

## Learning and thinking about Yom Kippur with

# JENERATION

and



Yom Kippur is a really long day. Well, we know it's the same length as every other day of the year but somehow it's hard to avoid counting down the hours. Jeneration and RSY-Netzer want to help you think about the themes and messages of this Day of Atonement, one of the most solemn and potentially meaningful days in the Jewish year... but that will only be true if we can pause from thinking about how hungry we are, what's on our to-do list for the coming week and the rest of our every-day concerns.

As a community we often talk about Tikkun Olam (repairing the world), but how often do we really focus on Tikkun Atzmi (repairing the individual)? Yom Kippur is a time when we can focus on this, when we can think about how we want to develop and grow going forwards.

Do the rituals of Yom Kippur; fasting, not wearing leather, not washing or brushing teeth resonate with you? Are there other ways in which we can atone for our sins? And what are those sins? This resource contains alternative readings that can accompany you in the run up to Yom Kippur or on the day itself and some thoughts about the place of Israel on this most important day in the Jewish calendar, especially in 2013, the fortieth anniversary of the Yom Kippur War.

We hope you find this booklet meaningful - if you do have any feedback on this resource please let us know as we would like to provide more resources like this going forward, but only if it is something that you enjoy using.

Gmar Chatima Tova (May you be sealed for a good year in the Book of Life)

## Reflection

The author of the website below has taken elements of the High Holy Days and related them to lines from Star Wars - how would you rephrase them and make them more relevant to you?

*During The High Holy Days we try to see ourselves and our world more clearly...* **"You'll pay the price for your lack of vision." Emperor Palpatine**

*During The High Holy Days we think about the in between times and spaces...* **"Twilight is upon me, and soon light must fall." Yoda**

*During The High Holy Days we tap into the vast spiritual resources within...* **"No more training you require, already know you, that which you need." Yoda**

*During The High Holy Days we accept the fact that we view the world through the lens of our life experience...* **"Many of the truths we cling to depend greatly on our own point of view." Obi Wan**

*During The High Holy Days we contemplate the theology of reward and punishment...* **"You serve your master well and you will be rewarded." Luke Skywalker**

*During The High Holy Days we explore our untapped potential...* **"Let's see what this piece of junk can do." Han Solo**

*During The High Holy Days we seek to understand what God requires of us...* **"What is thy bidding my master?" Darth Vader**

*During The High Holy Days we consider the fact that we may be fooling ourselves more than we're fooling those around us...* **"You cannot hide forever." Darth Vader**

(Exerts from <http://www.rabbispen.com/the-force-of-the-high-holy-days/>, Micah Lapidus )



Every human being is tied to God by a rope. If the rope breaks, and is later fixed with a knot, that individual is connected ever closer to God than if there never were a break in the rope. Thus, errors, mistakes, and failures have the potential of drawing us even closer to God.

*Hassidic teaching*

**Al Mitzvah Shekiyamnu – by Rona Shapiro**

For the mitzvah we fulfilled by loving ourselves  
And for the mitzvah we fulfilled by loving our partners, our friends and our families.

For the mitzvah we fulfilled by affirming our own strengths  
And for the mitzvah we fulfilled by affirming the strengths of others.

For the mitzvah we fulfilled in our work  
And for the mitzvah we fulfilled by eating healthy food.

For the mitzvah we fulfilled by being honest  
And for the mitzvah we fulfilled by living our values and beliefs.

For the mitzvah we fulfilled by supporting Jews  
And for the mitzvah we fulfilled by supporting all peoples.

For the mitzvah we fulfilled by working for justice and peace  
And for the mitzvah we fulfilled by preserving the environment.

For the mitzvah we fulfilled by...  
And for the mitzvah we fulfilled by...

At every stage in my life, I did what I knew how to do. If I would have known better, I would have done better. But every day I must remember to be kinder to myself and more forgiving of my imperfections, because, at every point along the way, I am blessed. Everything I have done and seen has made me who I am in this moment. It's OK to have been me. I forgive.

Extract from Rabbi Karyn D.Kedar

**At Yom Kippur we focus on our sins and things that we could improve on, but these readings remind us it is also good to focus on the good things we did this year. What did you achieve? What could you have done better?**



## Confessions

R. Simeon said: If a man confesses his sin to a human tribunal, he is punished. If he does not, he may be acquitted. But God acts otherwise. If a man does not confess, he is punished; if he confesses, he is acquitted.

Midrash on Psalms [on 100:1] 213a, §2

It is told of Rabbi Israel Salanter that late one night, he was passing through a main street where a cobbler of his acquaintance lived. He noticed through the window that the candle that gave the shoemaker light was flickering and would soon go out. Rabbi Israel entered the cobbler's hut and said to him, "My friend, why do you sit up so late? You worked all day long; the candle light is almost out; it is in its last flickering. Isn't it better for you to go to bed and rest?" "Well, Rabbi," responded the shoemaker, "as long as there is light in this candle, I can still do some mending." Rabbi Israel then, so the story goes, kept on repeating, "As long as the light of life is burning, one still has time to mend one's ways."

*Unknown source*

### A Prayer for Facing Our Faults

I've been hiding from my faults, blaming others for my mistakes. Help me, God, to search my soul. Teach me to be honest, give me the courage to accept responsibility for my actions, the humility to ask for forgiveness from those I've injured. Fill me with the desire to change. Be my guide, God, lead me to goodness, to joy, to learning and to peace.

*Rabbi Naomi Levy*

Rabbi Bunam was asked: "How can a man know if his repentance is genuine?" "If he loses the desire to commit those very offenses again," answered the rabbi.

*Newman, The Hasidic Anthology, p. 380*

## **Al chet shechatati l'fanecha...- modern day interpretation**

Rabbi Rachel Barenblat

I need to speak these words aloud and to know that the universe hears them.  
I get caught in old patterns and paradigms; I am stubborn and hard-headed.

In the last year I have missed the mark more than I want to admit.

Forgive me, Source of all being, for the sin I have sinned before you

By allowing my body to be an afterthought too often and too easily;  
By not walking, running, leaping, climbing or dancing although I am able;  
By eating in my car and at my desk, mindlessly and without blessing;  
By not embracing those who needed it, and not allowing myself to be embraced;  
By not praising every body's beauty, with our quirks and imperfections.

By letting my emotions run roughshod over the needs of others;  
By poking at sources of hurt like a child worrying a sore tooth;  
By revealing my heart before those who neither wanted nor needed to see it;  
By hiding love, out of fear of rejection, instead of giving love freely;  
By dwelling on what's internal when the world is desperate for healing.

By indulging in intellectual argument without humility or consideration;  
By reading words of vitriol, cultivating hot indignation;  
By eschewing intellectual discomfort that might prod me into growing;  
By living in anticipation, and letting anxiety rule me;  
By accepting defeatist thinking and the comfortable ache of despair.

By not being awake and grateful, despite uncountable blessings;  
By not being sufficiently gentle, with my actions or with my language;  
By being not pliant and flexible, but obstinate, stark, and unbending;  
By not being generous with my time, with my words or with my being;  
By not being kind to everyone who crosses my wandering path.

For all of these, eternal Source of forgiveness  
Help me know myself to be pardoned  
Help me feel in my bones that I'm forgiven  
Remind me I'm always already at/one with You.

**Which of these things can you associate with?  
What things would you like to confess that aren't here?**

**Read the "Alternative Vidui" (confession) on the following page,  
with the same questions in mind.**



## **An Alternative Vidui (confession)**

We are guilty, O Lord  
of pride in a job well done,  
even when it comes at the expense of others.  
We are guilty of playing to our strengths.

We are guilty of selective perception,  
and of situational ethics; of faintheartedness  
and ignorance.  
We choose those tasks more visible  
so that we might garner more recognition and praise.

We are guilty of passivity,  
of not taking the initiative,  
of falling too easily into the role of innocent bystander,  
of withholding support and love until we are shamed into offering it.  
We protect ourselves.  
We pretend we have not heard when we have heard.

We forget that you do not expect us to be perfect.  
We get frustrated by our limitations  
and neglect to celebrate our differences.  
We covet the self we think we should be.

Sometimes, at the end of a long day,  
we fantasize about a different life  
in a different town.  
We dream of paths not taken  
when we are supposed to be listening to our inner selves  
reflected in the outer world.

We are guilty, O Lord,  
of presumption in all things.  
We write for others more than we write for ourselves.

We share because it allows us to talk about ourselves.  
We pray, and never think to ask  
if now is a good time for you.  
We use humor as a crutch.  
We watch ourselves using language as a shield.

Even now, we are guilty. Our chutzpah shames us.  
We do not stop when we should.  
We go on far too long, thinking only of ourselves.  
Yet we do not take every opportunity to change.

Help us, O Lord, to forgive ourselves  
for these transgressions, and for a hundred more.  
Help us to remain warm and human in the face of humanity.  
May we be inscribed in the book of life  
that we may atone for our sins.

May we continue to learn and grow.  
May we wander yet another year  
in your grace, and in our own.

([www.mediakit.blogspot.co.uk/2005/10/we-are-guilty-oh-lord.html](http://www.mediakit.blogspot.co.uk/2005/10/we-are-guilty-oh-lord.html))

## Remembrance

Our Father our King, What does a father do  
whose children are orphans while he is still alive? What can a father do  
whose children are dead and he remains a mourning father to the end of days?  
Weep and not weep, not remember and not forget.  
Our Father our King, what can a king do  
In the Republic of pain? Give them  
Bread and circuses, like all kings:  
Bread of memory and circuses of forgetting.  
Bread and longing, longing for God  
And for a better world. My Father my King.

(Yehuda Amichai)

During Elul it is traditional to visit the graves of our loved ones and pay our respects. I like to think we are encouraged to do this in the month before the High Holidays so that we will be inspired to remember to live as well as we can, in part to honour the memory of those who have helped make us who we are. I find visiting graves a bit of an anti-Climax - the people I love are never there, they are with me each day. Each Elul I find an opportunity to teach a ritual that helps bring this light and those memories together; known as Soul Candles (you can find out more [here](#)). While I also try to visit the graves, the making of soul candles gives me a quieter, more intimate and more creative way to remember, and to bring light. Judaism has always associated candles with mourning and remembrance, and sees the wick and wax as a symbol of the entwined body and soul, which may seem to burn away but in fact are transformed into something unseen.

Rabbi Debbie Young-Somers



Death is nothing at all  
I have only slipped away into the next room  
I am I and you are you  
Whatever we were to each other  
That we are still  
Call me by my old familiar name  
Speak to me in the easy way you always used  
Put no difference into your tone  
Wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow  
Laugh as we always laughed  
At the little jokes we always enjoyed together  
Play, smile, think of me, pray for me  
Let my name be ever the household word that it always was  
Let it be spoken without effort  
Without the ghost of a shadow in it  
Life means all that it ever meant  
It is the same as it ever was  
There is absolute unbroken continuity  
What is death but a negligible accident?  
Why should I be out of mind  
Because I am out of sight?  
I am waiting for you for an interval  
Somewhere very near  
Just around the corner  
All is well.  
Nothing is past; nothing is lost  
One brief moment and all will be as it was before  
How we shall laugh at the trouble of parting when we meet again!

(Canon Henry Scott-Holland, 1847-1918, Canon of St Paul's Cathedral)

**Why is it important to remember people at this time of year? Judaism is full of symbolism within its tradition, are there any ways we can symbolize remembrance of loved ones?**

## Yom Kippur and Israel in 2013/5774

### This year, this Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, I'm giving God the day off

By Bradley Burston in Haaretz

Lord of Hosts, I don't know if You read Shana Tova greetings by Yourself. I know You have staff. But on the chance that they forward to You, and that this one makes it past the interns, here's what I'm thinking this year:

May this be a year of unexpected peace.

And let it be on us.

You've done more than Your share. You invented life itself, breath, free will, children. You designed and assembled us with the capacity to love, to comprehend mirrors, to regret, to do over. Just this once, let us show you what we've got. This year, this Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, take the day off.

We have work to do.

Surely there's much of this that You don't need - all our exalting You and beating ourselves up. Not sure if You can appreciate the great cooking. Nor do I know what possible good to You could come of our standing up and sitting down, and then standing up until we can concentrate on little except standing up.

It's the other part that You may need. The part in which we look at our lives and Your world, and with our battered expectations and our punctured hopes, try to revive our belief that peace is a possibility.

We have work to do.

This holiday of Yours, this anniversary of Your creation of the world and all that lives therein, means nothing if we have lost faith in peace between people, and, especially, in peace between peoples. And we have.

This is about us down here. This is about us believing that, more than anything, a New Year offers our calloused hearts and our realism-calcified heads, hope of the unexpected good, the entirely unforeseen small miracle, the wholly irrational positive outcome.

In recent years, it has become the fashion in some circles of our people, to speak of peace in a dark past tense. There are those who speak of peace as if peace itself were an old and defeated enemy. There are those who speak of peace, in particular a peace of compromise between Israel and the Palestinians, in terms once reserved for the tribe of Amalek - unlikely ever to be revived, but, should it come back to life, the duty of the Good Jew to battle to the death.

We have work to do.

I have friends who believe that, at best, peace is unattainable, and, at worse, a recipe for annihilation. Who knows - by the end of this New Year we may find that they were tragically right.

Until then, however, I have work to do.

I believe in this New Year. I believe in the many, many people, on my side, the other side, and no particular side, who are working as hard as they can for peace and fairness and humane living, within Israel and between Israel and its neighbors.

I still believe in the tools of peace. I believe in voting. I believe in individuals and groups who are rebuilding human bridges demolished in fire and terror and war and enforced separation. I believe in talking with people whom history and geography and extremisms of faith and behavior have made my formal enemy.

I believe that God's favorite religion is not Judaism nor Islam nor Christianity. I believe that God's true religion is peace.

So this holiday season, I'm leaving You alone to do what You like.  
And may this be a year of unexpected peace.



**This year marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Yom Kippur War, when, on Yom Kippur in 1973, a coalition led by Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack on position in the Israeli-occupied Sinai peninsula and Golan heights.**

The Jerusalem Post reported earlier this year, on Israeli Remembrance Day, a speech made by IDF Chief of Staff Benny Gantz at the Kotel during a ceremony, noting that this year marks the 40th anniversary of the Yom Kippur War of 1973:

"40 years later, we remember the Yom Kippur War," he said, "and we remember that the sirens went off, and men praying across the country were pulled away from Synagogues to go off and fight."

"40 years later, and we still need all of our youth to draft in to the army and to stand shoulder to shoulder...it is now tied in to the identity of our nation," Gantz continued.

Magnum, an online collaborative of photographers, have created an album of photographs from 1973 marking the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Here are some of their images. You can find more at

<http://www.magnumphotos.com/C.aspx?VP3=SearchResult&ALID=2K1HRGY4003>



Generals Ariel Sharon and Moshe Dayan at the bridgehead crossing of the Suez Canal.



On the 16th October 1973, Israeli units stop with their tanks and guns for traditional prayers



The advance of an Israeli tank into Egyptian territory after crossing the Suez Canal.



An Israeli soldier sipping "ritual wine" after crossing the Suez Canal into Egyptian territory.

In the five years following the Yom Kippur War, negotiations led to a peace accord between Israel and Egypt. These years of difficult talks finally concluded with a meeting chaired by President Jimmy Carter at Camp David in 1978 in which Egyptian President Anwar El Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin signed an agreement for Israel's withdrawal from the Sinai.

Although Gantz' words still ring true today, with Israeli teenagers being conscripted as ever, we may also consider what led to this accord, arguably the strongest peace agreement Israel has experienced. Although it did not gain back territory, Egypt felt a strong sense of morale, meaning that peace was made not between a "victor" and its "defeated", but rather by two equal partners.

**Who could Israel look to today as equal partners in peace?**

**Is there hope for peace in the future based in such mutual relationships? With whom? When?**

[With thanks to Michael Pollack from UJIA Informal Education Department for his education on this topic.]

## New intentions and beginnings for the coming year

### Old Garments

A young boy found his way into the city for the first time, excited to finally mark Rosh Hashanah among a community. To his surprise, upon his arrival, he was not greeted with a hearty welcome, but rather with harsh stares, because his clothes were shabby and worn. Impressed with the clothes he saw other people wearing, he went into a well-regarded tailor and bought a new suit. After several days, the suit was ready, and with much excitement he went to retrieve it, and try it on. To his dismay, the suit, despite having been made-to-measure, did not fit. Emerging from the dressing room, the peasant made his complaint;

"Excuse me Sir, but the suit you have made for me does not fit!"

The tailor laughed. "Of course it does not fit, young man, you've put the new suit on over your old clothes! You have to take off the old before you can put on the new."

Thus it is with the New Year. We cannot enjoy a new year, enter upon a new phase of life, and acquire a new outlook unless we first get rid of our old and outworn habits of thinking and acting. We must first remove the old habits of selfishness, vanity, and greed, before we can change to a new and better mode of life.

*Based on a story told by Cantor Ellen Dreskin*



### A New Year's Prayer

I'm good at making resolutions, but not always good at keeping them. There are so many goals I'd like to achieve, so many changes I'd like to make. I pray to You, God, for strength. Teach me how to live a meaningful life, to comprehend my true promise, to understand why You have put me here. Let this be a good year, God. A year of health, blessings, love and peace.

"A man's worst enemies can't wish on him what he can think up himself." (Yiddish Proverb)

In what ways are you your own worst enemy? How do you stand in your own way? Do you fear the worst when you could be expecting the best? Take time today to focus on what it might feel like to face a new day, a new situation, a new year with eyes full of hope and optimism.

*Rabbi Naomi Levy*

A Meditation  
(Unknown)

I long to change the world, but I rarely appreciate things as they are.

I know how to give, but I don't always know how to receive.

I know how to keep busy, but I don't know how to be still.

I yearn to succeed, but I often forget what is truly important.

Teach me, God, to slow down. May my resting revive me.

May it lead me to wisdom, to holiness, to peace,

and to You.

Have you found someone to share your heart with?

Are you giving to your community?

Are you at peace with yourself?

Are you trying to be as human as you can be?

So many people walk around with a meaningless life. They seem half-asleep, even when they're busy doing things they think are important. This is because they're into chasing the wrong things. The way you get meaning into your life is to devote yourself to loving others, devote yourself to your community around you, and devote yourself to creating something that gives you purpose and meaning."

(Professor Morrie Schwartz – from Tuesdays with Morrie, by Mitch Albom, 1997)

Before the gate has been closed,  
before the last question is posed,  
before I am transposed.  
Before the weeds fill the gardens,  
before there are no more pardons,  
before concrete hardens.  
Before all the flute-holes are covered,  
before things are locked in the cupboard,  
before the rules are discovered.  
Before the conclusion is planned,  
before God closes his hand,  
before we have nowhere to stand

(A Yehuda Amichai poem)

**At the end of Yom Kippur is there anything that you still feel is not quite finished?  
What will you choose to take with you from Yom Kippur and carry throughout the year?**

## Biographies (in order of appearance)

- **Micah Lapidus**, a reform rabbi living in Atlanta, GA. Rabbi and Director of Jewish and Hebrew Studies at The Alfred and Adele Davis Academy, Atlanta's Reform Jewish Day School. He is also the executive vice president of PARDES: Day Schools of Reform Judaism, the consortium of Reform Jewish Day Schools.
- **Rona Shapiro**, a female Masorti Rabbi in Cleveland USA and the first woman to lead a Masorti shul in her state. She has written many pieces of creative Jewish ritual, you can find some of them at [www.ritualwell.com](http://www.ritualwell.com)
- **Rabbi Karyn D.Kedar**, senior rabbi of Congregation B'nai Jehoshua Beth Elohim in Deerfield, IL, is widely recognized as an inspiring leader who guides people in their spiritual and personal growth. She is the author of many books and has created liturgical work which appears in the prayer book for the American Reform Movement, Mishkan T'filah.
- **Rabbi Naomi Levy**, author of the American bestseller "To Begin Again", and "Talking to God", is the founder and leader of the Jewish spiritual outreach movement, Nashuva. She lives in California with her husband and their three children.
- **Rabbi Rachel Barenblat**, the "Velveteen Rabbi," is an American poet and blogger who was ordained as a rabbi in 2011 and as a spiritual director in 2012.
- **Judy Lash Balint**, author of Jerusalem Diaries: In Tense Times (Gefen) and Jerusalem Diaries II: What's Really Happening in Israel (Xulon Press) and reams of blogs since 2001, Judy attempts to shed a little light on the quixotic, inspiring, frustrating and amusing aspects of life in the holy city
- **Bradley Burston** is a Haaretz columnist and Senior Editor of Haaretz.com which publishes his blog, "A Special Place in Hell"
- **Yehuda Amichai**, an Israeli poet. Amichai is considered by many, both in Israel and internationally, as Israel's greatest modern poet. He was also one of the first to write in colloquial Hebrew. He is well acclaimed within Israel, receiving the Bialik prize in 1972 and the Israel prize in 1982, as well as a host of international awards.
- **Rabbi Debbie Young-Somers**, is community educator at the Movement for Reform Judaism, she spent 4 years as the rabbi of West London synagogue and is a Buber fellow of the Paidea institute.
- **Canon Henry Scott-Holland** was an English cleric, theologian, and social reformer; he was Canon of St. Paul's Cathedral. This text comes from a sermon on death written by Scott Holland and entitled 'The King of Terrors.' He delivered it in St. Paul's on 15 May 1910), at which time the body of King Edward VII was lying in state at Westminster.
- **Cantor Ellen Dreskin**, is a leader of the American reform movement, from music and liturgy to experiential education and mysticism. She previously worked as Director of Programs for Synagogue 2000, a not-for-profit institute dedicated to revitalizing synagogue life in North America, and is now the first person to hold the post of Coordinator of the Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music Cantorial Certification Program at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.
- **Mitchell David "Mitch" Albom** is an American best-selling author, journalist, screenwriter, dramatist, radio and television broadcaster and musician. His books have sold over 30 million copies worldwide.