



**Peretz Centre for Jewish Culture**

**ROSH HASHANAH  
& YOM KIPPUR**



**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION by the President**

We have come together, mishpokhe, family and friends, to share with Jews throughout the world the observance of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Throughout Jewish history, observing holidays and special events in our lives has been a boundless source of joy, comfort, and strength. Our secular Jewish services bind us to Jews through the ages while meeting our contemporary spiritual needs as atheists, agnostics, or believers in a non-interventional higher power. We preserve those traditional rituals, songs, and practices that are still meaningful to us. We adapt others so that they speak to us more appropriately. And we create new ones specifically for our present and future generations.

— adapted from *City Congregation for Humanistic Judaism, New York*

 **Song 1**

**CANDLE LIGHTING**  
As we light these candles, let us create a peaceful interlude. This is a moment to set aside the events of today and to reflect on the past year.

 **Song 2**



## I HAD A BOX OF COLOURS

I had a box of colours.  
Shining, bright and bold.  
I had a box of colours,  
Some warm, some very cold.

I had no red for the blood of wounds.  
I had no black for the orphans' grief.  
I had no white for dead faces and hands.  
I had no yellow for burning sands.



But I had orange for the joy of life,  
And I had green for buds and nests.  
I had blue for bright, clear skies.  
I had pink for dreams and rest.

I sat down and painted  
Peace.

— Tali Sorek, age 13, Beersheba, Israel



### Song 3

## ROSH HASHANAH

This day marks the beginning of a season of renewal in which we reflect on our errors and our failures, our successes and our achievements of the past year, so that we can move on with greater wisdom in the year ahead.

In traditional observance, on Rosh Hashana it is written and on Yom Kippur it is sealed:

*[all read]*

Who shall live for the sake of others, who, dying, shall leave a heritage of life.  
Who shall burn with the fires of greed, who shall drown in the waters of despair.  
Whose hunger shall be for the good, who shall thirst for justice and right.  
Whose tongue shall be a thrusting sword, whose words shall make for peace.  
Who shall be plagued by fear of the world, who shall strangle for lack of friends.  
Who shall rest at the end of day, who lie sleepless on a bed of pain.  
Who shall go forth in the quest for truth, who shall be locked in the prison of self.

— City Congregation for Humanistic Judaism, New York



### Song 4

Remembrance is not merely an excursion into the past. The central theme of Rosh Hashanah is the power of memory itself. Memory defies oblivion, breaks the coils of the present, establishes the continuity of generations, and rescues human life and effort from futility. It affords the only true resurrection of the dead.

The act of remembering is thus in itself redemptive. If, on the one hand, it involves a chastening assessment, it involves on the other, a comforting reassurance. Rosh Hashanah is at once a day of judgement and a new beginning. If it looks backward, it does so only on the way forward; and its symbol is the trumpet of an eternal reveille.

You must understand one thing more. Not only an individual but a people too must possess a memory. A people's memory is called history. What is true of an individual without memory is also true of a people without history; they cannot become wiser or better. Where can a people derive in bad times experience, advice and self-confidence, if each generation with its joys and sorrows, virtues and failings is cut off and cast away?

An individual is not a free single dot in the universe but rather a link in the net which is spread over a certain spot on the earth. The net is his or her generation. A human being is also a link in the infinite chain of generations which reaches back to and beyond the Patriarch Abraham [and Matriarch Sarah] and extends onward to the end of time.

—From *Remembrance* by I.L. Peretz



## Song 5

## THE SYMBOLIC MEANING OF SOME FOODS WE EAT AT THE HIGH HOLIDAYS

**ROSH HASHANAH** ushers in the Jewish New Year, a time of introspection and dedication, a time to commit to new goals and new directions.

Like so many Jewish holidays, it is a time for families to gather and for the preparation of certain foods which have symbolic significance, in this case, for the new year.



The emphasis at Rosh Hashanah is on sweetness, excluding all things bitter and dark. This includes the ingredients for the preparation of the sweet Rosh Hashanah challah, which may include honey or dried fruit, and is round for a full and rounded year.

Ashkenazi and the Sephardic Jews have small differences in the particular foods they serve at this time of the year.

For Ashkenazi Jews, an apple cut into wedges with honey for dipping is placed on the table for all to partake, as a symbol of sweetness for the year. A carrot tzimmiss with dried fruit usually accompanies the entree. For dessert, honey cake, *teyglech*, or apple strudel is commonly served.



The symbolic fruit that Sephardim place on the table is sugar-coated pomegranate seeds. This fruit is new for the season in Sephardic lands, and also has biblical references, as the pomegranate has 613 seeds, equal to the number of commandments in the Bible.

The Jews of India serve a flat sweet wheat cake with coconut. Italian Jews serve a pastry called “sfratti” made of honey and nuts. Some Middle Eastern Jews make a couscous dish with seven different new vegetables, referring to the month of Tishrei, the seventh month. Rosh Hashanah falls on the first day of Tishrei. The number seven corresponds to the number of days it took to create the universe and is believed to bring good luck in the new year.

**MAY THE YEAR BE SWEET FOR ALL HUMANITY!**

— Seemah C. Berson/Bluma Field



## Song 6

In Jewish tradition, this day has many names:

### **Yom Ha-Zeekaron, “Day of Remembrance.”**

On Rosh Hashanah God is supposed to remember all the good and evil deeds of people. Today we take responsibility to remember and think about our own deeds.

### **Yom Ha-Deen, “Day of Judgment.”**

According to tradition, Rosh Hashanah is the day on which God judges each human being by his or her deeds during the year just ended and inscribes our fate in the heavenly record book for the year to come. Today, it is a time to judge oneself, and to rely on ourselves to make our lives what we will.

### **Yom T’ruah, “The Day of Sounding the Shofar.”**

In the past, the sound of the Shofar called upon each Jew to repent his or her sins, to forsake evil and to pursue goodness and mercy. We affirm that individual morality can bring us closer to universal peace and friendship.

### **Rosh Hashanah, “The Head of the Year,” the beginning of beginnings.**

We are beginning a new year that is one more step in a history thousands of years long. We strive to understand the values of our forebears. We build on what has gone before.

## TASHLIKH

The ritual of *Tashlikh* is not mentioned in either the Bible or the Talmud, and yet its origins are believed to go back to antiquity. Tashlikh is a traditional Rosh Hashanah ceremony that embodies the ideal of repentance (*t'shuva*) that is such a predominant theme in the rituals and customs of Rosh Hashanah. It involves emptying breadcrumbs from one's pockets into a flowing body of water, symbolizing casting away one's sins.

For secular Jews, the ceremony of Tashlikh offers an opportunity to reflect on our behavior, to admit our own faults and symbolically shed the baggage of last year's mistakes, and to vow to be better people in the year to come.

Although flowing water is preferred, Tashlikh has been performed at anything from a beach to a well to a bathtub. The residents of Safed would stand on their rooftops facing the Sea of Galilee, whereas the Kurdish Jews did not feel suitably purified unless they actually jumped into the water. There are many and varied forms of Tashlikh practiced around the world. Suffice it to say that, as with much of Jewish practice, our tradition has provided us with a set of powerful symbols which can be interpreted in an infinite variety of ways and can therefore effectively convey their message to the hearts and minds of each and every one of us.



## T'SHUVAH

The High Holidays Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur incorporate three basic concepts: *t'fillah*, *tsedakah* and *t'shuvah*.

**T'fillah**, commonly translated as prayer, is really derived from the word for honest self-judgement; **Tsedakah** (in Yiddish *tsedoke*), commonly translated as "charity," is derived from the word *Tsadik*—a righteous person—one whose daily actions go far beyond charity and who is constantly seeking the path of justice and searching out ways to enrich the lives of others.

**T'shuvah**. The beauty of the Hebrew language is that a word can have so many meanings: there is always another facet, another aspect to consider. T'shuvah can mean forgiveness, repentance, turn, return; a closing of the old and the joy of new beginnings. A gathering in of the harvest and the gratefulness for its bounty: our remembering to give thanks to the earth and especially remembering to share what we have with those who do not have.

We are human beings filled with foibles, frailty and finitude.

We ask for forgiveness of our misdeeds, our sins, our transgressions.

Why do we say “we,” in the plural? Because we are not alone. We are a community of people and we are responsible for one another: in good times and in bad. It is only as a community that we can bring about social change. We cannot do that alone. We need the strength of one another.

This is a time to turn and return: turn away from actions that are not good for one’s self or for one another. Turn away from being judgmental, from hatred, from selfishness. It is time to return to basics: to consideration of the other, to *khesed*, loving kindness. To letting the other person walk through the door ahead of you.

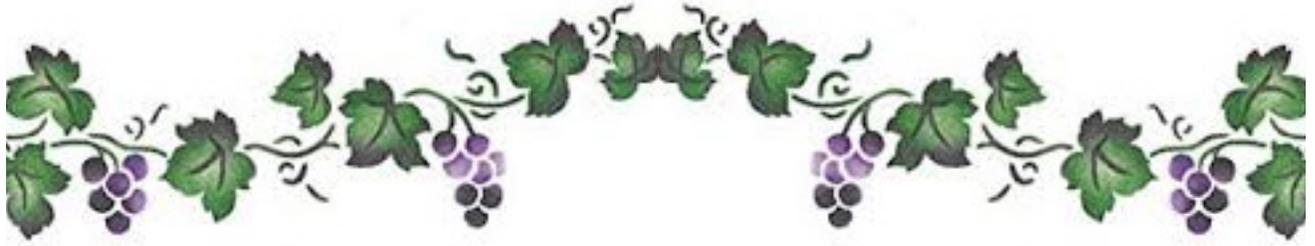
It is time to open your heart – just a little wider – to that person who might not be your favorite human being – and see even a little bit of goodness in that other.

Above all, turn and return again, to your *neshamah*, your soul, that wellspring of your being, and forgive yourself. That is T’shuvah.



## Song 7





- Reader:** Judaism begins with the commandment “Hear O Israel!” But what does it really mean to hear? The person who attends a concert thinking only about business ...
- All:** ... Hears, but does not really hear.
- Reader:** The person who walks amidst the songs of birds and thinks only of the noisy city streets ...
- All:** ... Hears, but does not really hear.
- Reader:** The person who listens to the words of family or friends and does not catch the note of urgency: “Notice me, help me, care about me” ...
- All:** ... Hears, but does not really hear.
- Reader:** The person who listens to the news and thinks only of how it will affect the stock market ...
- All:** ... Hears, but does not really hear.
- Reader:** The person who stifles the sounds of conscience and says that enough has been done ...
- All:** ... Hears, but does not really hear.
- Reader:** The person who hears the Shofar sound and does not feel the need to change ...
- All:** ... Hears, but does not really hear.
- Reader:** And so, as the New Year begins, may we listen to and hear the music of the world.
- All:** May we hear the music of the world, and the infant’s cry, and the lover’s sigh.
- Reader:** May we hear the call for help from the lonely ones among us and the sound of the breaking heart.
- All:** May we hear the words of our friends and also their unspoken pleas and dreams.
- Reader:** May we hear within ourselves the yearnings that are struggling for expression.
- All:** May we hear each other. For only if we do, will we have the right to hope that anyone will hear us.

— Author Unknown

## TEKIAH



The first call of the shofar is *tekiah*, our people's ancient call to assembly. Tradition stresses the importance of hearing the shofar. Its primal wail sounds a collective time out, reminding us to take account of ourselves, our Earth and humankind. For us, the sound of the ram's horn is a reminder: to remember the past that shapes and informs our present ... to ponder the wisdom of writers and sages of all the years before. To learn how we may cherish uniqueness—our own and that of every other people. To contemplate the future that only we can build for ourselves and for our children ... we, and others like us on all the continents, on the rims of all the seas and oceans.

## TEKIAH



Our observance is an echo of an ancient custom. Ancient Babylonians in the land we call Iraq believed that at this time of year, the gods reasserted their dominion over chaos. The deities reviewed the conduct of human beings and issued report cards settling their fates for the next year.

Religious Jews adapted that tradition, believing a mystical “Book of Life” foretells human destinies. A prayer recited at *rosheshone* — the New Year — invokes the magic of fate by determining “who shall live and who shall die; who shall perish by fire, who by water, who by hunger and who by thirst.” We ourselves ask the same, universal questions about destiny and purpose — as we reckon our own place in the universe and reflect on our own frailties and strengths.

## TEKIAH



In keeping with Jewish tradition on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we ask ourselves if we have done right, as people, as families, and as a community. Whether we look for answers through prayer as theistic Jews, or through thought and discussion as members of a secular and humanistic Jewish community, the questions remain important and relevant. By coming together today, different people, different families, different generations, we embrace a tradition over 3,000 years old and benefit from a conviction that the New Year can be a creative moment. Together we help each other find the courage and time to renew our convictions.

On this Rosh Hashanah we recognize that each of us must strive to create a better world for all humanity. Each of us must strive to make our own lives a moral example for those around us and for those who will come after us. Each of us must strive to remain committed to the idea of a just social order and to the actions necessary to achieve social justice.

Let the shofar sound a blast for peace everywhere in the world.

## TEKIAH



As we begin another year, we are once again summoned by an ancient rallying cry. The sound of the ram's horn once united warriors in battle. Tonight, let our shofar sound a call for justice. Let it beckon us to build a future of peace, to seek dignity for every human being — on all the continents, on all the islands and archipelagos, on all the rims of all the seas and oceans, through all the links in the chain of generations.

— adapted from Hersh Hartman

## KOL NIDRE

**KOL NIDRE.** The words are Aramaic, a Semitic language three thousand years old. *Kol nidre* means “All Vows.” The phrase begins a declaration recited on the eve of Yom Kippur. The legal-sounding text was written in the seventh or eighth century. No one knows who wrote the passage, exactly when, or why, but for some five hundred years, Jews have chanted kol nidre to a haunting melody. It is sung three times: first, almost timidly. Then, more assertively. Finally, in full and proud volume.

This is the translation:

All vows and oaths,  
all promises and obligations,  
all renunciations and responses,  
by whatever words and names they may be called,  
that we shall make from this Yom Kippur to the next — may it come to us in peace —  
all of them we retract.  
May we be absolved of them,  
may we be released from them all,  
may they all be null and void,  
may they all be of no effect.  
May these vows not be vows,  
may these oaths not be oaths,  
may these responses not be responses.

“All Vows ... May we be absolved of them.” Why would honorable people renounce their promises? The most persuasive explanation for the persistence of kol nidre over the centuries is that it provided dignity for Jews who had been forced to pledge allegiance to gods and monarchs they did not worship. During the Spanish Inquisition, *conversos*, the secret Jews, forced to deny their own identity and to accept another, could, in secrecy, conquer fear and reclaim their heritage. Are we, too, conversos? Do we have the courage to face ourselves as we are?

The moving music speaks of pain and sorrow more eloquently than words. In religious services on this night, Jewish congregations, confessing long lists of sins in alphabetical order, plead for divine mercy. We may not turn in atonement to a supernatural force, but we also ask ourselves the hard questions. Do we have the strength to acknowledge our own failings and the courage to give life and voice to our convictions?

What about the vows we have made to ourselves? Do we respect our bodies, nourish our souls, find balance among family, play, work, creativity, activism, relaxation? What if we miss the demonstration, the

meeting, the volunteer opportunity? What if appeals from worthy causes — including the Peretz Community — are left buried under the persistent pile of bills? Are these our “secular sins?” If so, where do we turn for atonement? Or do we need to stop beating ourselves up for not meeting every single one of our vows?

On the night of kol nidre, we return to our peoplehood and to our humanism, as we vow to embody compassion, empathy, and a generosity of spirit that is at the core of what it means to be human.

Our kol nidre is a return to roots in a time of hope and despair. It is our search for wisdom and inspiration.

—Adapted from the Sholem Community Rosh Hashanah service



## Kol Nidre Music

## YOM KIPPUR

In religious services on Yom Kippur, Jewish congregations, confessing long lists of sins in alphabetical order, plead for divine mercy. We may not turn in atonement to a supernatural force, but we also ask ourselves the hard questions. Do we have the strength to acknowledge our own failings and the courage to give life and voice to our convictions?

The word that is usually translated into English as “sin” is *khet*. Khet has its origins in archery, and the term was used to indicate missing the mark. Such is the Jewish concept of sin—missing one’s goal, losing sight of the important things in life. The concept of *t’shuvah*, although commonly translated as repentance, really means “turning,” turning to hit the mark.



***Let us say together: AL KHET***

Some of the ways we have missed the mark this year:

Being so preoccupied with ourselves that we ignore the large problems of the world in which we live.

Being so directed toward outward realities that we have ignored our own development.

Dulling our outrage at the continuation of poverty, oppression, and violence in this world.

Not doing enough to save the environment.

Not doing enough to challenge world hunger, poverty, homelessness, sexism and homophobia.

Not forgiving our parents or our children for the wrongs they have committed.

Being judgmental of others and ourselves.

Not recognizing the beauty within ourselves.

Not recognizing the beauty that surrounds us.

Not publicly supporting the Jewish people and Israel when they are being treated or criticized unfairly.

Not publicly criticizing Israel or the Jewish people when they are acting in opposition to the highest principles of the Jewish tradition.

While the struggle to change ourselves and our world may be long and painful, it is our struggle. No one else can do it for us. To the extent that we have failed to do all that we could to make ourselves or our community all that we ought to be, we ask ourselves and one another for forgiveness, and we now commit ourselves to acting differently this coming year.

— adapted from Michael Lerner, *Modern Sins: Updating the traditional Yom Kippur confession*

Every person is granted free will. If we desire to incline towards the good way and be righteous, we have the power to do so; and if we desire to incline towards the unrighteous way and be a wicked person, we have the power to do so.

— Moses Maimonides (1135–1204)

## YIZKOR



On the day of Yom Kippur, observant Jews perform the ceremony of *yizkor*, memorial. The ceremony began during the Middle Ages, when the Crusades wiped out entire Jewish communities along the Rhine. Then, the *yizkor* ceremony consisted of reading the names of the martyred communities.

In the following centuries, *yizkor* became a time of personal memorial for departed parents and other close relatives. In our secular Yom Kippur observances, we try to combine the historic memories of our people with the personal sorrows of those among us who mourn recent losses of loved ones.

## THIS YEAR THE PERETZ COMMUNITY LOST ...

Please see insert



### Song 8

## SHEVARIM



The mournful notes of *shevarim* affirm again our existence as a people. The silenced voices of those who perished in the Holocaust reaffirm that in spite of all the violence against our people throughout the centuries, we have survived.

We do remember. We, who seek our ethics in the imperatives of historical experience, have not forgotten that commitment to humanity is meaningless without commitment to one another—to families, to children, to parents, to lovers, to ourselves.

We remember, especially at this time, the women and men who were part of our lives and who are now part of the eternity that is human memory. In silence, we contemplate the empty spaces their deaths have left in our lives. In silence, we celebrate the spaces in our lives that they made richer, fuller, happier, more loving and deeper in meaning. We mourn their deaths as we celebrate their lives, and as we affirm life itself.

— Hersh Hartman

### *Let us say together:* HUMANIST MOURNER'S KADDISH

Let us mourn the ones who have departed.  
May their names be forever remembered,  
Respected and esteemed, celebrated and praised,  
Honored and revered, adored and admired,  
Beyond all songs and hymns,  
Beyond all praise that humankind can utter.  
May it be so.  
Let there be abundant peace on earth  
and life's goodness for humankind.  
May it be so.  
May there be peace for the Jewish people.  
May there be peace for all the world. Omeyn.

— adapted from the traditional Mourners' Kaddish by Harold Black

## I, MAY I REST IN PEACE

I, may I rest in peace—I, who am still living, say,  
May I have peace in the rest of my life.  
I want peace right now while I'm still alive.  
I don't want to wait like that pious man who wished for one leg  
of the golden chair of Paradise, I want a four-legged chair  
right here, a plain wooden chair. I want the rest of my peace now.  
I have lived out my life in wars of every kind: battles without  
and within, close combat, face-to-face, the faces always  
my own, my lover-face, my enemy-face.  
Wars with the old weapons—sticks and stones, blunt axe, words,  
dull ripping knife, love and hate,  
and wars with newfangled weapons—machine gun, missile,  
words, land mines exploding, love and hate.  
I don't want to fulfill my parents' prophecy that life is war.  
I want peace with all my body and all my soul.  
Rest me in peace.

—Yehuda Amichai, translated by Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld

The next to final blast of the shofar, *teruah*, is the call to arms. For us, it sounds a call to the never-ending battle for justice, peace and human decency. In the year ahead, may the shofar of peace sound in the streets of a peaceful and just Jerusalem, and throughout the world.

## TERUAH



*Let us say together:*

**SHOLEM. SHALOM. SALAAM. PEACE.**

**“Enough of blood and tears! Enough!”**



## SH'MA

*Let us all say together:*

Sh'ma Yis-ra-el,  
E-khad a-me-nu,  
A-dam e-khad!  
Ba-rukha ha-o-lam.  
Am Yis-ra-el khai,  
L'o-lam va-ed!



*Hear O Israel! Our people are one. All humanity is one.  
Precious is the world. May the people Israel live forever and ever!*

Therefore you shall love your fellow human with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength. These words inscribe in your innermost heart, repeat them, teach them to your children by day and by night. Teach them to revere all life. To connect them with our history and our traditions, tell them of ancient days and our parents' ways of remembering; teach them to treasure our heritage.

We have come together—all of us, mishpokhe, family and friends. We are united by a common bond, a sharing of our thoughts, a desire to gather today to celebrate an ancient ritual in a special way.

Together we have looked back and honoured an ancient culture that has meaning for us. Together we look forward to the coming year.

Today we begin the newest chapter of a story that started thousands of years ago, with the hope that the new year would be good to us, for all of Israel, for all humanity.

May we respond to the challenge of the new year, its promise of new growth and its hope for love and peace.

The final shofar call is *tekiah g'dolah*, a note held for as long as possible. The mystical concept is that, while the shofar sounds, the gates of heaven remain open in extended holiness.

## TEKIAH G'DOLAH



**And say we all: Omeyn!**



**Song 9**

**The Peretz Centre for Jewish Culture wishes you, your family  
and the world a sweet and peaceful New Year**



*A GUT YONTIF!*  
*A GUTYOR!*  
*L'SHANAH TOVAH!*

אַ גוט יום-טובֿ!  
אַ גוט יאָר!  
לשנה טובה

