Ramah in Wisconsin, bidding friends and our beloved community farewell as we prepared for the arrival of hundreds of campers and staff - over sixty of whom come from Anshe Emet and its surrounding neighborhoods.

Every summer at camp, we witness at least one breathtaking rainbow - a colorful miracle stretching across the gorgeous sky of Wisconsin's Northwoods. I didn't see any rainbows this summer, save for one or two through the sprinkler as my sons tried to stay cool in our front yard. Those camp rainbows seem unimportant when we think about the overwhelming losses to the Jewish community this summer: too many deaths; too much illness; Torah scrolls left unread. Less tragic but very significant as we look to our Jewish future - an entire camp season of Jewish living, friends, independence, and unbelievable fun has been erased.

The majesty and miracle of the rainbow make a brief and implicit appearance in the zichronot (memories) section of Rosh Hashanah musaf. Zichronot here refer not to our memories but to God's. The collection of ten Biblical verses in zichronot are reminders to God of moments and episodes when God remembered human beings, expressions of God's love which we hope will be repeated in our own time. The examples of these moments begin with the most universal of them all: when God remembered Noah and the animals in the ark and "calmed the waters." A little later in the story, we learn that the rainbow, the calm after the storm, will forever be a sign to us that God shall not destroy the world again.

We tend to focus inwardly during the High Holy Day season, asking ourselves how we can improve as human beings. This year, I think it appropriate that we channel an ancient Jewish instinct and engage with God on how, in partnership, we can push each other - humanity and God - to make the world a more livable place. God, please show us the figurative rainbows that have been so hard to find during the last six months. Reassure us that the stormy waters will soon subside. May next summer's rainbows at camp be a sign, like they were for Noah, of smoother sailing ahead.



Rosh Hashanah

SHOFAROT – TAMAR CYTRYN

Director of Judaic Studies and Campus Life at the Chicago Jewish Day School. The Cytryn family have been members of Anshe Emet for close to ten years!

In the *mishna* (oral tradition), our Rabbis ponder what the shofar blasts should sound like. What kind of noise should we aim to produce when blowing the shofar? The *mishna* suggests it sound like a "יבבה", a "yevava", often translated as a wail or sob or whine.

There is only person in the *Tanakh* (our Bible) described as making these sounds. It is a woman who only appears once and doesn't even have her own name!

Shoftim/Judges 5:28 reads:

בְּעַד הַחַלּוֹן נִשְׁקָפָה וַתִּיבֵב אִם סִסְרָא בְּעַד הָאֲשָׁנָב
מְדוּעַ בִּישׁ רָכְבוּ לָבוֹא מְדוּעַ אָחֲרוּ פְעָמֵי מִרְכָּבוֹתָיו

"Through the window the mother of Sisera looked forth and sobbed, and peered through the window; why is his chariot late in coming? Why tarry the strides of his chariots?"

Sisera was a very successful commander of the Canaanite army of King Jabin of Hazor. He commanded an army that included 900 chariots. According to Judges chapters 4 & 5, Sisera was eventually defeated by the forces of the Israelite tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali under the command of Barak and Deborah. The verse quoted above describes his mother waiting by the window for her son.

Questions:

1. What do you think the mother of Sisera is feeling at this moment?
2. What do you think the Israelites felt at his defeat?
3. Why do you think the Rabbis chose this particular woman to pattern the sound of the shofar after?
4. Do you think there is a connection between her experience and our experience on Rosh Hashanah?



Kol Nidrei / Erev Yom Kippur

KOL NIDREI – JANE KANAREK

Rabbi Dr. Jane Kanarek is Associate Professor of Rabbinics and Associate Dean of Academic Development and Advising at Hebrew College. She was a member of Anshe Emet from 2000-2005.

“And the sons of Israel were among those who went to procure rations” (Genesis 42:5)

Using this verse about Joseph’s brothers who travelled to Egypt to find food for their family in the midst of famine, the Jerusalem Talmud (Y. Megillah 4:3, 75b) teaches that ten people together form a community -- a minyan. These brothers journey together to ward off suffering. Much as this idea of family care forming the basis for minyan is powerful, we also need to remember that these same ten brothers cast their younger brother Joseph into a pit to die. Instead of this verse about Joseph’s brothers, the Talmud could have used Abraham’s plea that God refrain from destroying Sodom if even ten righteous people were found there. By choosing Joseph’s brothers and not the ten righteous of Sodom, the Talmud reminds us that the grounds for building community do not lie in perfection.

On Yom Kippur, before we recite the Kol Nidrei prayer, we ask for permission to pray together with those who have transgressed. We declare that we, who have all sinned, may now pray together as a community. We enter Kol Nidrei with an acknowledgement that we are not perfect. We have all acted wrongly, and we all have the power to right those wrongs and to forgive. Joseph will save his brothers from famine and eventually reveal himself to them; they will ask for his forgiveness, and he will grant it freely.

The Jerusalem Talmud, by using Joseph’s brothers as a model for community, teaches us that communities are not composed of the perfectly righteous. Instead, community depends on our willingness to journey together, to sustain one another, and to right our wrongs, even deep ones. As we recite Kol Nidrei, let us remember that our job is not to become perfect, but rather, in this space of our imperfections, to ask how we may sustain one another, where we may find forgiveness, and where and how we may create beloved communities.



Kol Nidrei / Erev Yom Kippur

AMIDAH - JANE SHAPIRO

Founder of Orot: Center for New Jewish Learning

Craft, Conscience and the Art of Vulnerability

Perhaps, like me, you have favorite prayers that only come around once a year. These are prayers that speak to a specific and precious moment: the lifting of the first matza at the seder; Rock of Ages over candles "fuuurios they assaaailed us." Others have haunting and beautiful melodies like the Kol Nidrei, that we know reach back to a distant time. And yet others are just complicated and weird and fun like the prayers for Rain and Dew.

But for me, the prayer I most look forward to saying all year long is Ki Hineah Kachomer, located just before the last recitation of God's 13 Attributes on the evening of Kol Nidrei. We have already begun the Yom Kippur dance of reckoning with our conduct in the past year while boldly reminding God that compassion and forgiveness are God's natural inclinations.

The piyut (poetic) prayer seems to have been written in France in the 12th century. As you read the words, it does hearken back to a world of craftsmanship and guilds. It is based on a scene in Jeremiah 18 where the prophet is told to go to the house of a potter (Bet haYotzer) where he observes a potter making pots. If the clay is spoiled, the potter makes it into some other vessel. I always recall the summer I took a pottery class and learned how to center a hunk of clay. It was hard to put my back into it, to apply the right pressure of hand and forearms to get the clay ready to accept whatever shape I wanted to pull. If the clay had bubbles, it would explode in the kiln. If it was not securely centered, it might decide to fly off the wheel at a high speed. It took skill.

God's presence floods into Jeremiah as he watches: "Just like clay in this potter's hands, that is what you are in My hands Israel!" God impresses upon Jeremiah how rapidly the lives of all of Israel can be disrupted and how quickly they can be overturned. These turns depend not only on God's will but also on the actions of the people.



The poem floats one line after another, taking the image of the potter and expanding it. As a stonecutter holds a stone, a blacksmith yields his anvil, a sailor steers a boat, a glassblower manipulates the molten sand; as there is thread in the hand of an embroiderer, and silver in the hand of a silversmith, so God are we in your hands. I like to close my eyes and see the images. Some are fragile and others strong. Some take physical strength and others do not. But all take precision and mastery.

God is the Yotzer, the potter, the Creator (because that is the second meaning of the word). And we are the materials of this world through which God works. This is specifically a Yom Kippur prayer because we are reminding God that unless God takes some responsibility for the quality of the clay, the sand, the metal, and the rudder, God's craftsmanship will fail. But we also take the part of these materials and say: we are just sand and dross and thread. We are uncertain and vulnerable and do not know what will become of us. But we close our eyes and sing and pray that in this year, the world will be created not just in a new but also a more beautiful, artistic and strengthened form.

Here are two versions of the prayer that I like to listen to as I prepare for Yom Kippur. One is by a pair in Chicago and the other the wonderful Israeli singer, Chava Alberstein.

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

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXAP_eMtapg



Kol Nidrei / Erev Yom Kippur

SHEMA KOLEINU - CHRISTIE CHILES TWILLIE

Christie Chiles Twillie is a member of the Anshe Emet Community and serves as the Director of the AES Choir, Shireinu.

A reflection on the unwavering commitment of Adonai to us, His chosen people.

Today and even in the most difficult of times, we seek moments to come together to enjoy and be thankful for the blessings bestowed upon us. The same is true for the African American community who, like the Jewish community, has desperately struggled while holding strong to our faith and belief that God will protect us.

Be it from times during enslavement, to making perilous journeys, overcoming our adversities or recovering from great loss of life, each time we find the strength to be thankful and to raise our voices to praise the eternal Master of the Universe who we pray will never leave us to our enemies.

On June 19th, I spoke about Cel-Liberation Day, the end of slavery for the African Americans in the United States, and I shared the song "Lift Every Voice and Sing." This beautiful song, with lyrics that are both heartbreaking and powerful, are a reflection of survival and determination to ensure our future generations have fruitful lives. We pray that they never suffer as we have in the past and we lift our voice to God in prayer to prove our ongoing devotion and love of blessings, no matter how few. I cannot help but hear the echoes of this song in the prayer Shema Koleinu - when we ask God to hear our collective voices. This song, and this Jewish verse, bind us together as people of faith who cling to our family, community and our gratitude to Adonai for always being with us.



Kol Nidrei / Erev Yom Kippur

AVINU MALKEYNU - TZIVIA GARFINKEL

Former Head of Jewish Studies, Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School

Avinu Malkeynu אבינו מלכנו

Beginning with the first day of Rosh HaShana, Avinu Malkeynu accompanies us on our way through the Ten Days of Awe, culminating with the final service of Neilah on Yom Kippur. These two words, Avinu Malkeynu, Our Father - Our King, have been on Jewish tongues since the days of Rabbi Akiva, who was the first to have used them. We are told a short story in the Talmud (Taanit, page 25b) describing a time of drought in which only Rabbi Akiva's prayer is answered. He is said to have uttered the first and last lines of Avinu Malkeynu as we know it, and his words brought the blessing of much-needed rain. Over time, many lines have been added in between the opening and closing lines of Avinu Malkeynu and it is a prayer of penitence to which we have returned through the generations.

The core idea of Jewish prayer is that every person may address the Divine. It is an act of religious expression that demonstrates an intimate relationship with God. But, is there is an underlying contradiction in the phrase, Our Father, Our King? How can the Divine be both?

Surprisingly, the phrase Avinu Malkeynu appears routinely in our daily prayers in the blessing that precedes the Shema. This blessing begins with the words: Ahava Rabba Ahavtanu - You have loved us with a great love . . . and the "You" is then identified a few lines later as "Avinu Malkeynu", Our Father, Our King.

So we have the combination of God simultaneously being father and sovereign. In human experience, a father is approachable; he is the one we turn to expecting a loving response. However, a King? A King is approached with awed reverence, with the understanding that there is a distance between us and the one who rules us. And yet, these two beings are united in Jewish prayer. God is both father, who is close and intimate, and exalted King, whom we serve and obey. The two aspects coexist. God is thus both transcendent and immanent.

Avinu Malkeynu begins with an overarching statement of confession: Our Father, Our King, we have sinned before you. It then continues with a series of statements that affirm



our trust in God, that address our need to repent, and that ask God to forgive us. The sequence of statements incorporates the themes of the weekday Amidah prayer and Avinu Malkeynu is said while standing before the open Ark. Uniquely, in the middle of the prayer, we ask God to write our names in five books, that focus on our physical, material and spiritual wellbeing:

the book of good life

the book of redemption and salvation

the book of livelihood and sustenance

the book of merit

the book of pardon and forgiveness

This prayer, that is repeated over and over, beginning on Rosh HaShana and culminating in the Neilah service of Yom Kippur, is bracketed by the words first said by Rabbi Akiva:

Avinu Malkeynu, we have sinned before You.

Avinu Malkeynu, be gracious to us and answer us, though we have no worthy deeds; act with us in charity and loving-kindness and save us.

Each time we sing the closing passage of this prayer, while I know the source is found in the Talmud with Rabbi Akiva, it is my mother's voice I hear harmonizing with the congregation around her, and it is that voice that makes this a secure anchor in my prayerful life.

Shana Tova U'Metuka! May we have a sweet and good year!



Yom Kippur Day

SHACHARIT – GARY S. WEISSERMAN

Dr. Gary S. Weisserman is the Head of School at the Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School.

Like many Jews, I sometimes struggle with prayer--or, rather, with public, liturgical worship. Maimonides tells us that until the destruction of the Second Temple, prayer was deeply individualized. But Shacharit, especially, can feel like ritual personified, and the Mishnah warns us that using prayer as a mechanical device defeats the whole purpose. I know, consciously, that keva (fixed prayer) should always enhance kavana (spirited prayer), but if I'm going to be honest, there are times during Shacharit when it feels like I'm looking at a reflection in a mirror while simultaneously contemplating the appearance of the mirror itself. It feels impossible to focus on both at the same time.

On those occasions when I grow most frustrated with my ability to strike the appropriate balance between ritual and intent--notably on Yom Kippur morning, when we also endure our own bodily discomfort--I find myself asking the most basic of questions: what am I doing this for, anyway? I don't ask that in some grand, ontological way, but with a very specific focus in mind. Each prayer we read or chant has form, meaning, and purpose. When form and meaning feel flat or rote, I try instead to dwell on purpose: Why are we saying this, now? What does it mean, and what does it accomplish? How does it get me closer to God, shape my interactions with others, or help me understand myself?

The service begins with Pesukei d'Zimra, which are not prayers but prologue; poetic verses intended as--well, spiritual calisthenics preparing us for the exertion of prayer. But they also serve the purpose of reminding us of both etiquette and our submissiveness to God, by praising God before seeking to attend our own needs.

As we turn to the most central prayer of Judaism, the Shema reminds us of the core elements of Jewish belief, including our personal and collective relationship with God. It recalls our obligation to fulfill God's commandments, while invoking the memory of Egypt as a call to action.

Having done so, we begin Tachanun, or supplication. Originally intended to be a personal appeal to God, it takes its origins from the practice of Nefilat Alpayim--literally, falling on one's face before God. This is prayer steeped in sorrow, and as its practice



became codified and standardized into liturgy, we offer words of confession, submission, and humility.

Finally, we conclude on a solemn, earnest note, with Adon Olam, and a prayer for peace, although on days such as Yom Kippur, some congregations move this to the beginning of the service. We chant this together, while seated, symbolically demonstrating that we are not eager to end our prayers.

Taken together, even the sequencing has meaning, and serves as a guide for us on how to live a meaningful life. One might even understand the structure of Shacharit in contemporary terms. Engage in mindfulness; practice gratitude; nurture the intent to grow and evolve; maintain perspective; seek forgiveness; and above all, embrace hope.



Yom Kippur Day

HINENI - ALBERTO MIZRAHI

Hazzan Alberto Mizrahi has served the Anshe Emet Synagogue as the Dr. Arnold H. Kaplan Chair for 30 years.

There have been hundreds of articles written about the origin and meanings of the prayer HINENI, the prayer with which the Precentor/Hazzan/Cantor (same meaning) chants this personal confession of not being worthy to represent their congregation, in asking for forgiveness, in acknowledging their faults, in praising God's Name, and in having a worthy understanding and voice, to lead their flock through the vast prayers of the High Holy Days liturgy. Though a number of these "reshuyot"/permission prayers were written over the centuries, this version has been with us since the 16th century. The words having been set to a plethora of musical compositions from the great cantors (I chant the magnificent setting of Hazzan Moses J. Silverman) to Leonard Cohen's "Hineni, Hineni - You Want it Darker."

"Here I am, impoverished in merit, trembling with fear before the One who hears the prayers of Israel...." Hineni is certainly the most private confession a Hazzan chants in public, before a congregation who, whether understanding each word or not, cannot but feel the pathos of the moment. To take to heart the importance of truly praying to Hashem and thus helping their precentor and all those praying beside them (even on Zoom!) to turn the corner; to forgive willingly, to ask for forgiveness, to make the voice of their family and friends into their own "Hineni". Because, yes, (Zoom or not) we are all one, and our prayers will be heard by God as one voice.

I will tell you that the emotional tension of realizing I am praying on your behalf, all of you, is the reason my tears fall. "Hineni He'oni Mima'as"... Here I am, poor in good deeds, and trembling with remorse for all wrongs I may have committed.

May God grant us all a New Year of love and health, strength and peace.



Yom Kippur Day

YIZKOR – MICHAEL SIEGEL

Rabbi Michael S. Siegel is the Senior Rabbi and Norman Asher Rabbinic Chair of Anshe Emet Synagogue.

Yizkor, the Power of Memory, and the Names We Entrust to the Living

Each of us has a name given by God and given by our parents

So begins the beautiful and stirring poem of Zelda Schneurson Mishkovsky, one of the most celebrated poets of the modern State of Israel. In the poem, Zelda acknowledges the many names we are given in life. The names reflect the many facets of our identity and the ways that we are known in the world.

Yizkor is a service of names. While prayers for those who have died have long been part of Jewish worship, the reading of lists of names on the holidays was a response to the horror of the First Crusade in 1096. The crusading army marching through the Rhineland on the way to fight the Muslims in Jerusalem wasted no time in attacking those who were deemed the enemy of their Lord. Thousands of men, women, and children were slaughtered by those marching under the sign of the Cross. Amidst the devastation, it was decided that the names of the dead would be read in synagogue on major holidays to inform the community as to who perished in the massacres. But I suspect that this was also an effort to return the contours of identity to people who were murdered simply because they were Jews.

Each of us has a name given by the stars and given by our neighbors

This year, the image of a long list of names representing people of all ages, all walks of life, all socioeconomic strata whose lives were stolen from them during the Crusade feels particularly relevant. At the time of this writing, more than 175,000 Americans have died from COVID-19 and more than 800,000 worldwide. Each was a person with a life, with a purpose. Each person loved and was loved. Each person deserves to be cherished and remembered by name.

Each of us has a name given by our enemies and given by our love

There is a remarkable memorial at Yad Vashem, a physical Yizkor for the million and a half children who were murdered in the Shoah. Built in an underground cavern, one must pass under a lintel with the words: Ner Adonai Nishmat Adam: The Soul of a Person is a



Candle of God. Inside, the room is dark. Behind the dark glass, the light of a single candle is reflected in thousands of mirrors. It gives the illusion of a countless number of candles aflame, each representing the light of a soul that burns only in our memory. Meanwhile, over the loudspeakers, the names and ages of the children are read.

This year, let each of us light a Yizkor candle to remember our family members who reside in our memories. Let us light a second candle to commemorate and honor those who have died in this pandemic. Looking into the flame, let us imagine a constellation of individual lights for every soul that was taken, ensuring that their names not be forgotten.

Each of us has a name given by the sea and given by our death.



Yom Kippur Day

ASHAMNU/AL CHET (VIDUI) - MATT FUTTERMAN

Former Rabbi at Anshe Emet Synagogue

Bag of Nails

Her mother gave her a bag of nails and told her that every time she lost her temper or insulted somebody, she was to hammer a nail into their fence. The first day, the girl hit 14 nails into the fence. Over the next few weeks, as she learned to control her anger, the number of nails hammered daily gradually dwindled. It was easier to hold her temper than to drive those nails into the fence.

Finally, the day came when the girl didn't lose her temper at all. When she told her mother about it, her mother suggested that the girl now pull out one nail for each day that she was able to hold her temper. The days passed until, finally, all the nails were removed.

The mother took her daughter by the hand and led her to the fence. She said, "You have done well, my daughter, but look at all the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like these." The girl then asked, "How can I repair the fence? Will it have to remain damaged forever?"

"Yes and no," said the mother. "Our Sages say that if the fences are people and they respond to the way you have changed; they too will change and heal themselves. If the fences are unwilling or unable to respond to your repentance it will carry its scars forever. While a fence may never be as it was before, it can heal. But you must always do your part and change, and the fence must do its part in response."

God is the third partner in every relationship. God oversees the healing that will make you and the fence better. This is what we mean by atonement. Changes that come about from repentance and forgiveness lead people to deeper relationships."

"And if the fence doesn't respond, you must still try on at least three different occasions. If it remains dead even after you have changed, you can't force it to become whole. In that case go and try to fix another fence somewhere else. There are always lots of fences that need fixing. We have a Day of Atonement near the beginning of every New Year to remind ourselves that we are the ones who make the New Year better than the last." We are the ones who bring to life the true miracle of atonement.



Yom Kippur Day

NEILAH - MEGAN GOLDMARCHE

Rabbi of Silverstein Base Hillel: Lincoln Park, AES Member

As we enter the final hour of Yom Kippur, emotions are mixed. The fast is almost over; the gates are almost closed; now is the time to get in those final confessions, but all we can think about is that bagel that awaits us. In years past, Neilah marked a return to normal life. Yes, Sukkot is around the corner and we are still living in Jewish calendar time, but routine is coming. This year, this is not so. This year, there are more unknowns, not just who will live and die but when we will truly live again. So in this final hour where God is close, where forgiveness and atonement are at our fingertips in ways they have not been since last year and they will not be until next year, at this time I encourage you to give forgiveness to the most important person in your life: yourself. Before the gates close, forgive yourself for every day you were less productive than you had hoped. Forgive yourself for the time you let down a friend because you were so caught up in your own woes. Forgive yourself for feeling hopeless, for being overly optimistic, for all the moments when you have not been your best self in this topsy-turvy year.

This does not mean you do not have to keep trying to be a better person. It just means you get to start fresh. Yes, we are still living in pandemic and we are unsure of what lies ahead this year. But we are still being given a new beginning.

When the shofar sounds on Rosh Hashana, it is meant to wake us up; to remind us who we are, and who we can be. But the shofar that will sound at the end of Neilah, the hollow echo, reminds us that we are now a blank slate. This is why today is called Yom Kippurim, the day that is like Purim, the most fun holiday of the year. Yom Kippur is actually a day of joy because at the end, we are free of the burdens of our past mistakes. When that shofar sounds, we are in the clear; our past errors have been covered over, and we have a chance to be the best version of ourselves. But to truly feel this joy we must start with forgiveness and end with acceptance.

Use these final moments to acknowledge the ways you have failed and then let it go. And when the shofar sounds, let the blasts echo through your soul until you feel free and light and clean.

May we all be sealed for a year of life, joy and health!



Extended Shiur/Essay

ROSH HASHANAH TORAH READING DAY 1 – CHARLIE SAVENOR

Rabbi Charles E Savenor is the Director of Congregational Education at the Park Avenue Synagogue, NYC. He is a former rabbi of Anshe Emet Synagogue.

Carrying Philip Roth

You never know who you will meet on any given day in New York. If you keep your eyes open, you can easily spot celebrities. Over the years I have seen Matt Damon pushing a baby stroller, Cynthia Nixon chatting outside Zabar's, and Jerry Stiller heading into a voting booth.

Before COVID, my approach to celebrity sightings was to let them know I know who they are and then quickly disengage. I would usually say something like, "I really like your work" and walk away.

A few years ago, I noticed a man walking towards us who looked a lot like Philip Roth. While Roth has a certain look, what sealed the deal was that this man was carrying a book by no one other than Philip Roth.

As we approached each other, I made eye contact and exclaimed, "Excuse me, sir. Are you Philip Roth?"

"Well, yes, I am," he replied with a hint of surprise.

"I am a very big fan of your work," I said turning to make my signature quick exit.

Before I could pivot, he responded, "Thanks. Who are you?"

This question doesn't usually happen when meeting celebrities, so I was taken aback. In my experience, most celebrities are polite, yet they want their privacy. I am lucky to get a smile.

What ensued was a wonderful conversation about our children, the pennant race, and his book, *The Plot Against America*. When Mr. Roth looked at his watch, I figured our time was up.

"Before you go, can I ask you one last question, Mr. Roth?"

"Sure."

"Do you always carry your own books around?"

Looking at his own book in his hand, Philip Roth let out a gentle laugh: "Oh, that. I told a friend I would mail him a copy of my new book, so I am heading to the Post Office."



Today, on Rosh Hashanah, we are in a similar position to Philip Roth. Spiritually, we all stand before God with our own stories from the past year in our hands, and we pray for the privilege to add another chapter in the Book of Life.

This might just be a metaphor, but what could be more important, more powerful than the idea of being here next year - or even next week - with those we love and respect?

Rosh Hashanah takes on extraordinary significance when we embrace the fact that the future is uncertain. Shakespeare calls the future "The Undiscovered Country". I think we, Jews, view it as the "undiscovered chapter."

In order for the high holidays to have true resonance and meaning, we embark on an honest review of our lives over the past year and identify where we succeeded and where we can improve in the next chapter. Rosh Hashanah provides us with the opportunity to take a step back and learn from the past, so the future might be better on a personal level.

While our individual experience is important, Rosh Hashanah reminds us that we are part of something larger than ourselves. On the High Holidays we come together as a community to look in the mirror and ask not just what can *I* do to improve myself, but also what can I do to help the community this year? The fact that our prayers are couched in the plural signifies that this path of growth, healing and renewal is one we walk together.

In the midst of this unprecedented moment in our lives, we acknowledge the enormity of our shared challenges. Our lives have been upended, leaving us knee deep in currents of change.

One of the first Jewish leaders to be confronted with change is Joshua. As soon as Moses has passed away, Joshua is called upon to lead the people not just across the Jordan River, but towards a future in a Promised Land yet to become truly theirs.

Three times God says to Joshua, "*Hazak V'amatz*", "be strong and take courage." The commentators believe that the emphasis of this expression is intended not only to calm Joshua's nerves, but also to underscore what is needed at times of uncertainty: strength and courage.

Years later, Winston Churchill helps us better understand this sacred charge to Joshua when he writes: "Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts."



The "courage to continue" constitutes the cornerstone of communal resilience. From the time of Joshua till today, the Jewish people have faced enemies and crises that have shaken the foundation of our spirit. Yet, in every generation, *b'chol dor vador*, we find a way not just continue, but to move forward; not just to escape death, but to embrace life; not just to leave Egypt, but to find our way to the Promised Land.

The pathway to a stronger future together is mapped out by the Mahzor itself. Our guideposts along the way are *Teshuva*; *Tefilla U'Tzedakah*. Today, I will reinterpret them as tools for communal resilience.

Teshuva is more than repentance. It can also be understood as reflection with perspective. After looking inwards, we turn outwards to help and heal those around us. *Tefilla*, which means prayer, can manifest itself as joining together to articulate our vision and dreams for a shared future.

Finally, *Tzedkka* focuses our attention towards creating a society animated by equality, freedom, and justice.

Rosh Hashanah reminds us that a proactive communal focus, lending our voices to the soundtrack of communal life, and unified purposeful action are the keys for building a community that can stand the test of time. Further, these Days of Awe beckon us to write a new story for ourselves, our families, and our community.

I mentioned earlier that I ran into Philip Roth on the street. As you may recall, I knew it was him because he was carrying his own book.

This year on Rosh Hashanah, I believe that we carry not just one, but two books: one for ourselves and another for our community. With strength to carry on and faith in our aspirations, we possess the power today to write the next chapter in our shared story that is filled with purpose, love, freedom, health, trust and equality.

All it takes is the courage to continue.

Shanah Tovah!



Extended Shiur/Essay

ROSH HASHANAH HAFTARAH DAY 1 – YEHIEL POUPKO

Rabbi and Judaic Scholar of Jewish United Fund, Chicago

The Haftarah, the selection from the Nevi'im-the Prophets, is juxtaposed to the Torah reading of every Shabbat and Holiday. For the first day of Rosh HaShanah, the Haftara is the saga and song of Chana in 1 Samuel 1-2:10. Haftarot are chosen because of their relationship to a theme in the Torah reading, or to the Holiday or calendrical event. What does Chana have to do with Rosh HaShanah? First, here is a brief summary of the saga of Chana. Following the conquest of the Land of Israel by Joshua, the Jewish People enter a period, recorded in the Book of Shofetim-Judges, of chaos. There is national backsliding and sin. There is punishment. There is episodic help from God in the person of critical leaders such as Devorah or Gidon. Then, after some respite, Israel sins again. By the time the Book of Judges ends, there is chaos. Each tribe follows its own path. This will not work. The unity of the Jewish nation is critical in order for the Jewish People to fulfill their Divinely commanded destiny, to fulfill the mitzvot while living upon the Land. The barrenness of the Jewish People is realized in the barrenness of Chana. She is the sixth barren woman in TaNaKh. She is the only one of the barren women of TaNaKh who personally intercedes through tefilla with God. Tefilla does not mean prayer. Tefilla means intercession with God. Her intercession is successful because she contracts a child from God. Contracts a child from God?! Yes, indeed, she does exactly that. Chana realizes that, given the chaos of the period of Judges, what the Kadosh Barukh Hu, the Holy One, needs is a leader who will unite the Jewish People. So, she promises God that if He gives her a child, she will return that child to the service of God. Thus, is the Prophet Shme'ul born to Chana. The Rabbis (Talmud Bavli Megillah 31a) for Rosh HaShanah tell the saga of Chana. The Rabbis teach us (Talmud Bavli, Rosh HaShana 11a) that on Rosh HaShanah, God visited [three barren women] Sarah, Rachel, and Chana. By visit it is meant that God opened the gates of their womb and they became possessed of child. In the drama that is TaNaKh, familial experience bequeaths and ever births national redemption. The lives of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs prefigure what will happen in the life of the nation Israel.

Rosh HaShanah is the least Jewish of all Jewish holidays. Pesakh, Shavuot, and Sukkot commemorate events that only the Jewish People, together with the Kadosh Barukh Hu, experience - liberation from slavery, Torah giving and receiving, and wandering in the desert. What does Rosh HaShanah commemorate? As our tefillot declare, Hayom harat olam-This day is the world created. Rosh HaShanah celebrates the creation of the world. On Rosh HaShanah, the world was created, as the Rabbis teach us. Creation is beyond



our comprehension. How can we celebrate creation? How can we grasp creation? And so, in the Torah reading, we learn how Sarah, who was barren, is granted a child by the judgement of the Kadosh Barukh Hu. And so, we read how the same is true for Chana. In other words, we witness the creation of one life in one woman and in one family, and from there we understand, learn, and come to be in awe of God's Creatorship. The universal for Judaism is realized, understood, and achieved exclusively in and through the particular.

Chana is one of the three great barren women whom we meet on Rosh HaShanah, and who on Rosh HaShanah by God were judged and blessed with child. The other two are Sarah, whom we meet in the Torah reading on the first day of Rosh HaShanah, and Rachel, whom we meet in the Haftarah on the second day of Rosh HaShanah. Yet there is more to Chana and Rosh HaShanah. In her tefilla of thanks to God for the gift of a child, Chana acknowledges God, who is the master of the destiny of all that overtakes humanity. She declares:

יהוה ממית ומחיה מוריד שאול ויעל: ⁷יהוה מוריש ומעשיר משפיל אף־מרומם:

The LORD deals death and gives life, Casts down into Sheol and raises up. The LORD makes poor and makes rich; He casts down, He also lifts high. (1 Samuel 2:6, 7)

By now, you, the reader will have noticed that these antonymic destinies that face all humanity are the subject of Unetaneh Tokef, and indeed, are quoted in Unetaneh Tokef:

How many shall pass and how many shall be created...

Who shall be impoverished;

Who shall be enriched;

Who shall be brought low;

Who shall be raised up?

With the close of Rosh HaShanah, we have not seen or heard or learned the last from Chana in these Yamim Noraim, these Awesome Days. We will meet up with her again at that most solemn, and indeed, joyous, moment at the close of Yom Kippur, when we recite Ne'ila. The Talmud Yerushalmi teaches us:

What is the source of the Ne'ila service: Rabbi Meir said: "It is written, 'And it was as she increased her prayer in the presence of God...' This teaches us that whoever increases in prayer will be heard and accepted" (1 Shmuel 1:12). (Talmud Yerushalmi Ta'anit 4).

Rabbi Meir teaches us that on the holiest day of the year, Yom Kippur, when we are most in need of God's receiving our prayer, we should turn to Chana for inspiration and instruction. We should increase our prayer. Therefore, we add an additional service



because, indeed, Chana is the only one in all of TaNaKh of whom it says “she intensified and increased her prayer.” Chana portrays the transformation of a normal everyday person into a real mitpalelet, a praying person, someone fit to intercede with God. As we pray in Ne’ila, we are expected to become like Chana. Ne’ila is, indeed, Tefillat Chana. For that reason, the core of the Ne’ila prayer begins with the phrase, “From the very beginning of creation you have distinguished only the human to stand before You” (From the Yom Kippur Ne’ila service). No other Jewish prayer carries that introduction and that invocation: We who now enter into prayer stand before God and stand in the Presence. Only the one created in the Tselem Elohim-the Image of God is recognized by God to stand before Him. The opening words of the unique portion of the Ne’ila service declare our standing before the One. At Ne’ila we stand before God as Chana did long ago at Shiloh as she prayed herself a child from God, as she contracted with God for a child who would bring David into the monarchy and redeem the Jewish people from its chaos and unite the Twelve Tribes into a nation and establish Jerusalem and its capital. All this we must keep in mind as we seek at Ne’ila time, as we seek at the close of the High Holy Day season, to bring our intercession in the presence of God to great success. At this time of the prayer of Chana, we see Chana standing before us. We began the High Holy Days on Rosh HaShanah with Chana. We close the High Holy Days ten days later on Yom Kippur with Chana. May the example of Chana, the ultimate praying person of TaNaKh, ever be with us in this High Holy Day season.



Extended Shiur/Essay

ROSH HASHANAH TORAH READING DAY 2 - SARAH WOLF

Professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary, former RCM member and co-chair

Scholars have noticed that when we look closely at the Akedah, we can see that it actually contains two different narrative voices at play in the text. In one of these narrative threads, God and Avraham are partners, but in the second thread, God is calling all the shots. I want to untangle these two threads and try to figure out what they're both doing in this story.

The first ten verses of Genesis 22 form a literary unit full of energy and tension. After verses one and two, which describe God's initial call to Avraham, the next several verses contain a litany of action verbs: in verses three and four alone, Avraham woke early, saddled his donkey, gathered the travelers, chopped the wood, got up, left, lifted his eyes, and saw.

In verse five, a trio of future tense verbs add to the tension, as Avraham tells his servants, "We will go, and we will worship, and we will return." And then the action returns: Avraham took the wood, laid it on Yitzhak, took the fire and the knife, they walked, there are several "and he said" in the agonizing dialogue in which Yitzhak asks his father where the ram is, they went back on the road, they arrived, Avraham built the altar, he laid the wood, bound his son, put him on the altar, reached out his hand, took the knife

And then, in verse 11, the angel interrupts the action to tell Avraham, "Don't do it. You passed the test, good job, no need to actually go through with this thing."

You'd think that at this point the action would stop, or at least slow down, as Avraham and Yitzhak breathe a sigh of relief and regroup to head back to Beer Sheva. But instead, the litany of verbs continues just as it left off: Avraham lifted his eyes, saw the ram, went to it, took it, and offered it instead of Yitzhak.

The end? No. First, we hear that Avraham called the name of the place "Adonai Yireh." And at this point, the angel comes back and says, "Avraham, one more thing, wanted to let you know—you're going to be rewarded for what just happened." On a purely literary level, it seems like there are two different threads here that have been interwoven in this story. One thread, which constitutes the bulk of the story, is a terse series of verbs that describe the different actions Avraham takes after he receives an incredibly difficult



message from God. In the second thread, an angel comes down and speaks in flowery prose to Avraham, first to tell him not to sacrifice Yitzhak and then a second time to promise him a reward. It also happens to be the case that in most of the first thread of the story, God is called Elohim, and in most of the second thread, God is called Adonai. Bracketing questions of Biblical authorship, I think we can treat these different names for God as an indication of two different theological paradigms for God's relationship with Avraham. In the thread with the angels, God is really clear about what is expected from Avraham and what's going to happen as a result. God tests Avraham; the nature of the test is that Avraham should show willingness to sacrifice what he loves most; he passed; and as a consequence, Avraham will be rewarded with descendants. Avraham doesn't really have an active role in this model.

But what's going on theologically in the first thread, the part of the story that doesn't include the angel? If we just look at the text without the speeches by the angels, are we now looking at a story about Avraham just deciding to disobey God of his own accord? There could be something somewhat perversely satisfying about that alternative version of the Akedah. But there's something just as troubling about an Avraham who rejects God with no explanation as an Avraham who blindly obeys. What's more, a version of the story in which Avraham ignores God also doesn't fit with the Avraham we know from other stories in Genesis in which he overcomes his fear to engage God as a conversation partner.

I think that there's something much more subtle going on in this first thread, and that the key to understanding it is the motif of sight, which appears three times in the complete story. We know this motif is important because it appears as the sort of moral of the story, the final etiological statement about the name of the place: Avraham calls the place "Adonai Yireh," "God will see," and the verse says that it was also the place where God was seen. This verse seems to be part of the second thread, so seeing and being seen could be a reference to the angel. But the verse also links the two threads together, because the verb "to see" appears two other times in the story, in the first thread.

Verse four tells us Avraham lifted his eyes and saw the mountain from afar. Clearly, he felt confident that that was the right place, since he then went there with Isaac and the wood and the fire and the knife. Now, this is somewhat surprising, because God had initially told Avraham to offer Yitzhak "on a mountain, which I will specify to you." But we never hear about God explicitly telling Avraham which one. Instead, Avraham lifts up his eyes,



perhaps a silent turning to God for guidance, and once he sees the mountain, he somehow understands that this is the one that God has picked out. God saw Avraham lifting up his eyes, and God was seen, a divine communication shown in the form of an earthly mountain.

The second time the verb “to see” appears in this story, it’s also connected to Avraham lifting his eyes. This time, in verse ten, Avraham is standing at the altar with knife in hand. And if we skip over the angel from the other thread to verse twelve, the next thing that happens is that Avraham lifts up his eyes, perhaps a silent turning to God for guidance, and he sees the ram. God saw Avraham lifting up his eyes, and God was seen, a divine communication shown in the form of an earthly ram.

This is a story that isn’t black and white. Avraham doesn’t override his own feelings to blindly obey God, nor does he override God’s wishes to do what he thinks is right. Instead, he remains patient and has faith—not faith that God’s will supersedes his own, but faith that his own moral intuitions are valuable, and that based on what he knows and believes about God, God cannot possibly want what God seems to be saying. Avraham stays in dialogue with God, lifting his eyes both to convey to God that he’s still looking for answers and to seek out ways in which God might still be communicating. So in some ways, the thread with no angels is perhaps more theologically reassuring because it doesn’t imagine a God who would ask Avraham to completely suspend his own sense of the ethical, and it also gives us a patriarch who engages with God in difficult moments instead of either completely rejecting or completely capitulating. On the other hand, the version of the story with no angel is also theologically disconcerting, because here God allows for the possibility that Avraham won’t figure it out, can’t find the ram, and will actually go through with the killing of his own child. God tells Avraham to sacrifice his son, and then isn’t really in the picture anymore. All we’re left with is Avraham and his series of verbs.

Without the first angelic intervention, Avraham is never explicitly given permission not to sacrifice his son, and without the second angelic speech, it’s never affirmed that sacrificing the ram instead of Yitzhak was the right choice. What kind of God issues a troubling, even horrifying commandment, and then leaves people on their own to figure out how to make sense of it? It’s understandable that the second voice enters to offer a different paradigm of God, a God who is much more present and explicit, and who swoops in at the right moment to prevent bad things from happening to good people.



Yet the version of the story with no angels is, I would suggest, much closer to our experience of the world than the version of the story with them. We are, in fact, living in a world in which we have to contend with many troubling things that, according to the Torah, God seems to have said. And perhaps our wish, the story we'd most love to write for ourselves, is one in which an angel comes down from heaven and explains to us exactly what we actually should and shouldn't be doing, regardless of whatever God said earlier. Who knows, maybe that's how things used to be. But in our lives so far, we don't seem to have those angels. And so it seems that instead, like Avraham, we're going to have to figure out a different way to try to stay in dialogue with God.



Extended Shiur/Essay

ROSH HASHANAH HAFTARAH DAY 2 – RENI DICKMAN

Rabbi Reni Dickman is the Executive Vice President of the Chicago Board of Rabbis and Senior Jewish Educator at JUF and proud member of Anshe Emet Synagogue.

Jeremiah 31: Love after Forgiveness

In the *haftarah* for the second day of *Rosh HaShanah* (Jeremiah 31:2-20), God remembers God's eternal love for the people, a love which began at the time of the Exodus. And it is because of this love that redemption will come. Jeremiah relays God's words, saying, "I will build you firmly again, O Maiden Israel! Again you shall take up your timbrels and go forth to the rhythm of the dancers." The relationship between God and Israel will continue, but it will be different. It is no longer the love of one's youth; it is the love between God and a people who has gone astray. It is a love after forgiveness, a love with more chapters, a love redeemed from heartache.

In addition to Israel's portrayal as a maiden, Israel is also portrayed as a beloved child whose parent cannot stop thinking about them despite their challenging behavior. Through the prophet, God declares, "Whenever I have turned against him, My thoughts would dwell on him still (*zakhor ezk'rennu*). That is why My heart yearns for him; I will receive him back in love (*rachem arachamennu*)." According to Rashi, these Hebrew phrases are what caused the rabbis to choose this passage as the *haftarah* for *Rosh HaShanah*. *Rosh HaShanah* is also known as *Yom HaZikaron*, a Day of Remembrance when we pray that God will remember us for life. For what is more hurtful than someone who forgets you? On *Rosh HaShanah*, we ask God to remember us as a parent remembers their child.

Woven into these verses are reminders that God's words were relayed to the people through the prophet Jeremiah - lonely, fierce, faithful Jeremiah. The prophet is not only a messenger; he is a model of faith, persistence, and abiding concern for his people. Prophets were lonely people, but Jeremiah did not give in to despair. He accompanied the people into exile, confident that God had not abandoned them. He had a vision of a time when the people would live in the land "over new grain and wine and oil, and over sheep and cattle. They shall fare like a watered garden, they shall never languish again." With these words, we are invited to feel hopeful as well.



There is another voice that we hear in this prophecy - the bitter weeping of Rachel who refuses to be comforted for her children who are gone. (Ephraim, another name for the Northern Kingdom of Israel, was the son of Joseph, who was the son of Rachel.) Most of the prophecy speaks about all of Israel, but then it zooms in on Rachel, and the pain of national exile becomes the unbearable pain of one mother weeping for her children. The midrash picks up on this change of focus and asks, why Rachel?

The midrash (Lamentations Rabbah 24) presents a long scene of witnesses who come to plead before God when the Temple was destroyed. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses all plead with the Holy One but to no avail. After they fail to elicit God's mercy, we read:

At that moment our mother Rachel broke forth into speech before the Holy One and said: Master of the universe, it is revealed and known to You that Your servant Jacob cherished a great love for me; indeed, because of me he worked for my father seven years. When the time for the marriage to my husband arrived, my father conspired to substitute my sister for me. Yet I was not jealous of my sister and did not expose her to shame. Now if I, who am flesh and blood, dust and ashes, was not jealous of my rival, then why should You - the King, living, enduring, merciful - be jealous of idols, which have no substance and banish my children because of them?

At once the mercy of the Holy One crested, and he said; For your sake, O Rachel, I will restore Israel to their place. Of this it is said:

Thus said the LORD: A cry is heard in Ramah— Wailing, bitter weeping— Rachel weeping for her children. She refuses to be comforted For her children, who are gone. (Jer. 31:15)

These words are followed by:

Thus said the LORD: Restrain your voice from weeping, Your eyes from shedding tears; For there is a reward for your labor —declares the LORD: Thy children shall return to their country. (Jer. 31:16 and 17)

Why Rachel? On the surface, it appears that Rachel made the most convincing argument. She challenges God to explain why God is jealous of gods that are not real when she was able to control her own jealousy of her sister and not put her to shame. But to understand the power of Rachel's presence, we must know all that she sacrificed to build up the family of Jacob which would become the People of Israel. Rachel did not protest when her sister, Leah, was married to Rachel's beloved Jacob. When Rachel had not conceived, she bade Jacob to bear a child through Rachel's maidservant, Bilhah. And finally, Rachel sacrificed her life in childbirth to Benjamin and, as a result, was buried by the side of the road near Bethlehem rather than in the Cave of the Machpelah with the other patriarchs and



matriarchs. Midrash also tells us that Jacob buried her there so that when her descendants were exiled to Babylonia, they would pass her grave and be comforted.

How could God respond with anything but mercy to the weeping of a devoted mother who had sacrificed so much to build up the People of Israel? Rachel elicits God's compassion like no other. The *haftarah* for the second day of *Rosh HaShanah* speaks of an eternal relationship between God and the Jewish People, a relationship based on memory, forgiveness, and love.



Extended Shiur/Essay

YOM KIPPUR MORNING TORAH READING – DR. JACOB MILGROM Z”L

(submitted by Dr. Ben Sommer)

Jacob Milgrom z”l (1923-2010), one of the most renowned biblical scholars of the twentieth century, is widely considered the leading authority on the Book of Leviticus in the centuries-long history of biblical interpretation. Milgrom served as a professor at the University of California Berkeley from the 1960's through the 1990's, but his first job when he graduated rabbinical school at JTS in 1946 was here at Anshe Emet, where he served as assistant rabbi for several years.

Professor Milgrom comments on the fact that the rituals prescribed in today's Torah reading were not originally limited to the tenth day of the new year's month; they were performed whenever the need seemed pressing to purify the Temple. Only when verses 29-34 were added to the original text did Yom Kippur become an annual event on the tenth day of the new year. Milgrom writes of the way this changed the day:

The annual Day of Purgation [as Milgrom translates Yom Kippur] for Israel's sanctuary, the tenth of Tishri, was, at first, entirely dissociated from the notion of public fast. Precisely because it was probably the climax of the New Year's Festival, it must have been altogether joyous in nature. The original joyousness of the tenth of Tishri is, to be sure, suppressed in the prescriptions for the day... Still, the initial intent of the celebration can be adduced from Scripture itself, from the fact that the Jubilee Year was proclaimed on this day (Lev 25:9). The shofar blast proclaimed each fiftieth year as the occasion on which ancestral lands reverted to their owners (25:10-34) and Israelites who, because of indebtedness, were sold into slavery were given their freedom (25:35-49). Surely, the day that heralded the 'year of liberty' (Ezek 46:16; Lev 25:10) was a day of unbridled joy in no way reflected the sober character of the later Day of Purgation. It is, in fact, a later rabbinic source that preserves the best evidence of the original nature of this day: 'Rabban Simeon son of Gamliel said: There were no happier days for Israel than the fifteenth of Av and the Day of Purgation, for on them the daughters of Israel went forth to dance in the vineyards. And what did they say? "Young man, lift up your eyes and see what you would choose for yourself: set not your eyes on beauty, but set your eyes on family..."' (1)



On the tenth of Tishri, the culmination of Israel's ancient New Year Festival... the people rejoiced that the new year was successfully launched and that the high priest had emerged safely from his purgations in the innermost shrine. This day, then, was marked by feasting, merriment, and the dancing of maidens in the vineyards, which, no doubt, resulted in many marriages throughout the land -- a far cry from the practice of 'self-denial' that characterizes this day... to the present time.

Professor Milgrom points to an ancient side of Yom Kippur that was never entirely lost. Even today, it is important to realize that in a very significant sense, Yom Kippur is the happiest day of the Jewish year: it is the day that we get a clean slate, the day that we get a second chance. Yesterday we were burdened by sin and by guilt, but today we can be forgiven, and tomorrow we begin again. Even when the fasting was added to the day's rites in verse 29 of today's reading, it was (in the words of verse 30) so that atonement could be made for us, so that we can be clean in God's presence. Fundamentally, Professor Milgrom's insight reminds us, Yom Kippur is a day of hope, not a day of sadness.

Notes

1. Quotation from Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics. A Continental Commentary*. Fortress Press, 2004, pp. 162-63; introductory and concluding remark by Professor Benjamin Sommer



Extended Shiur/Essay

YOM KIPPUR MORNING HAFTARAH – David M. Russo

Rabbi David M. Russo serves as one of the members of the Clergy of the Anshe Emet Synagogue.

The Haftarah on the morning of Yom Kippur is taken from the book of Isaiah. The prophet chastises the hypocrisy of the people of Israel. They adhere to the ritual commandments of Yom Kippur, fasting and praying, while not observing the ethical commandments - feeding the poor, clothing the naked, and pursuing justice.

Isaiah completely overturns our understanding of Yom Kippur. For us sitting here today, refraining from food and drink is one of the most critical elements of Yom Kippur. Yet Isaiah cries out in the name of God:

“Is this the type of fast I desire? A day for people to starve their bodies... Do you call that a fast, a day when the Lord is favorable?

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

The fast that I desire is one that shares your bread with the hungry; take the wretchedly poor into your home; When you see one who is naked, clothe them! Do not ignore your fellow neighbor.” (Isaiah 58:5-7).

Thousands of years after the prophet Isaiah, there lived one of the Talmud’s greatest commentators, Rabbi Shmuel Eidels, known as the Maharsha. Living in 16th century Krakow, the Maharsha had a custom. Whenever there was a fast day, the Maharsha calculated how much money he saved that day. And he would donate that exact amount of money to charity.

There is an organization called Fast for Feast. **The mission of Fast for Feast is to bring to life this teaching of the Maharsha. They encourage people to donate money in honor of fast days. Their goal is to transform fast days into feast days for the poor.**



As they say on their website: while each person's contribution may be modest, when merged together, they have the ability to feed tens of thousands.

Today is the day for us to think about - how will we help the most vulnerable? As we read from the prophet Isaiah, what is the fast that God desires? And how can we make God's desire of a fast that supports those who need it most, into a reality.



Extended Shiur/Essay

MARTYROLOGY - MIRON HIRSCH

An alumnus of Spertus College and The Conservative Yeshiva, Miron Hirsch has been an educator of adults and children at Anshe Emet for over thirteen years

If the poems of the Martyrology of Yom Kippur are not your favorite part of the Musaf service, you are in good company. They are dark and jarring and difficult... and they are all the more relevant in this era of pandemic when we sometimes push difficult questions aside just to make it through the day.

There is a fantastic high point in the Musaf service of Yom Kippur. The Avodah service guides us through the intricate ritual of the Temple rite, describing sacrifices, prostrations, changes of clothes and prayer. The Avodah concludes with the images of a joyous Kohen Gadol/High Priest emerging b'shalom, whole, unscathed from entering the Temple's holiest of spaces on this holiest of days. We envision him radiant and joyful, and like our ancestors we break into song in commemoration of the moment. Then Avodah concludes, and we turn the page in our prayer books to walk right into this bit of history wrapped in barbed wire:

These I will remember, and I will pour out my soul over this! For tyrants have swallowed us up, like cake not even fully baked. For in the days of Caesar, there was no reprieve for the ten martyred by the [Roman] empire.	Eleh Ezkerah v'nafshi alai eshpecha! Ki V'launu zeydim k'ugah b'li hafucha, Ki vimai keysar lo altah arucha L'asarah harugei melucha.	אלה אזכרה ונפשי עלי אשפכה! כי בלעונו זדים כעגה בלי הפוכה כי בימי קיסר לא עלתה ארוכה לעשרה הרוגי מלוכה.
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We leave the glories of the Temple of Jerusalem and find ourselves facing the Eleh Ezkerah, a lament for Jewish Martyrs, and it is not easy reading. This first part of the Martyrology was most likely written after the First Crusades (1), and it weaves a powerful and dark narrative taking place during the nearly successful effort to wipe out Judaism in the land of Israel known as the Hadrianic Persecutions (around 130 CE). Seeing that the capital crime of kidnapping and sale of Joseph by his brothers went unpunished, the villain Tyranus Rufus (2) sentences ten great sages to torture and execution in the brothers' stead, because "there were none like you since their time." The poem tells us how accepting their fate, the martyrs die al' Kiddush Ha'Shem, to sanctify the divine name. Each of them is executed in brutal fashion.

Where this poem has been edited or replaced in High Holy Day prayer books, in its place are other dark episodes of Jewish history: texts on the Crusades, the Inquisition, and the Holocaust, among others. On a day when we are seeking inspiration to change and seek forgiveness, this section is enough to make anyone say, "I have Yom Kippured as much as I can, I'm done." Even in edited form, why is this lament still part of the liturgy?

One answer is that it is meant to engage, challenge, and provoke. Nachum Levine's "Eleh Ezkerah": Re-reading the Asarah Harugei Malkhut", is an eye-opening exploration of this poem, and showed me much I had missed. Levine writes: "It systematically and transparently describes the martyrdom in terms of the Yom Kippur Avodah's motifs of preparation, priestly purification, lottery, calling out the Name, slaughter, skinning, spilling and sprinkling of blood, burning, etc., as its central theological idea. Eleh Ezkerah is about the aggregate death of the righteous, which atones for Israel as the sacrifices do."

These are two intense ideas. First are the (grisly) parallels: in the Avodah, the blood of sacrifices flow, in the Eleh Ezkerah, it is the blood of the sages. In the Avodah, two goats are brought and by lottery, one goat goes to the altar, and one to Azazel. In the Eleh Ezkerah, two rabbis are brought and by lottery, one must watch the other be executed first. The closer you pay attention to the Avodah, the more connections you will find with the Eleh Ezkerah. (3)



The second idea is a difficult one, that the death of the righteous atones for us. Yet “The death of the righteous,” the Talmud proclaims (4), “is like the burning of the Temple.” In other words, both may have been allowed by God, and both are disasters. As the complete poem mentions, the blood of the righteous is on God’s *pardod* (royal robe). God has not walked away from the ten martyrs completely clean: rather, as Levine argues, God owes us.

But even from that point of view, you may not be so enamored of the idea of the righteous atoning for our sins. In fact, you may find the whole premise of the Martyrology difficult. Why didn’t they flee? Why not take up arms and fight back? Why did they give up their lives, when in the same situation we would not?

That is the powerful and relevant question that the *Eleh Ezkerah* and other sections of the Martyrology make one ask oneself. Would you lay down your life for your children or your siblings? For your best friend? For your faith? For your nation? For your people? For what would you lay down your life?

By facing this difficult question, we clarify to ourselves that which we hold dearest. Our answer helps us answer the other questions of Yom Kippur, the questions of how to be better human beings, better students of the Torah, and better messengers of God’s will for justice and holiness in this world.

When you encounter the Martyrology and *Eleh Ezkerah*, it is time to ask yourself the questions that are disquieting and difficult, questions about life and death you may have pushed aside to make it through days when the pandemic was too much to face. Yom Kippur is a day where we are a step removed from everyday life, abstaining from food, sex, perfume/cologne and bathing, (5) and given the time to think about what matters most to us. This year, use the Martyrology, this darkest of mirrors, to reflect on your values and your choices, so that like the Kohen Gadol, you can exit Yom Kippur *b’shalom*.

Notes

1. Jewish communities throughout the Rhineland faced murderous pogroms at the hands of Crusaders in 1095-1096 CE.

2. Based on the very real and brutal Quintus Tinius Rufus, Roman senator and governor of Judea from around 130-133 CE.



3. Note that the Lev Shalem High Holiday prayer book has a shortened version of the poem where not all of the connections can be seen.

4. Bavli RH 18b

5. Thankfully, one is not required to abstain from mouthwash or deodorant on Yom Kippur.



Extended Shiur/Essay

PSALM 27 – BEN SOMMER

Professor of Bible and Ancient Semitic Languages, The Jewish Theological Seminary

A Song of Faith and Doubt

Psalm 27 is one of the most familiar psalms in Jewish liturgy. Ashkenazic Jews recite it one hundred times in late summer and early fall, once in the morning and once in the evening during the fifty days starting one month before Rosh Hashanah and ending on Hoshana Rabba. (1) A poem of great beauty, theological depth, and psychological insight, it moves in a surprising direction: from confidence to need, from believing in God's reliability to worrying about God's absence.

Psalm 27 divides itself into three stanzas, and the relationship among them provides a key to the meaning of this poem. Each has its own mood. In the first stanza (vv. 1-6), the worshiper is confident:

Hashem is my light and my salvation –
Whom should I fear?
Hashem is the sure haven of my life –
Whom could I dread?

...

Should an army encamp against me,
My mind will know no fear.
Should war break out around me,
I will trust in this. (Vv. 1, 3)

But in the second stanza (7-12), the worshiper is distressed:

Don't hide yourself from me!
Don't thrust Your servant away in anger!
You were my helper
Don't leave me, don't abandon me
O God of my salvation!

...

Don't feed me to my enemies!
Yes, lying witnesses are rising against me,



With unfair, violent testimony. (Vv. 9, 12)

In the third stanza (13-14), we find expressions of hope along with an implicit acknowledgement that certainty of salvation is not possible:

If not for the fact that I believe
That I will see Hashem's own virtue
While still alive –

Hope that Hashem will come!
Courage! Let your mind be strong!
And hope that Hashem will come. (Vv. 13-14)

This third stanza attempts to return to the serene confidence of the first stanza. But the attempt remains less than complete. The first poetic line of this stanza begins with an "If," but we never get the "then," because the line is a sentence fragment. To be sure, the intention of the implied then-clause is clear: what the speaker was thinking was something to the effect of, "If not for my faith that I will see God's goodness, I would be completely lost." But the speaker cannot quite get the whole thing out. His utterance brings him perilously close to an emotional place too dangerous to approach. We have in a single line the whole back-and-forth of the psalm: the confidence of the first stanza and the anxiety of the second are both manifest in this incomplete expression of faith.

The last line of the final stanza may have been spoken to the worshiper by a Levite or a prophet in the Temple where the psalm was recited in biblical times. In this case, the psalm ends with a new speaker's voice, which urges the worshiper to keep faith, rather than with a clear statement of belief by the worshiper himself. Alternatively, it is possible that the worshiper recites this line, speaking to himself. In that case, it is significant that the worshiper feels the need to reassure himself. He is not completely confident, but urges himself to hope for God's salvation. Either way, the robust faith of the opening verses has been replaced with hope and courage, but not pure confidence.



There is a stark contrast between the first stanza, in which the worshiper joyously proclaims trust in God, and the later stanzas, in which the worshiper betrays a fear that God might be far off. But the first stanza contains hints of the darker themes appearing later in the poem. The speaker's statement in the first stanza - that he has no reason to fear - draws attention to the fact that he apparently is worrying about something. Similarly, in v. 9, the speaker three times begs God not to abandon him, but twice goes on to confirm that God is the speaker's help and salvation. The third stanza (in v. 13) at least attempts to restate the confidence of the first stanza, albeit in a sentence that never reaches completion. The psalm closes with imperative verbs that call on the worshiper (and us) to wait hopefully for God. The fact that these imperatives are necessary points to the existence of doubts that must be overcome. In this one psalm we have a beautiful and brief distillation of the entire Book of Psalms as a book of doubt and faith.

The movement from faith to doubt in this psalm we recite again and again during this crucial segment of the Jewish year demands our attention, because the direction of the journey on which this psalm leads us is the opposite of what many people expect of a religious text. Our worshiper does not grow into a more conventional piety over the course of the psalm, casting aside doubts to take up the armor of faith. Rather, the worshiper sets aside a seemingly ideal faith to take on a more realistic one. While the faith of the first stanza seems to be stronger, the truth is that in that section, the worshiper speaks of God – always in the third person – as something he knows about, but not someone whom he knows. Only in the second stanza does the worshiper address God directly; only then does he achieve the experiential contact with God he yearned for in verse 4 (“One thing I ask of Hashem...: to dwell in His house all my life, to gaze on God's beauty and to serve in His palace”). It is precisely when the worshiper speaks directly to God that doubt becomes prominent. God is no longer something the worshiper claims to know all about; now God is a partner (though of course the senior partner) in a relationship, and relationships are slippery and unknowable in a way that does not conform to the simplistic faith of the first stanza.



The direction of the psalm's movement models the maturing of an authentic relationship with God. A simple faith that asks no questions and admits no anxieties is not the most religious faith. A relationship that can articulate anxiety about the beloved's distance is ultimately stronger. A faith that allows no doubt is hubris: when it claims to know for sure what God will and will not do, it denies God's freedom and invests far too much in the believer's impregnable security. Such a faith is the very opposite of true piety. The wavering faith of Psalm 27 is more honest and more humble. It is neither Pollyannish nor naive; it is realistic about the fact that God seems absent at times.

Deuteronomy 34 narrates not the victory of the hero, Moses, but his death. But that chapter also leaves us with the expectation that God's promises to Moses and to the patriarchs before him will nevertheless come to fruition in coming years with the victory of Moses' assistant, Joshua. Moses' life was a success not because he completed his task but because he did not desist from it – that is, because he lived up to the teaching of his latter-day disciple, Rabbi Tarfon in Mishna Avot 2:16 (“It is not incumbent upon you to complete the task, but you are not free to desist from it”). It is significant that the Torah ends on a note of hope rather than fulfillment. That tendency made it natural that the anthem of the Zionist movement and later of the State of Israel is התקווה, “The Hope” (rather than, say, a song with the title like הניצחון, “The Victory”). Hope, rather than perfect confidence, characterizes the most mature Jewish faith: a readiness to admit one's fears, to look toward God expectantly while renouncing the claim to predict all God's actions. This faith is well displayed by the Psalm 27's journey from simple, trusting piety in its first stanza, through doubt in the second, to hope in the third.

Notes

1. Psalm 27 was added to the liturgy for the months of Elul and Tishrei in the Middle Ages. Not all rites have it, and variations exist not simply between the five main liturgical rites of the Jewish people (Ashkenazic, Eidot Hamizrah/Sephardic, Italian, Yemenite, and Romani) but within these rites. Thus, most Ashkenazim recite it twice daily during Elul and Tishrei, but it is omitted in the rite of the Vilna Gaon. In the Italian rite, it is recited once a day during these months in the Roman sub-rite but not at all in the Milanese sub-rite. It is not recited in most versions of the Yemenite rite. In some Eidot Hamizrah rites one recites it after Shaḥarit and before Arvit all year long, not just in Elul-Tishrei; but Spanish-Portuguese Jews never recite it as part of their regular liturgy, whether in Elul-Tishrei or the rest of the year.



