

MACHZOR GUIDE 5781 - 2020

* - Omit when praying at home

ROSH HASHANAH

MINCHA

• Ashrei • Amidah • *Chazzan's repetition of the Amidah • Aleinu

For commentary on the Mincha service, see the section on Mincha for Erev Yom Kippur

KABBALAT SHABBAT (1st night only)

• Psalms 92&93 •

When the first night of Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat, an abridged form of the **Kabbalat Shabbat** service is recited. This consists of Psalms 92 and 93. The omission of the rest of the Kabbalat Shabbat service can be explained by means of a parable. A guest from out of town came to a small village for a few days. The hosts were simple people and did not have a spare room for visitors. However, they wanted their guest to feel comfortable so the parents asked the children to sleep with them in their room so that the visitor would have his own bed. When the children protested, the father said, "We sacrifice our own comforts for guests." So it is when a Yom Tov falls on Shabbat. The Shabbat 'gives up' some of her own honour so that the guest will feel comfortable.

MAARIV

• *Barechu • Blessings before the Shemah • Shemah • Blessings after the Shemah • *Half Kaddish • Amidah • [Vayechulu & *Magen Avot – 1st night only] • *Full Kaddish • *Kiddush [this is also said at home before the Yom Tov meal] • Aleinu • *Mourner's Kaddish • Psalm 27 • *Mourners Kaddish • Yigdal •

The evening service for Rosh Hashanah is identical to other festivals with one major exception – **the Amidah** prayer. During the week the Amidah consists of 19 blessings: the first 3 are Praise, the middle 13 are Requests and the final 3 are Thanks. On Shabbat and festivals, we omit the 13 Requests and substitute in their place a single blessing called Kedushat HaYom, "the Holiness of the Day." On the Three Pilgrimage Festivals this 7-blessing Amidah is identical, except when we mention the name of the Chag. On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, however, the content of the middle, 4th, blessing is quite different. Moreover, the third blessing, which discusses the Holiness of God's Name is enhanced and extended. After the opening line of the third blessing, "You are holy and Your name is holy, and holy ones praise You daily, Selah!" we add three short paragraphs, all of which begin with the word ובכן "And so"¹. This is the word Queen Esther used which she told Mordechai she would go to see King Achashverosh unannounced and uninvited to beg for the salvation of the Jewish people from Haman's plot, "And so, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish"². On Rosh Hashanah we must approach God even if we feel we are not worthy or not adequately prepared. On this day Hashem elevates us and grants us permission to come before Him.

The third blessing of the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur Amidah concludes, "Blessed are You, Lord, *the Holy King*"³. The usual wording is "...the Holy God." However, on Rosh Hashanah and throughout the Ten Days of Repentance, **we focus on God's Kingship**. This is a major theme of the day, as we will see in the Mussaf Amidah. Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik related that when he was a young child learning in cheder in the Russian village of Chaslavitch in the days preceding Rosh

¹ Abudraham, Seder Tefillat Rosh Hashanah

² Esther 4:16

³ Brachot 12b

Hashanah, he could recognize in his teacher an extraordinary sense of trepidation. “Our teacher, who was a Chabad Chassid, said to us: ‘Do you know what Rosh Hashanah is? The Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzedek, would call the night of Rosh Hashanah ‘Karanatzia Nacht’ (‘Coronation Night’). “Do you know whom we will be coronating?” the teacher asked the children. The young Soloveitchik responded in jest: “Nicholas.” (This was a number of years before the 1917 Russian Revolution, when Nicholas still served as the Russian czar.) The poor teacher of Chaslavitch responded: “Nicholas? He was coronated years ago. Why do we need to coronate him again? Besides, him?! He is not a real king. Tonight, my dear children, we coronate God...” “And do you know who places the crown?” the teacher continued. “Yankel the tailor, Berel the shoemaker, Zalman the water-carrier, Yossel the painter, Dovid the butcher...” Rabbi Soloveitchik concluded: “Over the years I have given many sermons and written many discourses on the concept of Rosh Hashanah, but nothing ever made me feel the true depth and power of the day as the words of my childhood teacher. Every year, when I recite in the Rosh Hashanah prayers the words, ‘Rule over the whole world in Your glory,’ I remember my teacher in Chaslavitch⁴.”

An addition to our prayers throughout the High Holy Days and, in fact, from Rosh Chodesh Elul, is **Psalm 27**, “A psalm of David. The Lord is my light and my salvation.” The Midrash⁵ states that “light” refers to Rosh Hashanah and “salvation” to Yom Kippur. Rabbi Elya Meir Bloch of Telz⁶ explains that on Rosh Hashanah Hashem casts a light upon us and shows us the lofty levels we can reach. A person cannot see what he is capable of becoming when he is still stuck in his current behaviour. As noted by the Messilat Yesharim⁷, he is like someone lost in a maze that cannot reach the centre. A person who has already reached the centre calls to him and guides him on the proper path. Hence on Rosh Hashanah we are elevated above our current situation and shown what we can achieve. Thus there is no mention of sin and no confession. With this newly acquired knowledge, we can forge a path towards the salvation we desire on Yom Kippur.

SHACHARIT

• ***Anim Zemirot • *Mourner’s Kaddish • Psalm of the day • *Mourner’s Kaddish • Psalm 27 • *Mourner’s Kaddish • Morning blessings • *Rabbis Kaddish • Pesukei D’Zimra • HaMelech • Yishtabach • *Half Kaddish • *Barechu • Blessings before the Shemah • Shemah • Blessing after the Shemah • Amidah • *Chazzan’s repetition of the Amidah • Avinu Malkeinu [not on Shabbat] • *Full Kaddish • *Removal of the Sifrei Torah • Torah reading • *Half Kaddish • Haphtarah • Prayers for the community, the Government, State of Israel & IDF [Shabbat only] • Sounding the shofar [omit on Shabbat] • Ashrei • *Return Sifrei Torah •**

The opening section of the Morning service is identical to that of every day of the year. However, many congregations recite Anim Zemirot, the Psalm of the Day and Psalm 27 at the beginning of the service instead of at the end of Mussaf. Each of these are followed by the Mourner’s Kaddish if one is davening with a Minyan. The services of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur have their own unique tunes [*nusach*] that have been handed down from one generation to the next. They are designed to inspire awe for the King of Kings, uplift the congregations and, in some instances, to melt stubborn hearts.

Following the section of the Morning Blessings is **Pesukei D’Zimra**, the Verses of Parise. This consists mostly of Psalms and the Song at the Sea, and is ‘bracketed’ by a blessing before, Baruch She’amar, and a blessing afterwards, Yishtabach. On Shabbat and festivals additional Psalms are added as well

⁴ <https://crownheights.info/something-jewish/3199/rosh-hashana-coronation-night/>

⁵ Vayikrah Rabba 21

⁶ Shiurei Daat, Yemei HaDin

⁷ Chapter 3

as a lengthy and beautiful prayer called Nishmat Kol Chai⁸ (“The soul of all that lives shall bless Your Name...”). This is actually an introduction to the Yishtabach blessing. The basic theme of Nishmat is that it is impossible to adequately praise God: “If our mouths were as full of song as the sea, and our tongue with jubilation as its myriad waves, if our lips were full of praise like the vast heavens, and our eyes shone like the sun and moon...still we could not thank You enough, Lord our God...” And after saying all of this, we then proceed to praise God anyway! This is the chutzpah of a Jew and his trademark – even when a project appears impossible, we attempt to do it anyway. That is how we have survived for so long as a “sheep among seventy wolves.” In most shuls a member of the congregation leads the service until just before the end of Nishmat at which point the Chazzan Sheini takes over. The exact point in Nishmat at which the Chazzan takes over depends on what day it is – Shabbat, chag or the High Holy Days. Thus on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the Chazzan begins with the words “The King [HaMelech] who sits on a throne, high and lofty”. This is in keeping with the theme of God’s Kingship which is the central feature of this period. It is for this reason that the Shacharit Service on the High Holy Days is referred to as **HaMelech**.

Piyutim

Piyutim (similar to the English word ‘poet’) are liturgical poems that are inserted into certain parts of the prayers on special Shabbatot, the Pilgrimage Festivals and on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. They are not mandatory but they enhance the services and set the mood for the occasion. In our generation, where attention spans have waned, most congregations (other than those of German descent) omit piyutim on Shabbat and chaggim. However, on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur almost all communities recite them. There are tens of thousands of piyutim from every corner of the world. Their authors are amongst the greatest Torah scholars, poets and philosophers of the Jewish people. Piyutim are often written in difficult Hebrew (or Aramaic) and contain multiple allusions to scriptural or Talmudic passages. There are clever wordplays, invented terms and hidden acrostics. Ashkenazim and Sephardim have different piyutim and within those two segments, there are further groups that have their own traditions, such as Jews from Poland, Lithuania and Germany. The famous Shabbat song Lecha Dodi is a piyut as is Akdamut, the introduction to the Torah reading on the first day of Shavuot. Piyutim are usually inserted into the blessings of the Shemah and the Chazzan’s Repetition of the Amidah. On second day Shavuot there is a piyut that is inserted into the Haphtarah! Most piyutim are recited responsively, with the chazzan singing a stanza and the community repeating it or vice versa. As this year many people will be davening at home and will not hear the repetition of the Amidah, most piyutim will be omitted. However, they may still be recited after the service as an independent unit. Moreover, even those who *will* be shul are restricted by the Covid regulations to a short service, and will have to select which piyutim to recite and which to omit, with priority given to those that are the most inspiring to the congregation.

Probably the most famous piyut is **Unetaneh Tokef**, which is recited before the Kedusha (the public sanctification of God’s Name) in the chazzan’s repetition of the Mussaf Amidah on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. This stirring poem, which most believe was written in 11th century Germany by the martyr Rabbi Amnon of Mainz⁹, tells of the awesome judgement of God on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. It describes how God scrutinizes each and every person like a shepherd who counts his flock in single file¹⁰. It asks a number of frightening questions, “How many will pass away and how many will be born? Who will live and who will die? Who in his due time and who before? Who by water and who by fire?” It is not unheard of for people to break down in tears at this part of the service and I have even heard about someone who had to leave shul while the prayer was being said. However, Unetaneh Tokef ends on a positive note, reminding us that our fate is not pre-determined and that we can avoid harsh judgements: “But repentance, prayer and charity avert the evil of the

⁸ See Pesachim 118a

⁹ Sefer Or Zarua

¹⁰ Rosh Hashanah 16a

decree.” God is merciful and forgiving and “does not desire the death of the wicked but rather that he returns to Him and shall live¹¹!”

For commentary on **Avinu Malkeinu** and the **Thirteen Attributes of Divine Mercy**, which are recited before the Sifrei Torah are removed from the Ark, see the section for Yom Kippur.

Torah reading and Haphtarah

The reading of the Torah and the Haphtarah are communal obligations and are therefore omitted when there is not a Minyan present. However, it is perfectly acceptable for one praying at home to read the day’s portion and the Haphtarah from a Machzor or a Chumash¹².

The readings for both days of Rosh Hashanah are from Parshat Vayeira¹³, the second portion of the Torah that deals with Avraham and Sarah. The reading from the second Sefer Torah, the **Maftir**, is from Parshat Pinchas¹⁴, which discusses the additional offerings that were brought in the Temple on all the festivals. **The reading for the First Day** deals with three subjects: the birth of Yitzchak, the banishing of Hagar and Yishmael from Avraham’s home and the covenant that was made between Avraham and the Philistine king, Avimelech. The Talmud¹⁵ states that Sarah was ‘remembered’ by Hashem on Rosh Hashanah and conceived Yitzchak. The concept of Remembrance (*Zichronot*) is the second major theme of Rosh Hashanah (the other two being *Malchiyot*, Kingship, as mentioned above, and *Shofarot*, the Sounding of the Shofar) as we will see in regards the Mussaf Amidah. This concept implies that God is interested in the lives of human beings. He is not a distant deity who created the world and let mankind to their devices. He responds to prayer and He guides history. When God granted a child to Avraham and Sarah at ages one hundred and ninety respectively, He demonstrated in the most palpable way that He is present and concerned with His creations. **The Haphtarah for the First Day**, taken from the opening chapters of the book of Samuel, also deals with God’s Remembrance. In this case He granted a son to Chana, after many years of childlessness and abuse at the hands of her co-wife Penina. Chana poured out her soul before Hashem at the Tabernacle in Shilo and her method and language of prayers was used by the Sages¹⁶ to compose the prayers that we say till this very day. The son of Chana was Samuel, the greatest prophet after Moshe. The Sages¹⁷ tell us that Samuels’ father, Elkana, merited to have such a son because he encouraged Jewish families to make the pilgrimage to Shilo to worship Hashem. The first year he took a few families, the next several more until there was a large gathering. Influencing other people to do mitzvot is a great deed and one that we should consider doing as part of our self-improvement during this time of repentance. The second part of the Torah reading, that which tells of how Avraham heeded God’s command to expel Hagar and Yishmael from his home, also teaches an important lesson. Soon after leaving his father’s home, Yishmael took ill and drank all the water in the container. He was about to die and his mother distanced herself from him and wept. At that point the angels said to God that he should let Yishmael die because in the future his descendants would persecute the Jewish People. God refused. He told the Heavenly Host that at the moment Yishmael was not guilty and that He judges people as they are now, not based on what they will become¹⁸. Although He knows the future of every person, God will only judge us according to our current situation.

¹¹ Ezekiel 33:11

¹² Although it is not obligatory - Orach Chaim 285:7

¹³ Bereishit 21 & 22

¹⁴ Bamidbar 29

¹⁵ Rosh Hashanah 10b

¹⁶ Brachot 31a

¹⁷ Yalkut Shimoni, Shmuel 77

¹⁸ Rashi

The reading for the Second Day is the Binding of Yitzchak¹⁹. This was the tenth and final trial of our patriarch Avraham. The Midrash²⁰ explains that the point of a trial is to bring the latent potential of a person to the fore. God tests the righteous to demonstrate to them – and the world- their worth and capability. Rabbi Azriel Chaim Goldfein, of blessed memory, would liken this to a sports coach who pushed one of the members of the team harder than any of the other players. The coach insisted he come earlier, leave later and do many more exercises than his colleagues. Eventually the player accosted the coach and asked him why he was giving him such a hard time. The coach explained that the seemingly unfair treatment he inflicted on the athlete was precisely because he saw such incredible potential and talent in him. He had to push him harder to bring out those talents. The final test of Avraham is very difficult to understand. Why would a loving God who had granted Avraham a child in his old age, tell Him to offer that same child as a sacrifice? The commentaries wrestle to explain it. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks²¹ explains that this section teaches us the mysterious and miraculous nature of Jewish continuity. Had Hashem not instructed Avraham to abort the sacrifice at the last minute, there would be no Jewish people. “On such slender avoidance of the probable does Jewish continuity rest.” Just when it seems the Jewish people have died, as was the case after the Holocaust, we are reborn out of the ashes. **The Haphtarah for the second day is from the Prophet Jeremiah²²**. It contains a verse that will appear later in the Mussaf Amidah, “Is Ephraim not a treasured son to Me?” There is also the moving scene of Rachel crying for her exiled children and God’s promise to her that her children will return to their land. The crying of Rachel evokes the wordless wail of the shofar.

Prayers for the Government, the State of Israel and the IDF. It has been customary since the earliest days of the Jewish diaspora for the community to recite a prayer for the government on Shabbat morning. This is based on a Mishna in Pirkei Avot²³: “Pray for the peace of the kingdom, for if not for fear of the kingdom, one man would swallow his fellow alive.” This in turn is based on a verse in Jeremiah²⁴ where the prophet says to the exiles: “And seek the peace of the city into which I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray to the Lord for it: for in its peace shall you have peace.” This prayer is not an endorsement of any particular government but rather a request that God guide them to lead the country justly and fairly.

Sounding the Shofar (omitted on Shabbat)

The sounding of the shofar is the central mitzvah of Rosh Hashanah. **The minimum number of notes one must hear is thirty²⁵**. These are the notes sounded before Mussaf. The shofar is sounded again at the end of each of the three sections of the Chazzan’s repetition of the Mussaf Amidah and then a final time at the end of the service, giving a total number of one hundred notes²⁶. This year services will be shorter due to the Covid regulations and in some shuls the final (customary) notes will be omitted. People praying at home should still try to fulfil the mitzvah by sounding the shofar, if they have one and are conversant with the laws, or attend special ‘shofar sessions’ that some shuls will provide. The Torah does not offer a reason for this mitzvah. Some, like the Rambam²⁷, view the shofar as a call from Hashem to man. The blasts of the shofar call on those who are ‘sleeping’ to awaken from their slumber, examine their deeds and return to Hashem in sincere repentance. Others view the shofar as call from man to God. There are prayers with words, in which we

¹⁹ Bereishit 22

²⁰ Bereishit Rabba 55:2

²¹ Koren Rosh Hashanah Machzor page 737

²² Chapter 31

²³ 3:2

²⁴ 29:87

²⁵ Rosh Hashanah 33b

²⁶ Orach Chaim 596:1

²⁷ Hilchot Teshuva 3:4

articulate our feelings and needs before our Creator. But then there is a cry, a prayer without any words, like the wailing of Mother Rachel for her children who have gone into exile. A baby's sobs have no words, but its mother knows exactly what it needs. The Torah speaks about two notes that are sounded with a shofar- a tekiah and a teruah. A tekiah is a long, uninterrupted sound. A teruah is a cry and is meant to sound like a person wailing. It could be a series of protracted sobs (what we refer to as shevarim) or a number of short, staccato sounds (what we refer to as a teruah), or a combination of both²⁸ (shevarim-teruah). Each possible teruah is sounded three times and is preceded and followed by a tekiah, giving a total of thirty sounds: tekiah, shevarim-teruah, tekiah (4X3=12); tekiah shevarim, tekiah (3x3=9) and tekiah, teruah, tekiah (3x3=9).

The Ben Ish Chai²⁹ notes **that the combination of these sounds is intended to be a commentary on human existence.** He refers to the legend of King Solomon's ring as a metaphor for the lessons of the shofar: King Solomon desired to test his most trusted advisor. He devised a challenge that he believed his servant would not pass. The monarch said to him, "In six months we will celebrate Succoth. At that festival I wish to wear a magic ring, such that if a depressed man looks upon it, he will become joyous and if a joyous man looks upon it, he will be saddened in a moment." The royal advisor travelled from country to country and from town to town. He met many peddlers and many talented jewellers but none had heard of the ring. He grew dejected and miserable as the festival of Succoth approached. On the day preceding the *chag*, he came to the small workshop of a poor smith in a little village. He had nothing to lose, so he asked the man if he had ever heard of such a ring. The smith thought for a few moments and extracted a bronze ring from one of his shelves. He engraved a few words upon it and gave it to the king's servant. The servant, who, in the course of the six months, had lost all hope, took the ring and glanced at the inscription. Immediately his eyes lit up. He thanked the smith and paid him generously for his work. When the advisor returned to the palace, the king was overjoyed to see him, for he never believed his servant would produce the desired result. The man handed him the ring and suddenly the king's smile faded from his face. All of the people in the royal court waited impatiently to see what was written on the ring. It was passed around and all read the inscription, "This too shall pass" (*gam zeh ya'avur*). One may be depressed and despondent one day, but with time, one will experience joy. And one may be overjoyed today, but tomorrow circumstances might change that cause one to fall into despair. The notes of the *shofar* are like the inscription on the ring. After we sound a *tekiah*, which hints at goodness and joy, we sound a *shevarim*, which hints at pain and suffering, so as to remind the listener not to become arrogant and haughty in his current circumstances and to provoke him to consider that after joy, suffering might be around the corner. But then we conclude with a *tekiah* to hint to the fact that goodness can return and that a person in anguish should not become despondent and lose hope.

MUSSAF

• ***Chazzan's Prayer • *Half Kaddish • Amidah • *Chazzan's Repetition of the Amidah (includes prostration on the ground, shofar blasts and the Priestly Blessing) • *Full Kaddish • *Final shofar blasts • Ein Keilokeinu • *Rabbi's Kaddish • Aleinu • Adon Olam •**

The **Mussaf Amidah** is the most elaborate – and the longest – of all Amidah prayers recited during the year. We noted above that on Shabbat and Festivals the Amidah consists of seven blessings. The fourth, middle, blessing is called Kedushat HaYom, the Holiness of the Day, and always contains a reference to the additional (Mussaf in Hebrew) offerings of the day. The Mussaf Amidah on Rosh

²⁸ Rosh Hashanah 33b

²⁹ Shana Rishona, parshat Nitzavim

Hashanah, however, consists of *nine* blessings³⁰. The reason for this is that the Sages derived through the Oral Law that we are to mention three themes in this prayer³¹, namely Kingship (Malchiyot), Remembrances (Zichronot) and the Shofar (Shofarot). The first theme is combined with the fourth blessing of the Amidah, Kedushat HaYom, the Holiness of the Day. Zichronot and Shofarot are the fifth and sixth blessings respectively. For each of these three themes ten scriptural verses are recited. The verses are taken from the Torah, the Prophets and the Writings, in particular the Book of Psalms (Tehillim). The order is: three verses from the Torah, three verses from the Writings, three verses from the Prophets and a tenth verse from the Torah. There is a principle in Jewish Law called *ma'alim b'kodesh v'lo moridin*, we ascend in holiness but we do not descend. This explains the strange order: after first citing verses from the Torah, we then cite verses from the Writings, which are the least holy, we then ascend to the Prophets, which are of a higher level and then we ascend to the Torah³². When the chazzan repeats the Amidah and concludes each section, the shofar is sounded.

What is the significance of these three themes and why are they so important? Rabbi Yosef Albo³³ offers this explanation: He claims that there are three basic principles of the Jewish faith: The existence of God; the Divine origin of the Torah, and reward and punishment, or, the involvement of God in the lives of mankind. Malchiyot, the verses of Kingship affirm the existence of God. Zichronot, in which we speak of how God 'interferes' in history, relates to reward and punishment and demonstrates that He is not aloof but intimately involved in our lives. The ten verses of Shofarot recall the Divine Revelation at Sinai, which was accompanied by the sounding of a shofar, as related in the Book of Shmot³⁴. In our Mussaf of Rosh Hashanah, in the opening prayer of the New Year, we affirm our belief in these three fundamental principles.

During the Mussaf Amidah many piyutim are inserted, as explained above in the section on Shacharit, with the most famous being Unetaneh Tokef. A very familiar part of the Mussaf Amidah is **Aleinu**, which serves as an introduction to the ten verses of Kingship. When we reach this point of the prayer in the chazzan's repetition, **we bow down on the ground**, as our forebears did regularly in the Holy Temple. The Halacha requires that we do not bow directly on the floor but that we cover it with a mat or garment³⁵. In Europe there was a delightful story that they told children in cheder. Aleinu came to complain to Hashem. He pointed out that he was placed at the end of every prayer service, at which time everyone was tired and wanted to go home. Consequently, the worshippers would mumble through the recitation. Hashem had compassion upon him and placed him right in the middle of the Rosh Hashanah service! It's a nice story, but it's not accurate. Aleinu was originally composed to be part of the Mussaf service on Rosh Hashanah and much later in history it was borrowed and placed at the end of every service.

TASHLICH

Recited in the afternoon of the first day of Rosh Hashanah, unless it is Shabbat, in which case it is postponed to the second day, as is the case this year³⁶. It may also be said during the Ten Days of Repentance.

Tashlich is a custom dating back to at least the 14th century. It is recited at a river, lake, the sea or other bodies of water. The main part of the prayer is a passage from the prophet Micha³⁷ that

³⁰ Brachot 29a

³¹ Rosh Hashanah 32a

³² Tosfot, ad loc, gives a different explanation

³³ Sefer Halkkarim 1:4

³⁴ Chapter 19 & 20

³⁵ Orach Chaim 621:4

³⁶ Ibid 583:2 with Mishna Berura ad loc

³⁷ Chapter 7

speaks of God's Attributes of Mercy and concludes, "He will again have compassion on us, suppress our iniquities, and cast into the depths of the sea all their sins." Other prayers have been added over the centuries, most of which are Kabbalistic in nature.

The Midrash³⁸ records that when Avraham was on the way to take his son Yitzchak to Mt Moria as an offering to God, Satan (the accusing angel tasked by God to turn people from His service) transformed himself into a raging river. Avraham feared that if he would take Yitzchak and his assistants into the river, they would be drowned. He jumped in first and attempted to wade across. When the water reached his neck, he cried out, "Master of the Universe! You appeared to me and said, "I am one and you are one - make My Name known in the whole world and bring your son as an offering." I did not hesitate or question your word and I did not delay. And now the water threatens to take my soul. If I drown, how will my son Yitzchak sanctify your name?" Immediately God scolded the Satan and he disappeared." The halachic work *Levush* identifies this Midrash as the source of the custom of reciting *Tashlich*. The *Akeida* (binding of Yitzchak) occurred on Rosh Hashanah and many references are made to it in the prayers. In fact, the use of a ram's horn as a shofar is intended to recall this transformative event, for a ram was sacrificed in Yitzchak's place. On Rosh Hashanah we are filled with enthusiasm for the year ahead. We make commitments to improve our lives and come closer to God's service through the performance of mitzvot and the study of Torah. The piercing sound of the shofar wakens us from our stupor and energizes us for the months ahead. The last thing we need is to have our passion drowned in a river of negativity. Hence, we make our way to a river or other body of water to remind ourselves that Avraham, our great forefather, was not dissuaded from his holy task. No amount of 'cold water' could extinguish the fire that was burning within his heart.

MINCHA

• **Ashrei & U'va L'Zion** • ***Half Kaddish** • ***Torah reading [Shabbat only]** • ***Half Kaddish** • **Amidah** • ***Chazzan's repetition of the Amidah** • **Avinu Malkeinu [omitted on Shabbat]** • ***Full Kaddish** • **Aleinu** • ***Mourner's Kaddish** •

MAARIV FOR THE END OF YOM TOV

• ***Barechu** • **Blessings before the Shemah** • **Shemah** • **Blessings after the Shemah** • ***Half Kaddish** • **Amidah** • ***Full Kaddish** • **Aleinu** • ***Mourner's' Kaddish** • **Psalm 27** • ***Mourner's Kaddish** • **Havdalah** •

There are several **additions that are made to the prayers during the Ten Days of Repentance**³⁹. In the Amidah: "Remember us for life", in the 1st blessing; "Who is like You", in the 2nd blessing; "The Holy King" instead of "the Holy God" at the conclusion of the 3rd blessing [if this change is not made, the Amidah must be repeated]; "The King of justice" instead of "the King who loves righteousness and justice" at the end of the 11th blessing [if this change is not made one does not have to repeat the Amidah]; "And write us for good life" in the 18th blessing and "In the book of life", in the 19th blessing. We recite **Avinu Malkeinu** at Shacharit and Mincha. Certain changes are made in the **Kaddish**, as indicated by the Machzor and Siddur. These indicate the loftiness of Hashem that is readily apparent at this time. Hence, He is *l'eila u'l'eilah*, "Above and beyond any blessing, song" etc.

³⁸ Yalkut Shimoni, Parshat Vayeira 22:99

³⁹ Orach Chaim 582 & 602

YOM KIPPUR

Mincha

• Ashrei • *Half Kaddish • Amidah [includes the Viduy, Confession] • *Full Kaddish • Aleinu •
*Mourner's Kaddish •

On Erev Yom Kippur Mincha is recited before the final meal⁴⁰ (Seudat Mafseket). The reason for this is that one should recite the confession (Viduy) before Yom Kippur "lest he chokes or loses his mind during the final meal" and passes away without the opportunity to confess his sins before Hashem. Although this appears to be a far-fetched concern, it seems that in the past Jews were so overawed by the thought of Yom Kippur that they would simply collapse in trepidation of the Holy Day!

The Talmud⁴¹ states, "'A person should always be very careful and meticulous when it comes to reciting the **Mincha** service for Elijah was answered at Mincha, as it states⁴², *'And it was at the time of the afternoon-offering, Elijah the prophet approached and said, 'Hashem, God of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yisrael, today it will become known that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that it is by Your word that I have done all these things. Answer me, Hashem, answer me! And let this people know that You, Hashem, are the G-d; thus you will turn their hearts back.'*" Why is Mincha singled out by our Sages? At the climatic ending of the Neilah service, we recite the verse "Hashem is the Lord" no less than seven times. These words were originally said by the Jews who witnessed the contest between the Elijah and the priests of the idol Baal at Mt Carmel. Elijah accused his co-religionists of "dancing between two opinions." They served Baal and yet they wanted to be Jewish at the same time. They could not commit themselves to either 'faith.' They wanted the best of both worlds - the privileges of being Jewish and the freedom that an idolatrous lifestyle brought. Elijah told them that such a path was impossible. They had to choose - either Hashem or Baal, but they could not be neutral. He challenged the priests of Baal to a contest. Both he and the Baal priests were to set up altars and prepare sacrifices, but neither could set fire to the offerings. Both were to pray to their respective deities for fire to descend and whoever would be answered would be victorious. Elijah was answered and when the Jews saw the power of Hashem, they fell to the ground and declared "Hashem is the Lord!" Rashbah⁴³ explains that the three prayer services correspond to each part of the day: getting up, standing and going down. At these times we must acknowledge the One who created us and be aware that at every point in our day, when we get up, when we stand and when we go down, we must serve Him "for this is the whole of man." Furthermore, these three times correspond to the ages of a person - youth, adulthood and old age. It is not that difficult to serve God when one is young, "to recite the morning prayers"; one does not yet have the obligations of adult life. He is not married; he does not have a family or a job or bills to pay. There is time for Judaism. Young children have no problem coming to shul. There is not much to stop them. They receive a chocolate and run and play with reckless abandon. Similarly, it is not difficult to serve God when one is advanced in years. Work responsibilities have diminished or one may be retired. One has time for study, prayer and contemplation. Many elderly people come to shul far more regularly than they did during their working lives. But the real challenge is in the middle of our productive lives, *after* the bar and bat- mitzvah years, during the teens and the young-adult period of life. When our responsibilities begin to increase. When other interests vie for our attention. When we have a job and a spouse and children and bills to pay and mouths to feed and meetings to attend. That is when it is very difficult to serve God. There are many distractions and many *seemingly* more productive things to do with our time. It is then that we must turn to God

⁴⁰ Yoma 87b

⁴¹ Brachot 6b

⁴² I Kings 18:36

⁴³ Chiddushei HaHaggadot

for that's when we are at our full strength. That is the 'Mincha' of our lives and, as Hillel reminds us, "And if not now, when?" Maybe, God forbid, we may not reach our "golden years." We may miss out on an entire Jewish experience that we were too immature to understand when we came of age.

Viduy- the confession

According to Rambam⁴⁴ the primary mitzvah of Teshuva (Repentance) is to confess one's sins before Hashem, "All commandments of the Torah, whether they be positive or negative, if a man violates any one of them, either presumptuously or erroneously, when he will repent himself and turn away from his sinful way, he is obliged to confess before God, blessed is He, as it is said⁴⁵: "When a man or woman shall commit any sin...then they shall confess their sin which they have done, which is a confession of words. Such confession is a positive commandment. How is the verbal confession made? The sinner says: "I beseech You, O Great Name! I have sinned; I have been obstinate; I have committed profanity against You, particularly in doing thus and such. Now, behold! I have repented and am ashamed of my actions; forever will I not relapse into this thing again." This is the elementary form of confession; but whosoever elaborates in confessing and extends this subject is, indeed, praise-worthy."

Confession is not limited to Yom Kippur and indeed should be done any time during the year when one returns to Hashem. However, on Yom Kippur it is an important part of the service in shul, as it was in the Temple in Jerusalem. In the Temple the Cohen Gadol would confess his sins, the sins of his household, the sins of his priestly brethren and the sins of the Jewish people at different stages of the service⁴⁶. In shul Viduy is recited ten times (excluding Mincha on Erev Yom Kippur) – once in each of the five silent Amidah prayers, once in the Selichot prayers following Maariv and then four more times during the chazzan's repetition of the Amidah for Shacharit, Mussaf, Mincha and Neilah. One praying at home would omit the confessions that are said as part of the chazzan's repetition. There are two forms of the Viduy: the short version (*Ashamnu*) and the longer version (*Al chet*). Each is written in alphabetical order. The author of the halachic work Chayei Adam⁴⁷ writes that one should insert their own individual sins in the appropriate point of the text. Thus if one had indulged in non-kosher delicacies, they would insert under the letter *aleph*, "*achalti devarim asurim*", "I have consumed forbidden foods". Viduy is recited while standing slightly bent over, in a humble position. As one mentions a sin, they beat their breast lightly, as the prophet Jeremiah said⁴⁸, "After I strayed, I repented; after I came to understand, I beat my breast." The Viduy is phrased in the plural, "We have become guilty" and "For the sin we have sinned before You", because as Jews we accept responsibility for one another. If I see a fellow Jew acting in a way that is not in accordance to the Torah law, I cannot turn a blind eye and say, "It's not my problem." If you could have intervened and caused the sinner to stop but you did not, you are held partially responsible for their sin⁴⁹. As Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said⁵⁰, "If a person drills a hole under his seat in a boat, when the water enters, not only he but everyone is in danger." **The Atrscroll (page 849) and Koren (page 1353) Machzorim both feature excellent commentaries on the Viduy** at the back of the book. It is worthwhile reading that section so that one will understand properly what he is saying and thereby recite the confession with the proper intention.

⁴⁴ Hilchot Teshuva 1:1

⁴⁵ Bamidbar 5:6-7

⁴⁶ Vayikrah 16:6,11,21

⁴⁷ Hilchot Yom Kippur 143

⁴⁸ 31:18

⁴⁹ Shabbat 55a

⁵⁰ Vayikrah Rabba 4:6

Kol Nidrei

• Putting on the tallis • *Removing the Sifrei Torah from the Ark • *Permission to include transgressors • Kol Nidrei • Shehechyanu [women recite this blessing at candle lighting]

One should ideally put on one's **tallis** before sunset⁵¹ in order to recite the blessing as tzitzit are a day-time mitzvah. The tallis is worn throughout Yom Kippur for all services, even when one is praying at home. White clothing is worn and married men wear a *kittel*⁵². This brings to mind the verse from Isaiah⁵³, "If your sins are like scarlet, they shall be whitened like snow, should they be as red as crimson, they shall become like wool."

Kol Nidrei - the two words that reach deep into a Jew's soul. This short service, with which we begin the awesome day of Yom Kippur, conjures deep emotions within us and sets the tone for the holiest day of the year. Accompanied by a haunting tune that grows louder with each of its three repetitions and with the added majesty of the Torah scrolls that are held aloft throughout its recital, *Kol Nidrei* has a power all its own. What is the purpose of this prayer and why does it occupy such an important position in our liturgy? In truth, it is not a prayer at all, but rather a legal declaration. In the presence of the "earthly court and the Heavenly court" Jews declare that any vows or oaths that they may make in the year to come are henceforth annulled retroactively and are not binding at all. Only if a Jew makes an oath or vow with the express condition that he overrides the declaration made at *Kol Nidrei*, will such an oath or vow be binding. The source for this declaration is a somewhat disguised law stated by Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov in the Talmud⁵⁴ to the effect that "someone who does not want their vows or oaths to take effect during the course of the year should arise at the beginning of the year (i.e. on Yom Kippur) and declare, 'All vows that I will make in the future shall be null and void'." Why such a fuss about vows and oaths? If a Jew decides to forbid a certain action that the Torah permits, either as a preventative measure or as a reaction to something he has done, he may bolster his decision by making a vow or an oath. A vow changes the legal nature of the object, whereas an oath changes the legal nature of the person. Thus, for example, someone may want to decrease their fat intake and will take a vow that "all chocolate shall be forbidden to me in the same way that a sacred animal is forbidden." Henceforth, all chocolate will be prohibited to him by Torah law and if he consumes it he will transgress two Torah commandments⁵⁵, "If a man will take a vow to Hashem or swear an oath to establish a prohibition upon himself, *he shall not desecrate his word* (negative mitzvah); *according to whatever comes from his mouth shall he do* (positive mitzvah)." A similar result can be achieved by swearing an oath, except that in the case of an oath the object's legal nature remains unchanged but the person's legal nature changes. Thus, he may say, "I swear that I shall not eat any chocolate." Once again, if he consumes the food, he will transgress the above mitzvah. Because the desecration of vows and oaths is such a serious matter, the Torah provides methods to release oneself from them. There are two basic methods - *hafara* and *hatara*. The first may only be performed by a father for his minor daughter or by a husband for a wife and even then only for certain vows and oaths. *Hafara* stops the oath, but does not annul it retroactively. *Hatara*, on the other hand, uproots the oath or vow from its inception. This is done when the person who took the oath or vow approaches a Beth Din of three and seeks an "opening" (*petach*) for the oath. If the person can demonstrate that they regret the oath or that they were not aware of all the facts, the Beth Din will pronounce it null and void. Although this remedy may be sought at any time, it has become customary to convene ad hoc

⁵¹ Orach Chaim 18:1

⁵² Orach Chaim 610:4

⁵³ 1:18

⁵⁴ Nedarim 23a

⁵⁵ Bamidbar 30:3

tribunals on the eve of Rosh Hashanah to seek annulment of all our vows so that we can enter the new year free of such obligations that are prone to be broken.

The law of Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov, that forms the basis for *Kol Nidrei*, is another way one can avoid transgressing the serious prohibitions associated with breaking vows and oaths. However, unlike *hafara* or *hatara*, that are applied *after* the oath, *Kol Nidrei* is recited *before* the oath is even mouthed. If one knows that he is prone to taking vows, he may declare that should he take any oaths in the year ahead, that such oaths will have no effect. Understandably, this method is open to abuse as it may encourage people to make promises and then dishonour them with the excuse that they had recited *Kol Nidrei* and thereby cancelled any oaths before they could become binding. There are records of non-Jewish businesspeople who refused to accept the word of a Jew because they claimed that his promise was worth nothing as a result of his declaration on Yom Kippur. As early as the 12th century, we find Rabbi Yechiel of Paris defending *Kol Nidrei* against such attacks.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks notes that the inclusion of *Kol Nidrei* may have been as a result of historical events. When forced conversion to Christianity was rife amongst Jewish communities in ancient Spain, many Jews swore oaths to their tormentors that they would forsake their religion and adopt Christianity instead. When the persecution was lifted, they returned to Judaism and declared in public that in the event that they should be in such a situation again, all such oaths and vows would have no effect. **Kol Nidrei may be recited by one praying at home.**

Maariv

• ***Barechu • Blessings before the Shemah • Shemah • Blessings after the Shemah • *Half Kaddish • Amidah [includes the Viduy, Confession] • Selichot • Avinu Malkeinu • *Full Kaddish • Aleinu • *Mourner's Kaddish • Psalm 27 • *Mourner's Kaddish • Adon Olam • Yigdal**

When reciting the **Shemah** on Yom Kippur, the phrase “Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom for ever and ever” is recited aloud⁵⁶. When Yaakov lay on his deathbed, he summoned his sons, the twelve tribal heads, and blessed them. Our Sages explain that he asked them if they had any reason *not* to accept God upon themselves as their sole deity. They all replied in unison, “Listen O Israel [the other name of Yaakov]! Father- just as you have complete faith in God, so do we! Hashem is our God, Hashem is one!” Yaakov replied, “Blessed is the Name of His Glorious Kingdom forever!” However, since this phrase was not included in the text of the Torah, it is recited quietly during the year. This sentence, which is an angelic praise, was said in the Temple by those attending when they heard the Cohanim pronounce Hashem's Ineffable Name. We mention this in the chazzan's repetition of the Mussaf Amidah. On Yom Kippur we are elevated to the status of angels⁵⁷ and are therefore permitted to say the phrase aloud.

Yom Kippur is the only time of the year that there is a protracted service in the evening. Following the silent Amidah, **Selichot**, prayers for forgiveness, are recited. These are also said at other services during the day, most notably during Neilah. The format of the Selichot on Yom Kippur is identical to the prayers that Sephardim recite every morning during the month of Elul and Ashkenazim from the Sunday before Rosh Hashanah. Between each *selichah*, prayer of forgiveness, which is a type of piyut (see the section on Rosh Hashanah), the congregation recites or sings the **Thirteen Attributes of Divine Mercy** (see commentary below for Shacharit). The Thirteen Attributes are omitted when one is praying without a Minyan⁵⁸, unless they are recited with the tropp (cantillation notes) as a form of learning rather than a prayer. Each service has its own unique selichot as well as standard prayers that are recited at every service. These include the paragraphs *Z'chor rachamecha*, “Remember, Lord, Your compassion and kindness” and the stirring *Shemah koleinu* “Listen to our voice, Lord our God” that is recited responsively with the Chazzan as an

⁵⁶ Orach Chaim 619:2

⁵⁷ Mishna Berura ad loc #8

⁵⁸ Mishna Berura 581:1 #4

introduction to the communal Viduy, Confession. In shul the Ark is opened during the Selichot to enhance the service and add a sense of awe to the proceedings. One of the best known Selichot of Yom Kippur evening is “Like clay in the potter’s hands...so are we in Your hand.” According to Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks⁵⁹, “This poem is a daring plea for the defence: Forgive us for we are what You made us. We sin because You gave us the ability and inclination. Had You made us like angles we would have been like angels. Based on ideas in Isaiah⁶⁰ and Jeremiah⁶¹, the poem belongs to a radical tradition, in prophetic and rabbinic literature, of audacity in prayer.” Perhaps the greatest proponent of this tradition in recent times was the Chassidic leader Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev who defended the behaviour of Jews even when their actions seemed inexcusable. It is related that one Shabbat, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak met a Jew smoking in the street. The rabbi asked the young man if he’d forgotten that such an act is forbidden on Shabbat. The young man replied that no, he hadn’t forgotten. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak asked if there was some circumstance causing him to sin. The young man replied that no, he was knowingly and voluntarily sinning. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak looked up to the sky and said, “Lord of the Universe, see the holiness of Your people! They’d rather declare themselves sinners than utter a lie!”

For commentary on **Avinu Malkeinu** see the section on Shacharit and for commentary on **Psalm 27**, see the section on Maariv for Rosh Hashanah.

SHACHARIT

• **Psalm of the day** • ***Mourner’s Kaddish** • **Psalm 27** • ***Mourner’s Kaddish** • **Morning blessings** • ***Rabbis Kaddish** • **Pesukei D’Zimra** • **HaMelech** • **Yishtabach** • ***Half Kaddish** • ***Barechu** • **Blessings before the Shemah** • **Shemah** • **Blessing after the Shemah** • **Amidah** [includes the Viduy, Confession] • ***Chazzan’s repetition of the Amidah** • **Avinu Malkeinu** • ***Full Kaddish** • ***Removal of the Sifrei Torah** • ***Torah reading** • ***Half Kaddish** • ***Haphtarach** • **Prayers for the community, the Government, State of Israel & IDF** • **Yizkor** • **Ashrei** • ***Return Sifrei Torah** •

For commentary on **Psalm 27**, **Pesukei D’Zimra**, **HaMelech**, **Piyutim** (poems added into the services) and **Prayers for the Government**, see the section on Shacharit for Rosh Hashanah. For general remarks on the structure of the **Amidah** for the High Holy Days, see the section on Maariv for Rosh Hashanah.

Avinu Malkeinu is one of the most beloved prayers of the High Holy Day liturgy. In it we address Hashem in His “dual roles” as our Father and our King. A father has compassion on his children and forgives their misdeeds. A King is powerful and can grant amnesty to criminals. Certain stanzas of Avinu Malkeinu are recited responsively and the Ark is opened. In many communities a rousing tune is sung at the end of the prayer. This is the story behind “Our father, our King”: The Talmud⁶² relates that once during a terrible famine the great Rabbi Eliezer led the prayer services for rain and recited 24 blessings, yet his prayers remained unanswered. When Rabbi Akiva took his place, he said “Our Father, our King, we have no king but You; our Father our King, for Your sake have compassion upon us”, and he was answered at once with copious rain. People began to whisper about Rabbi Eliezer and question his piety. A Heavenly Voice was heard saying, “It is not because Rabbi Akiva is greater than Rabbi Eliezer but rather because Rabbi Akiva foregoes his honour and forgives insults made against him and Rabbi Eliezer does not.” God’s Divine mercy can be aroused if we have the inner fortitude to bite our tongues and “let it go.” Elsewhere the Talmud⁶³ states, “Whoever forgoes his

⁵⁹ Introduction to the Koren Yom Kippur Machzor page lx

⁶⁰ 64:7

⁶¹ 18:6

⁶² Taanit 25a

⁶³ Rosh Hashanah 17a

reckonings with others for injustices done to him, the Heavenly Court in turn forgoes punishment for all his sins.”

The **Thirteen Attributes of Divine Mercy** are recited when removing the Sifrei Torah from the Ark on festivals and during the Selichot services in Elul, the Ten Days of Repentance and on Yom Kippur. They are sung with a traditional uplifting tune and are considered by many to be a highlight of the day especially during Neilah. After the sordid affair of the golden calf, Moshe ascended Mt Sinai for another two periods of forty days to seek forgiveness from Hashem. His prayers were successful. God told him to prepare a second set of tablets to replace the ones he had smashed at the foot of the mountain and that He would inscribe upon them the same words that He had inscribed on the first tablets. Moshe ascended the mountain and, while there, God taught him the Thirteen Attributes of Divine Mercy. This set of prayers was to be used by the Jewish people to plead for mercy whenever they believed that the merit of their forefathers had run out. Hashem promised that these prayers would never be returned unanswered⁶⁴.

Torah reading and Haphtarah

The **Torah reading** for Yom Kippur morning is from Vayikrah 16, which describes in great detail the Temple service on the Day of Atonement. On this day the Cohen Gadol would conduct the entire service. He wore two sets of garments: the eight golden vestments, which were worn when he was outside of the sanctuary, and the four white, linen garments that he wore when he entered the inner sanctum. When he changed clothing, which happened five times, he would immerse in a mikveh. Apart from the additional sacrifices of the day, described in the **Maftir**⁶⁵, there were several other offerings unique to Yom Kippur, namely the bull sin-offering of the Cohen Gadol; the two goats, of which one was a sin-offering and the other, the ‘scapegoat’, and the incense offering that was brought in the Holy of Holies. Yom Kippur was the only day of the year on which the Cohen Gadol entered the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant was housed. There is an entire Tractate of the Talmud (Yoma) dedicated to the Temple service on this day. During the chazzan’s repetition of the Amidah, a lyrical account of the High Priests’ service on this day, called **Seder Avodah**, is given. It is written in difficult Hebrew and in excruciating detail. It also includes a lengthy lament for the fact that we no longer have a Temple and an elegy for the Ten Martyrs who died at the hands of the Romans before and after the destruction of the Second Temple. It is very beautiful and contains direct quotes from the Cohen Gadol’s prayers in the Temple. It is during this section of the prayers that we **prostrate on the ground**, as was done by our forebears in the Temple (see the section on the Mussaf service for Rosh Hashanah). I suggest that those who are not familiar with Hebrew should read the translation of the Seder Avodah. It may be read as a ‘stand-alone’ prayer when one is praying at home.

The **haphtarah for the morning of Yom Kippur** is a beautiful passage from the prophet Isaiah⁶⁶. The Prophet describes the type of fast Hashem desires – not one with false chest-beating and insincere prayers where people don sackcloth but continue to take advantage of the poor and vulnerable members of society. Instead he calls upon us to “loosen the bindings of evil, break your bread for the starving, and bring dispossessed wanders home. When you see a person naked, clothe him [and] do not ignore your own flesh [your relatives in their time of need.]”

Yizkor

Rabbi Yoseph Karo writes in the section of the Code of Jewish Law dealing with Yom Kippur⁶⁷: “And we have become accustomed to **pledge charity** on Yom Kippur on behalf of the departed souls”. Rabbi Moshe Isserles adds the following note: “And we also **remember and mention the souls of the**

⁶⁴ Rosh Hashanah 17b

⁶⁵ Bamidbar 29

⁶⁶ 57 & 58

⁶⁷ Orach Chaim 284:7

dead, for they too receive atonement on Yom Kippur". It is for this reason that Yom Kippur is called by the Torah *Yom HaKippurim*, the Day of Atonements, in plural, for the dead also receive atonement on this holy day. This prayer is known as *Yizkor*, after its opening word "May [Hashem] remember". *Yizkor* is recited quietly by individuals who have lost close relatives. In many shuls the chazzan will also recite Hazkarot prayers before or after the silent *Yizkor*, as well as several memorial prayers for martyrs of the community or the greater Jewish Nation. This prayer is very ancient in origin and is mentioned in the Midrash⁶⁸. From there it would seem that the original practice was to recite *Yizkor* only on Yom Kippur. However, at some later time the custom was extended to the final days of the three Pilgrimage Festivals.

The commentators explain that the recitation of *Yizkor* together with the pledging of funds to charity has two benefits: (i) It assists the souls of the deceased to rise even higher in the next world. This is because, in the words of the Talmud: "a son can bring merit to his father", that is a living relative can elevate the soul of a deceased parent by fulfilling *mitzvot*, and particularly the *mitzvah* of charity, in his honour. Furthermore, when a child pledges charity, G-d determines whether his deceased parent would likewise have given money to charity and considers it as if he had done so. (ii) When the names of the dead are read out, this serves to break our hearts and humble us and thereby ward off the power of the evil inclination. ***Yizkor* may be recited by one praying at home.**

Mussaf

• *Chazzan's Prayer • *Half Kaddish • Amidah [includes the Viduy, Confession] • *Chazzan's Repetition of the Amidah [includes a synopsis of the Temple Service, prostration on the ground and the Priestly Blessing] • *Full Kaddish •

The repetition of the Amidah is extremely lengthy **because it contains many piyutim, including Unetaneh Tokef** (see section on Rosh Hashanah); **the Seder Avodah** (account of the Temple Service, see above regarding the Torah reading); **prostration on the ground** (see the section on Mussaf for Rosh Hashanah); **Selichot** (prayers for forgiveness, see the section for Maariv); the communal **Viduy, Confession and the Priestly Blessing**. One praying at home will omit most of this. However, they may recite the Seder Avodah and piyutim of their choice as stand-alone prayers after they have concluded Mussaf.

As mentioned above, the Seder Avodah is a lengthy description of the unique Temple service of Yom Kippur. One difficult aspect of this service was the **scapegoat**. This rite is an enigma wrapped in a mystery. Its purpose and meaning has long been debated by the great commentators. In short, two identical goats were prepared before Yom Kippur and on the day itself, the Cohen Gadol would draw lots to determine which was to be a sacrifice and which was to be sent to a "desolate land." Before sending the goat with a designated man, the Cohen Gadol would confess upon its head all the sins of Israel. The goat was then taken into the wilderness close to Jerusalem and unceremoniously pushed off a cliff. What is the meaning of all this? Can sins be transferred from the head of one person (or persons) onto another? Is atonement such a simple matter that all one has to do to achieve forgiveness is cast his sins onto a dumb animal? Rambam⁶⁹ deals with this difficult issue in his Guide for the Perplexed, where he writes: "There is no doubt that sins cannot be carried like a burden, and taken off the shoulder of one person and laid on that of another. But these ceremonies are of a symbolic nature, and serve to impress people with a certain idea, and to induce them to repent, as if to say: we have freed ourselves of our previous deeds, have cast them behind our backs, and removed them from us as far as possible."

The Sefer HaChinuch⁷⁰ suggests that the scapegoat is directed to those who have committed [or are contemplating committing] grievous sins against God and the Jewish people, such as those who deny

⁶⁸ Tanchuma, Ha'azinu#1

⁶⁹ 3:46

⁷⁰ Mitzvah 95

the Divine origin of the Torah or who cause distress to the community. Should such people think that they can continue on their crooked path and then repent, after which they will be accepted amongst the pious of the Nation, even though their sins are great in quality and quantity, the scapegoat states otherwise. Other sin-offerings that are offered in the Temple throughout the year are burned, but a portion of their bodies, even if it is just their ashes, remain in the holy courtyard. This is an indication that even sinners have a place in God's Kingdom. But the scapegoat is 'expelled' entirely from the precincts of the Temple; it has neither place nor memory in God's sanctuary. It is doomed to destruction because of the heavy burden of sin that it carries. That should be a sobering thought to all those who witness the ritual. God is patient and desires the repentance of the wicked but even so, too many sins, or certain very serious sins, can break the camel's back.

In his comments on the custom of Tashlich, and in particular the practice some have to throw bread into the water, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks writes⁷¹: "That [the reason offered by the Rambam for the scapegoat], undoubtedly, is the underlying psychology of the folk custom of casting away crumbs as sins: a symbolic gesture, no more, no less. The Judaic concept of teshuva, repentance, is not psychologically straightforward. For those who feel a strong sense of guilt it is not easy to believe that God forgives and that the past is in some sense erased (the root meaning of kippur in Yom Kippur). Feelings of stigma, shame, self-reproach, dishonour, disgrace, even defilement, may remain, trapping us in the past and barring our way to a new beginning. If a symbolic act was needed in biblical times, might it not be needed even now, for though the world has changed, human psychology remains? There is, therefore, in the custom of throwing away crumbs – as often with Jewish folkways – a psychological depth not to be lightly dismissed. It is a gesture of breaking with the past and letting it be carried away on the river of time while we set out on a new journey in a different direction."

Symbolism remains one of the most powerful tools for human transformation.

Mincha

•* Removing the Sefer Torah • *Torah reading and Haphtarah • *Return the Sefer Torah • *Half Kaddish • Amidah [includes the Viduy, Confession] • *Chazzan's repetition of the Amidah • Avinu Malkeinu • *Full Kaddish •

The **Torah reading** for the afternoon of Yom Kippur is the section on the prohibited relationships, Vayikrah 18. A respected attorney once confronted me at my weekly lunchtime shiur, which he attended regularly. He could not fathom why the sages had chosen for the afternoon Torah reading of Yom Kippur the section dealing with the prohibited sexual relationships (incest, adultery, bestiality, etc.). "Could they not have selected something more appropriate for the holiest day of the year?" he wondered, "perhaps a section dealing with charity or repentance?" I explained to him that *kedusha*, holiness or sanctity, and sexuality are intertwined. One example of this is Rashi's comment on the verse⁷², "Hashem spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the entire assembly of the Children of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for holy am I, Hashem, your God." Rashi comments: "You shall be holy - [this means] that you must abstain from forbidden relationships and from sin, for wherever you find safeguards (literally "fences") against sexual immorality, that is where you will find holiness." The Torah's measure of a society's holiness is its sexual ethic. Does the society promote the sanctity of marriage and sexual fidelity or does it allow promiscuity and permissiveness⁷³? It is very telling of their approach to this subject that the Talmudic sages referred to the method by which a husband and wife become bonded together as *kiddushin*, sanctity. When the Jewish people conduct themselves in a way that is conducive to this sanctity, they merit God's Presence, but when they behave immorally, they cause Him to depart, as the verse proclaims: "For

⁷¹ Koren Rosh Hashanah Machzor pp 946-7

⁷² Vayikrah 19:2

⁷³ For more on this see the Koren Yom Kippur Machzor pages 992-996

Hashem, your God, walks in the midst of your camp to rescue you and to deliver your enemies before you; so your camp shall be holy, so that He will not see a shameful thing among you and turn away from behind you.” Achieving this level of holiness is no easy task because, in the words of the Talmud⁷⁴, “Theft and forbidden sexual relationships are sins that a person covets and desires.” The sexual urge is one of the most powerful forces in a person and it can bring one to utter destruction.

The Haphtarah is the entire book of Jonah. This is a most appropriate selection for Yom Kippur as it deals with a number of themes of Teshuva, Repentance. When the prophet attempted to withhold the prophecy he had received from God regarding the sinful Gentile citizens of Nineveh, he fled by ship. But there is no escaping God and the ship was beset by a storm. It became clear to the sailors that Jonah was the cause of the storm and he insisted they throw him overboard after identifying himself as a “Hebrew who fears the God of the Heavens.” The sailors were saved and repented of their idolatrous ways. Jonah miraculously survived by being swallowed up in the stomach of a great fish. In the depths of the sea he prayed to God and begged for forgiveness. After reaching dry land, Jonah set out for Nineveh. The king and the inhabitants of the city were moved by his words of warning and they, too, repented of their evil ways. Several verses from the prophet Micha are added to the end of the haphtarah, the same that are said at the Tashlich service on Rosh Hashanah.

Neilah

•Ashrei and U’va L’Zion • *Half Kaddish • Amidah [includes the Viduy, Confession] • *Chazzan’s repetition of the Amidah • Avinu Malkeinu • Dramatic Proclamation of Faith • *Full Kaddish • Sounding the Shofar • “Next year in Jerusalem!” •

I always associate Neilah, the fifth and final service of Yom Kippur, with the words of the Chofetz Chaim⁷⁵, which my Rosh Yeshiva, of blessed memory, would cite every year: “Just as Yom Kippur is the climax of the Ten days of Repentance, so Neilah is the climax of Yom Kippur. The Heavenly judgment inscribed on Rosh Hashanah is sealed during Neilah. This is virtually the last opportunity for sincere repentance to reverse the judgment from death to life, from poverty to prosperity, from suffering to contentment. It behooves everyone, therefore, to rouse themselves at this time to pray with concentration, feeling, and intensity, despite the weariness he feels in this final hour of the long fast.”

Neilah means “closing” and it refers either to the closing of the gates of the Temple or the gates of Heaven⁷⁶. It is an emotional service with its own unique tune that is intense and even haunting. In shul the Ark remains open for the entire repetition of the Amidah. One feels a sense of urgency during Neilah. Time is running out and “if not now, when?” this theme appears in one of the Selichot that is recited, “Open the Heavenly gate for us at this time when the gate closes, for the day is fading away. This day will fade away, the sun will set and be gone – let us come to Your gates.” The limited time does not even allow us to say both versions of the Confession - during Neilah only the short version is said. Today Neilah is associated exclusively with Yom Kippur but it also used to be recited on public fast days that were proclaimed as a response to drought in the Holy Land. It is interesting to note that Neilah stresses the need to put an “**end to the oppression that is in our hands**”. This seems to be a reference to the fact that people take advantage of the vulnerable members of society by not paying them sufficiently for their work or not paying them on time. God is more forgiving of insults made against Him than He is regarding sins against our fellow man⁷⁷. The *Thirteen Attributes of Divine Mercy* are recited many times during the chazzan’s repetition (and therefore omitted by one praying at home) because we are relying on God’s Promise that this prayer will not be returned unanswered.

⁷⁴ Chagigah 11b

⁷⁵ Mishna Berura 623:3

⁷⁶ Yerushalmi Brachot 4:1

⁷⁷ Bereishit Rabba 38:6

Neilah concludes with **Avinu Malkeinu** and it is not unusual to hear people sobbing aloud as they say the verses of this prayer, especially “Our Father, Our King, may this moment be a moment of compassion and favour before You!” We then recite a dramatic proclamation of our faith, consisting of three verses which are recited responsively with the chazzan. One praying at home may say them. The first is the **Shemah**, which is said once. The Talmud⁷⁸ does not allow us to repeat it lest we give the impression that there is more than one God, Heaven forbid. Throughout history Jews have gone to their deaths with the words of the Shemah on their lips, from the martyrdom of Rabbi Akiva to the gas chambers of Auschwitz. We then say “**Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom for ever and ever**” three times and, finally “**The Lord He is God**” seven times. These words were uttered by the Jews who witnessed the contest between Elijah and the priests of the Baal deity on Mt Carmel, as explained above in the commentary to Mincha on Erev Yom Kippur.

After this one long note (Tekiah Gedolah) is sounded on the **shofar**⁷⁹ and everyone beaks out into the joyous cry of “Next year in Jerusalem rebuilt!” The sounding of the shofar at this point (or later, after Maariv, depending on the custom of the community) brings to mind the Revelation at Mt Sinai. The shofar was sounded at the beginning of Moshe’s ascent on Rosh Chodesh Elul and at the end of the forty days, on Yom Kippur, when he came down the mountain holding the second set of tablets, the symbol of a new beginning. It also signified that Hashem’s Presence had departed the mountain, so to speak, and that He would later cause His Presence to dwell in the Tabernacle. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks cites Rabbi Yosef Ber Soloveitchik who said that the sounding of the shofar at this point represents our final wordless cry at the end of the day when we have exhausted the lexicon of penitential words. Perhaps the sounding of the shofar demonstrates the longing of the Jewish people for the imminent arrival of the Mashiach, as we say in our daily prayers, “Sound the great shofar for our freedom, raise high the banner to gather our exiles, and gather us together from the four ends of the Earth.”

Maariv for the end of Yom Kippur

• ***Barechu • Blessings before the Shemah • Shemah • Blessings after the Shemah • *Half Kaddish • Amidah • *Full Kaddish • Aleinu • *Mourner’s’ Kaddish • Psalm 27 • *Mourner’s Kaddish • Havdalah • Kiddush Levana [Blessing for the New Moon] •**

The Midrash states: “A Heavenly voice announces [at the conclusion of Yom Kippur]: Go out in happiness and partake of your meal”. Hence we treat this night as a quasi- Yom Tov and rejoice with good food and drink⁸⁰. It is customary to begin to **build the Succah**⁸¹, so as to immediately be involved in a mitzvah.

⁷⁸ Brachot 33b

⁷⁹ Orach Chaim 623:6

⁸⁰ Orach Chaim 623:6 and Mishna Berura ad loc #15

⁸¹ Orach Chaim 625:1