

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR

HIGH HOLY DAYS AT TEMPLE BETH EL

YOUR GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL PREPARATION AND FAMILY CELEBRATION



Inside this guide, you will find reflections for inner preparation, information about the holidays, family activities, and recipes.

✧ The Month of Elul ✧

The month of Elul is the month preceding the High Holy Days. The rabbis say that the hebrew letters of the month of Elul stands for “Ani L’Dodi V’dodi Li” - I am for my beloved and my beloved is for me. Therefore, the entire month is about getting very clear about “who” and “what” we are for, in our lives. How do we best connect with what is most important to us and get clear about how to manifest it?

If we’ve spent the attention necessary on these areas during this month, the power of our time together in synagogue on

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur can be truly transformative. Please join us to begin this month together as a community on **Wed**

evening, August 31, 2011 with our rabbis learning how to engage the inner preparation necessary to make this year like no other.



HIGH HOLY DAY SERVICE TIMES 2011/5772

	Reform	Family/Multi-Generation	Conservative
Erev Rosh Hashana	7:30 pm	5:00 pm	7:00 pm
Rosh Hashana 1st day	10:00 am	K-5th service and program - 10 am	9:00 am
Rosh Hashana 2nd day	10:00 am	None	9:00 am
Kol Nidre/Erev YK	7:30 pm	5:00 pm	Mincha 6:15/Kol Nidre 6:30 pm
Yom Kippur Day	10:00 am	K-5th service and program - 10 am	8:30 am/Yizkor 1:30 pm Mincha 4:30 pm/Neila 5:30 pm

High Holiday Tot Services on RH 1st Day and YK Day at 8:30 am



Elul - A Month For Spiritual Accounting by Steve Birch

During the month of Elul, leading up to the High Holidays, it is part of Jewish tradition to conduct a “spiritual accounting,” a **cheshbon hanefesh** in Hebrew. The objective of this accounting to better clarify where we are now in regard to the person we want to be, and where we would like it to be different.

The practice of cheshbon hanefesh is something that is done year round as part of Mussar - a science of character development. The month long practice during Elul uses the same methods and can get us started on a track for spiritual elevation. The book entitled Cheshbon HaNefesh authored in 1821 by Rabbi Menachem Mendel Levin provides a basis for this practice.



The Procedure

During Elul we'll want to focus on areas of our behavior that we feel need attention. These areas are personality attributes called *middot*. Below is a list of twelve middot taken in part from the book, Cheshbon HaNefesh. There are many others that have been elaborated upon by the teachers of Mussar.

GRATITUDE	PATIENCE	HUMILITY
DECISIVENESS	CLEANLINESS	COMPASSION
REFRAINING FROM LUST	HONESTY	FRUGALITY
GENEROSITY	FAITH	HONOR

Mussar practice involves focusing on these middot, one at a time, in order to understand where you are on the continuum of behavior as it pertains to the particular attribute, and then to bring into line with where we would like to be. For example; patience is often considered a problem if we find ourselves lacking in this attribute, but we can also have too much patience and not respond to situations as we should.

We start our practice by

- 1), selecting a middah (the singular of middot) to focus on for a week.
- 2), Upon awakening we repeat aloud the name of the middah and reflect on what it means to us. It may help to have a reminder phrase to help collect your thoughts. For example for “patience”, you might use: “whatever may obstruct me from reaching my goals, it is possible to bear the burden of the situation” or “remember that I am not the center of the universe.”
- 3), Set aside some time to meditate on this phrase or on a phrase from the Torah that helps you to focus on this middah. During the day keep mental notes of how you are behaving with regards this middah.
- 4), in the evening record the results in a journal. The process of journaling helps us to see where we are.

This practice builds self awareness of how these different qualities operate in us. The awareness is what allows us to make choices to change our behavior in the direction that we desire. There are many resources that will be of help. Some books that are available include: Cheshbon HaNefesh (Feldheim Publishers), Everyday Holiness by Alan Morinis (Trumpeter Books) and A Responsible Life (Aviv Press). Additionally, there are groups that work on Mussar together and can be a place to find a partner to work on your middot with.

Being the best that you can be doesn't happen by accident, it requires effort and **cheshbon hanefesh** is a powerful tool to help you in this direction.

Reflections from “Jewels of Elul”

Yearly Publication by Craig n'Co

“The smoothest path is full of stones.” Yiddish Proverb

One day my daughter, Noa, who has physical disabilities, asked me if she could have a rock climbing party for her twelfth birthday. I froze. I'd always been so careful to protect Noa from disappointment. I'd gone to great lengths to create parties where she wouldn't get left out or feel that her friends surpassed her. I said, “No, I don't think it's a good idea.” “But why?” she pressed me. “It's too expensive,” I said. But day after day Noa kept pushing for the rock climbing party. Eventually I gave in. But I was still worried.

On the day of the party Noa put on a climber's harness, and to my amazement, she pushed with her legs and pulled with her arms and boldly made her way up the wall. It wasn't easy, but she climbed and climbed. She was fearless, beaming with joy.

I was so wrong about her.

During the party there was a boy about Noa's age who was too frightened to climb. His father was encouraging him, but he stood frozen in his place. His muscles were strong, but his fear was stronger still.

That day my daughter taught me an invaluable lesson: our greatest disability is fear, our greatest strength is courage. In climbing, it is the smoothest surface that is the most treacherous. A rough rocky landscape is fertile ground for ascension. If you want to rise up don't fear the bumps. Turn every stone into a step.

As I looked around the gym that day I couldn't help but wonder if the key to a meaningful life was embedded in that rock wall. The beckoning stones gave me my answer. The challenge in life is as simple as this: Do I stare at the wall or do I climb?

Rabbi Naomi Levy. www.nashuva.com.

My daughter Katie and I were trying to navigate our way to a restaurant located one state over. The phone's GPS had given out and we were lost (typical when I'm driving). I then decided to let my instincts guide me (a very foolish choice) and, to me and my daughter's endless surprise, somehow found a stunningly direct route to the restaurant. Katie remarked, "In what lifetime could you ever have found this on your own?"

My 19-year-old son Jonah had died only a month earlier. This was actually one of his favorite restaurants. Katie and I had decided to go there in his memory. And we were certainly wondering if he had played some role in guiding us there.

A year and a half since Jonah's death, I'm now beginning to understand my process of grief and recovery. Each and every day, I ache a bit, I cry a bit, and I take a tiny step forward back into my life. Sometimes it's to look for evidence that Jonah is still with me – either metaphysically by my side, or profoundly resident deep within my heart – and sometimes it's to live a moment or two without his laying claim to my entire spirit (sometimes I'm actually able to come out from under the shadow of my life without him).

Each of us is the recipient of so many blessings. But being fragile, being breakable, not every moment's going to be blessed. After the hurt, I think we pick ourselves up, limp if we have to, and (step by step) get back onto our path. We begin again. After all, the blessings haven't gone away.

And no matter how poor our navigational abilities, no matter what route we select, before long we're bound to bump into a blessing or two.

Billy Dreskin is the rabbi at Woodlands Community Temple in White Plains, NY. For more about Jonah visit jonahmaccabee.blogspot.com.

An Inspiring Story

by Rabbi Peter Levi

I like to tell this story at our rosh hashanah table every year. Try it with your family.

There was an old man. Although he was not rich, he had three prized possessions: a peach tree, a silver pitcher, and a fur-lined coat. Everyday he would sit in his house and look at the peach tree growing in his yard. Only one peach grew on it. In the house across the yard lived a woman and her son. The boy too spent the days in his window, sitting at a desk hard at work. But the old man noticed as the summer wore on that he saw the boy looking up more and more at his peach tree. Soon the boy was looking at the peach more than he was looking at his studies. And then, one day to the old man's surprise, he did not see the boy. As the days went by, he forgot about the boy. His peach grew ripe and it was time to pick it.

As he stood in the yard below the peach in the tree, admiring the fruit, the woman from across the yard called out to him. "Good sir, do you have a moment?" she called.

"Sure I do," he replied, "I was just about to pick my peach and eat it."

"Oh, thank goodness. You see, I have a son who is sick because of you."

"Because of me?! How so?"

"Well, not exactly you," she explained. "But because of your peach you are about to eat. You see, he sat in the window everyday yearning for your peach and it has made him ill."

"You don't say!" said the old man. "Tell him to get out of bed and I would be happy to give him the peach." The old man picked the peach and gave it away.

Soon everything was back to normal. Summer turned to fall. Each day the man would sit in his window, and the boy would sit in his studying his books. As the days grew colder, the old man would make himself some hot chocolate in his silver pitcher and sit in his window sipping it. He began to notice that the boy began looking more at the silver pitcher than his books. And then one day he could no longer see the boy sitting in the window.

The next day there was a knock on his front door. The woman from across the yard was there. "Good day" the old man greeted her.

“Oh dear,” she said. “Not a good day at all. My son is not well. He has taken to his bed and keeps talking about a silver pitcher.”

“The silver pitcher? It is of no great value, but I have had it for so long..”

“But he is so young,“ the woman implored. “And the young have so much to look forward to. If he could only touch the silver pitcher I’m sure he would get up and resume his studies.”

The old man got up, went to his table and picked up the silver pitcher. “He shall have it!” he said generously. “And not just for a day. For always. You tell him it is a gift from me.”

Soon everything was back to normal. Each day the man would sit in his window and the boy in his studying his books. **Although he old man did not have the taste of the peach to remember or the shiny silver pitcher with his hot chocolate, nevertheless he was content with what he did have.** And as the days grew even colder, the old man would drape his fur-lined coat over his shoulders. He would sit in his window and took delight in seeing the boy across the yard sitting at his desk hard at work. But soon he began to notice that the boy began looking more at his fur-lined coat than his books. And then one day he could no longer see the boy sitting in the window.

The next day there was a knock on his front door. He got up holding his coat over his shoulders and went to answer the door. The woman from across the yard was there. “Oh, it’s you,” said the old man. Suddenly, he knew what was coming.

“It is my son...” the woman began. “He can’t sleep. He can’t study. He just longs for a fur-lined coat. He says he will die if cannot have one. Oh please, sir, can you help?”

Thoughtfully the old man replied, “I think, perhaps, I can.”

The old man wrapped the fur-lined coat around him tightly and followed the woman across the yard and up the stairs. Surely the boy looked like he was near death. “I have come to save your life,” the old man said to the boy who smiled with delight. But the old man was in no rush to take off his coat. He looked at the books and paper on the boy’s desk and said, “You have a good head and it should take you where you want to go -- if you will let it.” The boy nodded. The old man continued, “A long time ago my father told me a story and now I am going to tell it to you.

Once there was a snake. One day the snake was coiled up happily in his favorite spot when his tail thumped him on the head from behind.

“Who’s that?” said the head.

“It’s me, your tail”

“What’s the matter? Why’d you thump me?” asked the head.

“I did it because it seems to me that you have been leading us around long enough.

Now it’s my turn,” said the tail.

“You?! But you can’t think. How can you lead us anywhere?”

Maybe I can’t think. But I can feel. And I feel very deeply that it is my turn to be the leader for a change.”

“Well,” said the head to the tail, “if you feel you must, well you must, I suppose. Go ahead.”

Well the tail could feel all right, but the tail couldn’t see and the tail couldn’t think. So he began dragging the snake into all sorts of places. Through swamps and nasty thorny bushes. Into walls and off ledges. The poor snake head got dragged along behind. His eyes were scratched and his head so bumped and bruised he could barely think anymore. And since the tail never had anything to think with in the first place, he lead the snake into the street where...BAM...it got run over by a truck and the snake died--both the head and the tail.

“Like the snake,” the old man said, “a person is born with a part for thinking and a part for feeling. When the head is doing the job, this works pretty well. But when he let’s his feelings do the thinking for him, then maybe he is wearing his tail where his head should be.” Then the old man got up, wrapped his fur-lined coat tightly about him, said “Good day.” and went home.

I love this story because it's lesson is simple and deep. We ourselves are often what keeps us from our own happiness. And it is completely within our own power to cultivate that "attitude of gratitude". And, sometimes our deep love and compassion for others means saying "No. Just deal with it." A few years back I was have Rosh Hashbanah with my wife's family. Her aunt was serving this new gefilte fish she had made. And she was reminiscing about how in the old days her mother would make the gefilte fresh, and the head of the fish was offered to an honored guest. I guess had I been around in those days, my being the rabbi in the family would have meant that I would get the fish head. Yummy. And I remembered that there is a special blessing for the one who gets the fish head to eat-- and this is not a joke. [I looked it up in a traditional prayer book] The blessing goes like this: "May it be your will Adonai our God and the God of our ancestors, that we be like the head and not the tail."

Making Yom Kippur Personal

by K'vod Wieder, Rabbinic Intern

This year, we have a special opportunity to let the power of this community be our companions and fellow journeyers on our own paths of healing and change. Each one of us has our own personal vision for who we want to be this year, and the possibility of discovering where our thinking or choices don't reflect that vision. One of the greatest gifts that we can give each other is the genuine knowledge that we are not alone in missing the mark of our vision.

It would be a great goal for Yom Kippur to bring all parts of ourselves in harmony with that vision. In ancient times, the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies, the innermost chamber of the Temple in Jerusalem, and would bring the entire community's transgressions in harmony with a vision of God's purpose in the world. This purification was a revelation of Divine forgiveness and supported the community of Israel to be on a path of truth and purpose for another year. In the Torah, it says of Aaron, the High Priest:

*“when he goes in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he comes out, and have made an atonement for **himself**, and for **his household**, and for **all the congregation of Israel**.” (Vayikra 16:17)*

During Yom Kippur, we will be asking for forgiveness in each of the different services that we pray together. In order for us to make our prayers relevant and meaningful, we will not just call out the transgressions that are listed in the prayerbook, but we also want to call out the real transgressions (anonymously, of course) of the actual people that we are praying with. It is powerful and deeply healing to hear how other people's transgressions parallel our own and to ask forgiveness for not only ourselves, but the actual people in the congregation.

To make this experience a reality, we ask you to tear off the section below and send it in to us.

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1. **Yom Kippur Eve** - write a transgression that you have committed against yourself. (*“himself”*)
 2. **Yom Kippur Morning** – write a transgression that you have committed against your loved ones (*“his household”*)
 3. **Yom Kippur afternoon** – write a transgression that you have committed against your community, society, or earth (*“all the congregation of Israel”*)

Rosh Hashanah Dinner Blessings

Blessing for the lighting of the holiday candles

On the eve of Rosh Hashana, we say two blessings over the candles. The first is the traditional blessing for the “Yom Tov” (holiday) and the second is the “Shehecheyanu” blessing which thanks God for allowing us to celebrate this special day.

Ba-ruch Atab Adonai, Elobaynu meh-lech ha-olam, Asher kidsbanu b'mitzvotav, v'tsivanu l'hadlik ner shel Yom Tov.

Blessed is the Eternal our God, Ruler of the universe who has made us holy with Your commandments and commanded us to light the holiday candles.

Baruch Atab Adonai, Elobaynu mehlech ha-olam, she-he-che-yanu, v'kiymanu, v'higiyanu lazman hazeh.

Blessed is the Eternal our God, Ruler of the universe who keeps us alive, sustains us and allows us to celebrate happy occasions together.

Blessing over the wine (the Kiddush) (For full traditional blessing, consult your machzor)

Baruch Atab Adonai, Elobaynu mehlech ha-olam, boray pree ha-gafen.

Blessed is the Eternal our God, Ruler of the universe, creator of the fruit of the vine.

Blessing over the challot (HaMotzi)

We use round challah on Rosh Hashana to symbolize our hope for a year of peace and unbroken happiness.

Baruch Atab Adonai, Elobaynu mehlech ha-olam, ha-motzi lechem min-ha'aretz.

Blessed is the Eternal our God who brings forth bread from the earth.

Apples and honey represent our hope for a sweet new year.

We dip an apple in honey and say the following blessing:

Baruch Atab Adonai Elobaynu mehlech haolam boray pree ha-aitz.

Blessed is the Eternal our God who creates the fruit of the tree.

It is customary to add the following blessing:

Yehi ratzon milfanecha, Adonai Elobaynu vaylobay avoteinu v'imoteinu shet-chadash aleinu shanah tova oo-metukah.

May it be your will, Eternal our God and God of our fathers and mothers, to renew us for a good and sweet year.

***Now it's time to enjoy a wonderful holiday meal with your family. Eat ! B'tay-avon ! Ess
Gezundt !***

Reflection For Lighting A Memorial Candle on Yom Kippur Eve

by Rabbi Rachel Kort

The lighting of a *yahrzeit* candle is one of the few Jewish customs that does not entail reciting a blessing. This lack of liturgy surrounding lighting a memorial candle begs a question I often get asked as a rabbi: “What should I do when I light my memorial candle?”

Lighting a memorial candle on Yom Kippur is an opportunity to honor a loved one’s memory. It is an opportunity to share precious memories to help make your loved one’s memory a blessing. At the end of this reflection, I’ve included readings that you might like to use to frame the lighting of your *yahrzeit* candle(s).

The lighting of a memorial candle on Yom Kippur can also be seen as a way to give added meaning to your personal holy day experience. Mourning and repentance are intimately linked in our tradition.

Our sages teach that “Any person who weeps and mourns at the death of another human being who was a good person is forgiven for all of his or her sins because of the honor which they have bestowed upon the deceased person” (*Moed Katan*, 25a).

At first glance this statement in the Talmud appears to be an exaggeration. How could the act of mourning replace the act of repentance? During this time of year, the *Yamim Noraim*, we are all sensitive that true *teshuvah*, true repentance, is no menial task. But if we take a closer look at the act of mourning, we see that it has much in common with the act of repentance.

A person’s act of mourning has the ability to teach you what they think about human beings and how they value human life. Mourning, crying, and weeping for the dead also indicate what we think of ourselves. They are a mirror reflection of our own self-image. If a person is able to truly mourn the life of another human being it means that they have a deep respect for human life. This respect transcends into their actions with people in the living world. During Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we are taught that our greatest sins are those we commit against our fellow other human beings. These sins occur when a person does not recognize the value of human life.

Mourning and repentance both share the same core value, the appreciation of life. As you take time to mourn and remember your loved one as you light a *yahrzeit* candle in their memory, I invite you to allow this process of mourning to heighten your appreciation of life and humanity. And may this appreciation of life make you a better people in the coming year.

A GROUP SAYS:

At this moment, in memory of our beloved....., we join hands in love and remembrance. A link has been broken in the chain that has bound us together, yet strong bonds of home and love hold us each to the other.

We give thanks for the blessing of life, of companionship, and of memory. We are grateful for the strength and faith that sustained us in the hour of our bereavement. Though sorrow lingers, we have learned that love is stronger than death. Though our love one is beyond our sight, we do not despair, for we sense our beloved in our hearts as a living presence.

AN INDIVIDUAL SAYS:

At this moment, I pause for thought in memory of my beloved.....
I give thanks for the blessing of life, of companionship, and of memory. I am grateful for the strength and faith that sustained me in the hour of my bereavement. Through sorrow lingers, I have learned that love is stronger than death. Though my loved one is beyond my sight, I do not despair, for I sense my beloved in my heart as a living presence.

Sustained by words of faith, comforted by precious memories, we (I) kindle the Yahrzeit light in remembrance. As this light burns pure and clear, so may the blessed memory of the goodness of our (my) dear.....illumine our souls (my soul).

LIGHT IS KINDLED

For a Male:

Zich-ro-no li-v'ra-cha.

His memory is a blessing

For a Female:

Zich-ro-nah li-v'ra-cha.

Her memory is a blessing

From: On the Doorposts of Your House: Prayers and Ceremonies for the Jewish Home

Family Activities

Becoming a Better Person

- Write RH prayers. Each child could dictate and illustrate his/her own prayers (which could be combined into a book).
- Collect your children's wishes for the new year, and what they thank God for. Use this formula or something similar: Dear God, thank you [for my baby brother. His toes are just perfect.] I hope [he learns to play soccer with me soon]
- Use various items for reflection – mirrors, foil, water, eyes, etc... Talk about how important it is to see ourselves and think about how we act and if it's how we want to act.
- Make a list of the people to who we have to say I'm sorry and what we might say to them.
- Make a Tzedakah box: Great containers to use are: baby wipe boxes, tins from General Foods International Coffee, gold Godiva chocolate boxes, checkbook boxes, coffee cans, yogurt containers, etc.... Allow the children open-ended decorating freedom – basic collage materials, paint, pictures of coins, glitter. Ask how a Tzedakah box can help a person become better. Ask what MM quality a Tzedakah box helps develop. Sing "If You're Happy and You Know It," and include a range of feelings.



Shofar

- Move to the shofar calls. Movement reinforces sounds. It can also reinforce the concept of a New Year, an opening, a beginning, an awakening. The first call of the shofar is "Tekiah" a long stretched out sound. The second call "Shevarim" is three short blasts. The third call "Teruah" is nine short blasts. "Tekiah Gedolah" is the final blast of the Shofar and it is long and lingering. Show the children motions for the sounds:
 - *Tekiah* – arms up/arms down
 - *Shevarim* – arms up/shake your hands three times/arms down
 - *Teruah* – arms up/arms down, repeated nine times
 - *Tekiah Gedolah* – stretch arms really high and hold

- Make *shofarot* using toilet paper or paper towel rolls. Put a small piece of waxed paper over one of the openings and secure it with a rubber band. Have the children blow the *shofarot* as you say and/or play the calls.
- Choose one child to say the shofar calls as the others respond with their shofarot or with their arms.
- Play *Red Light, Green Light* with the shofar. Tekiah means the children can walk, Shevarim means the children can skip or hop, Teruah means the children can run, and Tekiah Gedolah means run back to base.
- Study the animals from which a shofar can be made (any kosher animal including a ram, gazelle, antelope, goat, but not a cow or a deer). You can bring in photos of these animals and talk about how they eat, sleep, etc...
- Children can draw a picture of their own shofar and decorate with markers, glitter, etc...

Recipes

Classic Honey Cake

3 Eggs
 1 1/3 cups honey
 1 1/2 cups sugar
 1 cup strong black coffee
 2 tsps. Baking powder
 3 Tbsps. Margarine, softened
 1 tsp. Baking soda
 4 cups flour
 1 tsp cinnamon



Preheat oven to 325.

Grease and flour a 9 by 13-inch cake pan.

In a large mixer bowl, beat eggs and honey together. Add sugar and mix again. Mix coffee with baking powder, and then add with margarine to the egg mixture. Add baking soda, flour, and cinnamon and beat together well.

Pour into greased cake pan. Bake for 55 minutes to an hour.

USE: 9 X 13-inch cake pan

Moroccan Fish

1 3-pound whitefish, gutted and split down the center
1 large green or red pepper
1 to 2 tomatoes
2 to 3 cloves garlic
water
 $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. salt
2 tsps. saffron
3 Tbsp. oil



Rinse fish and dry thoroughly. Slice pepper and tomatoes. Peel garlic cloves and cut in half. Line 5-quart Dutch oven with peppers, tomatoes and garlic and place fish slices on top. Add enough water to cover fish. Bring to a boil, then add salt, saffron and oil. Lower flame and simmer 40 to 50 minutes. This dish may be served hot or cold.

USE: 5-quart Dutch oven

YIELDS: 6 servings

Raisin Challah

4 cups warm water
2 Tbsps. dry yeast
4 eggs
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup oil
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup honey
2 cups raisins (or less, to taste)
14 to 15 cups flour
1 Tbsp. coarse kosher salt



GLAZE:

1 egg, beaten
Poppy seeds

Pour warm water into a large mixing bowl. Stir in yeast, and then add eggs, oil, honey and raisins. Mix well and add about half of the flour. Stir well.

Let mixture rest 45 minutes to 1 hour until the yeast is bubbly. This is the first rising.

Add the salt and most of the remaining flour. Mix and knead on a lightly floured board, adding only as much flour as necessary to be able to handle the dough. The dough should be soft. You may let the dough rise again for 1 hour, if desired.

Separate Challah with a blessing. Divide dough, and shape loaves.

Place challah in greased pans and let rise 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Preheat oven to 350.

Brush tops of loaves with beaten egg and sprinkle with poppy seeds. Bake for about 45 minutes to 1 hour for loaves or 30 minutes. Remove from pans and cool on racks

USE: Baking sheets or loaf pans

YIELDS: 6 loaves or 4 loaves and 12 rolls

