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HIGH HOLIDAYS 5781/2020



Archways

IN TORAH

COLLECTION OF INSIGHTS FROM STUDENTS AND ALUMNI

SHABBOS HOUSE CHABAD - UALBANY

WELCOME TO “ARCHWAYS IN TORAH”

Welcome to our second edition of “Archways in Torah” for the High Holidays of 5781/2020. We began this “Archways” publication concept for Shavuot 2020 when most everyone was staying home during the intensity of Covid-19. It was a platform for alumni and students to share words of Torah with one another and to have interesting reading material for the holiday.

We’re not out of the woods yet with Covid, but Corona or not, it’s nice to continue a good thing. It is our hope to be able to continue to publish this semi-annually with the help of alumni and student contributors of articles, teachings and insights.

Why the title archways? First of all, everyone who went to UAlbany is very familiar with its ubiquitous myriad of archways. Archways have lots of symbolism: They are supportive yet open, they are entrances and exits at the same time, they are guideposts that draw and raise our eyes upward and frame our perspective. UAlbany buildings have many archways on every side, for all its length and breadth, from every angle, inside and out. All of this can be a metaphor for Torah.

Some doors of synagogues will be closed this year, others will have limitations and restrictions. An archway reminds us that spiritual entrances always remain open. We can access and experience the High Holidays from within our own homes, wherever we may be, no matter who we are.

Legend has it that the archways at UAlbany were originally designed for a warmer climate where its wind tunnel effect would be more welcome. On a deeper level, the wind can be likened to spirit and we are always looking for way to foster and facilitate more spirit!

Many thanks to all who’ve contributed to this booklet. We took liberty to do some edits, to add or remove bits and pieces for the sake of clarity and elucidation, but maintained the message and expressions of each writer.

Among the traditional greetings for the new year is “Shana Tova UMetukah” - may you and yours be blessed with a good and sweet year. A very popular English version is Happy, Healthy & Sweet New Year, and this especially resonates this year in 2020. May 5781 usher that in!

Love,

Mendel and Raizy

Shabbos House

ALUMNI INSIGHTS

A TALMUD STORY FOR 2020

SETH BROOKS - 2020

Rosh Hashanah is always a time of great uncertainty (especially this year!) for every Jew as we recall the past year and wonder about what the next year has in store for us. As we prepare for the year ahead it is important to remember that Divine providence has a role in everything that happens in our lives. From waking up in the morning to going to sleep at night G-d is right there along with us each step of the way. There is a story from the Talmud that I felt is very applicable to us today. Talmud Taanis 21A relates a story in which there was a large fire in the town of Rav Huna, a famous Talmudic scholar, where much of the city was burnt down except for his neighborhood. Now the people in the neighborhood thought that it was the great merit of Rav Huna but it was revealed to them in a dream that this salvation was based on the merit of a certain woman who would heat her oven and make it available to less fortunate neighbors. Now how does this story apply to us in our time?

In the story most people thought that it was the great merit of a titan of Torah however it was the nice deed of a woman to her neighbors in an era where not everyone had everything they needed. It shows that every deed that you do the smallest amount of charity the smallest deed any mitzvah counts massive amounts in the eyes of G-d and can truly make a difference in times of struggle.

The second point is that G-d has a plan for everyone. G-d has a plan we just cannot see it. Just as the city people could not see it without a dream so too in our time. We can assume and can think one way or the other about what the reasoning is but in the end we truly do not know.

In times such as these where great uncertainty surrounds us it is important to remember these two facts, we truly do not know what G-d has in store and that the smallest deed can make a world of difference.

THE BIG DAY

SARAH SCHWEDELSON - 2008

We know that Rosh Hashanah is Halachically considered as if it were one long day. Even in Israel, where they typically celebrate one day of holidays and festivals, they have two days of Rosh Hashanah. Day means light. So for 48 hours of Rosh Hashanah, it is a time filled with light. There is even a concept to sleep very little, and not take a regular Yomtov nap. Rosh Hashanah evenings and nights, are also included in this vision of 48 hours of day, filled with light, for the primary quality of the day is to bring in light.

The year this talk of the Rebbe was written, Rosh Hashanah fell on a Tuesday (that's not the case this year, when it falls on Shabbos and Sunday). Tuesday is the day that the Torah writes in Genesis that

Hashem "saw it was good" not once, but twice. The Talmud explains that the two times refer to two types of good – good to heaven and good to creations.

We can interpret these two types of good also in our service of G-d which is divided between the two areas of matters between us and Hashem, and matters between people. This past year 2020 was a rough year for most of us. On Rosh Hashanah we have an opportunity to rectify the deficiencies and improve on our matters between us and Hashem, and also matters between people. The goal is to bring luminous bright daylight (with all of its spiritual and emotional meaning) to all of that we do. May these actions hasten the coming of Moshiach.

ROSH HASHANAH AS A BIRTHDAY

MORDECHAI WEIN - 2006

There is a pretty well-known Gemorah in tractate Niddah that teaches a fetus is taught the entire Torah while in the mother's womb by an angel and shortly before its birth the angel gives it a little slap causing it to forget everything learned. HaRav Shaul Arieli shlita of Congregation Ohel Yitzchok in Kew Gardens Hills explained once that this is to show what our potential is but we need to earn it ourselves.

There is a lesser-known Gemorah in tractate Niddah but just as inspirational which explains the miracle of childbirth. This gemara teaches that the moment a baby is born is such a miracle that words can barely describe it. In mere seconds—if even that long—a fetus completely attached to & dependent on its mother becomes a baby on its own. No fetus/baby can survive the moment of birth without the clear hand of Hashem.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe HaRav Menachem Mendel Schneersohn zt"l made a special campaign and encouraged people to celebrate Jewish birthdays. In the book, "Toward a Meaningful Life" Rabbi Simon Jacobson explains the Rebbe's birthday message as follows:

"In your mother's womb, you were comfortable, warm and cared for. Then, you left. It was an ordeal, a trauma. The world you entered was cold and harsh. The mere act of living became a struggle. You cried. Yet, every year you celebrate that day. Because the day you were born was the day you became your

own entity. No longer an extension of someone else. A proactive force in the world. So, celebrate your birthday. And take time to think: What have I given the world that was not given to me? Was I really born?"

HaRav Avigdor HaKohen Miller zt"l explains a birthday is an opportunity to grow in our connection to Hashem remembering our mission. We each have the power, on our birthdays, to give others blessings. This is something the Lubavitcher Rebbe zt"l encouraged as well, based on the rabbinic teaching that one's mazal shines on their birthday and they are able to take on new resolutions and to bless others. HaRav Moshe Feinstein zt"l, Rosh Yeshiva of Mesivta Tiferes Yerushalayim on the Lower East Side of Manhattan would make it a point to call all his grandchildren and great grandchildren on their Hebrew birthdays each year and they would reciprocate on his. Yet the calls were more than ordinary "happy birthday" calls, rather they were calls of blessing that the coming year should be a good one with growth in the recipient's service of Hashem.

All this creates a whole new perspective of what a birthday truly is. It is not merely a day to celebrate but rather it is a personal Rosh HaShana. It is a day of reckoning to look back at our own previous year and decide if we're happy with where we're at now or if we want to make improvements in certain areas.

YOM KIPPUR AND REPENTANCE

"Repentance was created before the world came into existence" (Talmud tractate Nedarim 39b)
Repentance, along with the Torah, Gan Eden & Gehennom, Hashem's Kisei HaKavod—Heavenly

Throne, the Beis HaMikdash and the name of Moshiach are listed in the Gemara as being "created before the world."
Rabbenu Nissim, known as the Ran, explains that

our primary focus in life is to choose good over evil. The above seven are “prerequisites” to achieve this focus.

As repentance is the central theme of Yom Kippur, I would like to briefly focus on it. It is important to realize that as we are human we are prone to do bad at times. Indeed it says in Megillas Koheles, “For there is no man so righteous on earth that he always does good and never sins.” (7:20) The gemara in tractate Shabbos teaches us that when Hashem wanted to give Moshe Rabbeinu the Torah the angels complained that as closer to G-d both physically & spiritually they deserved it. Hashem answered them by pointing out they don’t need it due to their being on a higher level yet we, humans, do need it.

We all have different urges and find life to be a

constant struggle to choose good. As Rabbi Akiva in the last Mishnah of tractate Yuma teaches us, “fortunate is Israel” to have Yom Kippur, a day where we can spiritually cleanse ourselves to perfection and to show Hashem what we’re capable of. The Rashba, Rabbi Shlomo Ibn Aderet, explains that the world wouldn’t survive at all if we didn’t have the opportunity to repent.

As we daven on Rosh HaShana, the days of repentance and finally Yom Kippur, let’s realize the purpose of our tefillos is not to be perfect all year. Rather we should view life as a big ladder going only in the up direction, with different rings each only a small distance from the previous and Hashem on the top helping us reach Him.

MY FAVORITE DAY OF THE YEAR

BEN ZAEINTZ - 2013/2015

Yom Kippur is my favorite day of the year.

There are so many reasons why I connect to it so closely. It’s the one day a year where all barriers are stripped away and you can have true connection with G-d, our Father. The prayers move us emotionally, both in words and melody. Everyone has the part of the liturgy that moves them the most: for some it’s Kol Nidre, for some it’s Vidui, some it’s Unesaneh Toikef, or Avinu Malkeinu, or Eleh Ezkereh, and for some it’s the Shofar – likely because they are about to break the fast. Yom Kippur is also so unique and special for its distinct differences: no Ashrei at Mincha, a 5th davening, kneeling, donning a white kittel, etc. I also love the small memories and emotional connections: the way the lights looked in my synagogue growing up, the feel of my machzor my best friend gave me, the bracha I give my children before the holiday begins.

But I think the thing that makes the day so special,

so deeply emotional, is the chance to change your life. With the worldly needs washed away, with the singular focus on the holiday- we are able to address our own lives in a way that we can’t do any other day of the year. However, without the rest of the year, Yom Kippur is nothing.

Yom Kippur gives us the opportunity to change our perspective and the way we feel about ourselves. With so much focus on death and mortality, it gives us the clarity and strength to live our lives. We get an opportunity to make our year a better year. How do we treat our family and friends? Do we give our spouse and children enough attention? Are we too quick to anger? Have we been charitable of our wallets, time, and hearts? Do we make decisions that make G-d happy? Yom Kippur helps us address each one of these questions, and many other personal questions, and makes us better people.

There is one famous line of the davening that, when

viewed through a different lens, really sheds a light on our personal growth. “Repentance, Prayer, and Charity can cancel the evil of the decree”. At first glance, this line seems not to be true. Plenty of religious people suffer hardships. Repentance, prayer, and charity don’t save you from suffering. Generation after generation, people who embodied teshuva, tefilah, and tzedakah, are forced to witness some of the most unimaginable suffering.

Let us read the line a little differently. They won’t cancel an evil decree but they take the evilness out of the decree. A person whose life is dedicated to *Repentance*- making your life better, *Prayer*- making

your relationship with G-d better, and *Charity*- making your relationship with your fellow better, realizes that the world is in G-d’s control and can find comfort in that. That doesn’t mean they won’t experience challenges, hardships or suffering, but it takes the evilness out of it. They see it differently.

Yom Kippur is the day to work on yourself. This year, especially, as synagogues may be less crowded, family time limited, services truncated, don’t lose sight of the goal - to make your year better. Enhance your relationship with your family, friends, colleagues, neighbors, and others. Enhance your relationship with G-d. Enhance your relationship with yourself.

ELECTING THE KING

CRAIG MESSER - 2008

When Elul begins we begin to look towards Rosh Hashanah. We begin the process of tshuvah (return), ask forgiveness from our friends and family, and focus on self-improvement. Many people have the custom to learn Rambam’s laws of Teshuva and many modern Jewish thinkers have published essays and books around the idea. The main idea of Rosh Hashana, however, is almost completely absent from our rhetoric: declaring God as our king.

How can it be that climax of our Rosh Hashana liturgy has almost completely disappeared? It’s the main focus of our tefilot!

I pose that it’s because the idea simply isn’t relevant to people anymore. The paradigm of kingship in our modern society is not relatable and really hasn’t been for over 100 years. There is no physical idea of someone standing over us deciding every facet of our lives: economic, social, even who we marry. We have the right to choose our leaders, our lawmakers, and in some places those who judge us.

The Rosh Hashana prayers are organized as the crowning of God as the king of the world. The

crowning ceremony consists of placing a crown on the king’s head and the king recites an oath pledging to serve the country which includes its people, its economy, and its security. The allegiance, however, is the country. While it is true that many kings are more concerned with themselves and their personal interests, at the end of the day if everyone abandons them, they will have no power (or worse!). This idea is relatable as in the same way people can abandon a king for a new leader, a democratic society can remove a leader and replace with someone new.

In a more relatable sense today, the piyutim (liturgical poems) which are added on the high holidays can be understood as an inauguration instead of a crowning. On Rosh Hashanah, we elect God as king. We declare we will perform mitzvot (commandments) and we accept his rules. In the piyut “Hashem Melech, Hashem Malach” we declare: “The holy communities dedicate (and declare).” We declare (usually with a nice tune!) that we, the people, have chosen God to be our leader, and right after we elect and declare we finish with the inauguration and after reciting

Kedusha finish with: “You will rule (lead) alone...”. With those words we have completed the election and inauguration of God. Just as we have a leader of our country on earth

(של למטה) we also have a leader above (של מעלה). Just as we have a ceremony to inaugurate our physical leader, we must have a ceremony for our ultimate leader. Wishing you a happy and sweet new year!

A STILL SMALL VOICE

DAVID WALLACE

“Why are you here, Elijah?” He replied, ‘I am moved by the zeal for the L-rd, G-d of Hosts...’ The L-rd said to him, ‘Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the L-rd, for the L-rd is about to pass by.’ Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the L-rd. But the L-rd was not in the wind. After the wind was an earthquake, but the L-rd was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire. But the L-rd was not in the fire. And after the fire – a still, small voice.” - I Kings 19:9-12

First, the democratic primaries came. G-d didn't seem to be in the primaries. Then came the fires in Australia, G-d wasn't there either. After that, Impeachment, and still no G-d. After impeachment came COVID-19, yet G-d does not seem to be in the virus or lockdowns. Then came more police brutality, begetting protests and riots, no G-d to be seen. What a year of drama, 5780 has been!

One of the best known and powerful piyutim (liturgical poems) that we read on Rosh Hashanah is Unetaneh Tokef, “Let us recount the power/might..”. There are many themes embedded in it that may inspire fear and awe, but every year there is one line that strikes a deep chord within me, “A great shofar sounds, and a still small voice is heard.” The conjured image of a powerful shofar blast, producing an all but audible voice inspires a certain line of paradoxical thought; it produces a certain grey area that begs to be explored. To me, that is the grey area that is the essence of the holiday, the essence of Elul's preparatory steps, and what gives purpose and

life to the rest of the year.

This Elul, this Rosh Hashanah, we find ourselves in an externally loud and chaotic world. As an introvert, I did not need to strain to find the silent blessing in all of this; cancelled social plans, furloughed work, a society and work culture that demands constant output – all cancelled. Despite all of the political, social, and other raucous being more deafening than ever perhaps, our focus should not, cannot be there. “Why are you here, Elijah?” Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks suggests that our purpose in life is where our passion collides with what the world needs. Perhaps I am being overly optimistic, but I cannot imagine a better set of circumstances that would allow for one to simultaneously hear the world's call, while providing the time and opportunity to delve inwards to listen for that still, small voice.

But what do we do once we've heard that “Still Small Voice?” Sometimes it is so small, hardly even a whisper in our thoughts. It is one thing to have an epiphany, revelation, or to feel inspired. It's quite another to take that whisper of a thought or feeling, and cultivate it into a living and breathing reality. Perhaps the answer is in the formula of our Rosh Hashanah service. Immediately following Unetaneh Tokef we pray the Musaf Amidah, we go inward to listen. Following our silent prayer (or during it for Nusach Ari/Sefard), we blow the shofar. A tiny whisper of air that would otherwise be soundless and insignificant is magnified into a piercing blast, which serves as a powerful reminder of the work to be done in the year ahead to translate our ‘voice’ into

action.

As if this weren't enough, we have yet another seemingly paradoxical formula that quite literally parallels our line from Unetaneh Tokef, still emphasizing the cultivation of silence, if we would just listen. Just as our shofar blasts always start and end with one solid note, they only serve to book-end the broken notes of Shevarim and Teruah-interspersed with moments of thin silence. So too is

our formula for introspection and growth on Rosh Hashanah; always surrounded with noise and action. But ultimately, the shofar blasts culminate with one final "Tekiah Gedolah," a sustained and unbroken note, as if to suggest that the end result of our cultivation of that "Still, Small Voice,' should be projected loudly into the world for others to hear and benefit from.

BEAUTIFUL TENTS

SHAUN ZEITLIN - 2001

"Ma Tovv Ohalacha Yakov." How great are the Tents of Jacob!

We learn this introductory prayer as young children and it begins our daily morning prayers. These famous words are actually the blessing Bilaam gave the Jewish people when he was supposed to curse us. These last few months I have been reminded of these words almost everywhere I go. I go to a neighbor's backyard every day to daven in his tent. My parents and in laws come over once a week to have dinner in our backyard in our tent. Our shul has a tent. Many schools have tents. Shabbos House now uses a tent. But what is so beautiful about tents?

The tent is a beautification of the temporary. It is the ability to quickly set up a home wherever you are. The Jewish people that Bilaam saw were a travelling nation with no home but what he saw was not a downtrodden people but rather people making the best of the current situation.

Due to Covid most of the tents I have been to are open on all sides just like the welcoming tent of Avraham and Sarah. I am constantly thinking about this idea. We all would love to once again open our homes to friends and family but we are afraid. Our solution is a tent where every side is open and we feel protected but not restricted. This was the message of Avraham and Sarah who invited guests to feel protected but

never forced into a situation. He tried to influence with love while never trying to trap a person.

For the first few months of Covid our home is what made us feel safe but we were isolated. We felt safe with the doors closed and the windows shut but we also felt detached and lonely. We are now in the Tent Phase were we feel more open and attached to others but through the openness of the tent.

I really feel this message as we approach Tishrei because as I explained to my children the honey we dip the apple and challah into makes the best of a situation. It attaches itself to something mundane and gives it a sweetness we appreciate.

The second level is when we celebrate Sukkos which is one of the happiest holidays on our Jewish Calendar. Vsamchta B'chagecha! For thousands of years how we have been celebrating by picking up and leaving our houses to join our family and friends in a non-insulated porous hut. What's the great joy? It is through beautifying the temporary while surrounded by those we love.

I hope we can all internalize this message of always making the best of every situation no matter temporary or not it is. We must always strive to add honey to the mundane and elevate our lives the best we can. Wishing everyone a safe and happy New Year!

MENDEL'S MESSAGES

THE DISTANCING FACTOR IN AVINU - MALKEINU

RABBI MENDEL RUBIN

One of the best known prayers and beloved songs of the high holidays is “Avinu Malkeinu” which addresses G-d as “our father, our king”. Rabbi Akiva was the first to use this prayer formula, expanded over the years to a series of stanzas. This prayer specifically, and throughout the liturgy in general, speaks of G-d as both father and king, to highlight our closeness and the distance, both love and respect. This balance is a wonderful, healthy and necessary approach to any relationship, with spouses and friends, parents and children, teachers and students, employee-employer and most certainly with G-d. Closeness and distance is very much in the limelight now, as we attempt to balance the Covid-required physical-distancing with human-wired social-closeness and connection. This isn't an easy formula, Interestingly, we find a similar balance in the growth cycle of apples which dipped in honey are a traditional Rosh Hashanah staple. Unlike citrus or tropical fruits which thrive on warmth, apples grow best with the right ratio of warm days and cooler nights. Apples thrive in this region (as well as in the Northwest), because of the cool nights and warm days that we have right here at this time of year. It's the contrast that makes the apple, the proper tension and careful balance between hot and cold is the desired state. Too much hot would ruin it, just as would a sudden deep freeze. You need the right balance of cool nights and warm days.

Apples take both to thrive and develop that desirable crisp crunch. Hot and cold are metaphors for closeness and distance. Not only in Judaism but even in the hot/cold game that everyone played at least once. Spiritually and emotionally, we tend to think of warm as a positive sign of life and of cold as indifferent, detached, and disconnected.

Some might think that the warmer the connection, the better the spiritual fruit. Apples teach us, that it isn't always so. Sometimes, it's the cold and warm that makes the best fruit. It's the pull and strain, the contrast and challenge of both together that makes apples sweet. Maybe a Jew in Jerusalem surrounded by Torah would be considered in a hot spot, whereas a Jew at UAlbany might be considered in a spiritually (and physically) cold place – and the apple teaches us: that may make for the best fruit! A challenge may make us stronger, the distance may make the heart fonder, the delicate and sensitive balance of cold and warm is what brings out the best in the fruit. But this only works if we don't go too far to the warmth or to the cold – and is only in play as long as the apple is still connected to the tree. All the warmth and cold doesn't matter much once it falls off the tree.

There are so many examples of this balance in Jewish learning, especially in Chabad Chassidic thought. indeed, Chabad and the Rebbe's vision and teaching thrives on such paradoxes!

MODERN SHOFAR MEDITATIONS

Classic Jewish texts speak a lot about the Shofar's meaning and messages. It's said to remind us of the ram at the Binding of Isaac or the Shofar sounded at Sinai. The call of the Shofar is likened to an alarm clock, to a primordial wordless inner cry from within the depths of one's heart, or trumpets at a royal coronation. See Chabad.org for their illustrated list of 11 classic Shofar messages.

Here are a few more ideas, all rooted in tradition but cloaked in modern twists, parables and analogies – in no particular order:

(1) **PINGING THE SERVER:** Pinging is a computer tech method to test the connection between computers and the server. The ping sends out a small data packet with a header and footer (visualize that as the Shofar's sets of sounds starting off with a Tekiah – Shevarim – Teruah – and back to Tekiah) and evaluates the connection. Indeed, the Shofar calls between us to G-d and G-d to us in return (see the Boomerang metaphor below) is an indicator of our bond and connection, that transcends detailed words or fancy programming, it speaks to the core connection itself!

(2) **WHOLE & BROKEN SOUNDS:** Notice that we never blow broken (Shevarim, Teruah) Shofar sounds alone. They are always accompanied by a strong bold Tekiah blast before and after every broken Shofar sound. Like the broken Matzah on Passover, it is psychologically significant that the Seder's middle broken Matzah is surrounded and supported by the whole Matzahs above and below her. Same with the Shofar sounds, the whole sound that always precedes and follows it symbolizes the strengths in our life that ought to support, encourage and uplift, sandwiching the broken aspects in between. We all have whole and broken parts of our lives, so this uplifting yet validating support sandwich perspective is important.

(3) **RISING FROM THE BROWN PAPER BAGS:** A heartfelt vivid emotional memory of the Rebbe's Shofar blowing. I wrote it up on a different post, you can read it in this Archways booklet or see it at this link online: <https://www.shabboshouse.org/mendels-messages/rebbes-shofar-rising-from-the-brown-paper-bags/> This idea is connected to the Shofar's shape (as symbolized by the first verse recited before Shofar): it's narrow, tight mouthpiece that widens into its much broader opening. It speaks to the blessing in Rosh Hashanah's Amidah that concludes with: "G-d who hears the Shofar cry of his people Israel with compassion/empathy!"

(4) **INSTA'S BOOMERANG:** Instagram has this popular feature where you can capture a movement in a series of still shots which are stitched together and turned into a moving GIF that goes forwards and backwards in a continuous loop. This may not improve anyone's life or do anything significant but since it is popular we might as well find some connection and learn some lesson. Let's think of it in terms of Shofar: a series of (100) sounds stitched together and it goes both forward and backward: the Shofar is both our call out to G-d and G-d's call back to us. And it keeps looping, forwards and backwards, to and fro, from us to G-d and from G-d to us... all day long.

(5) **KID (2X) ACROSS THE PODIUM:** We were tabling before Rosh Hashanah at the Small Fountain with its constant noisy rushing water. Raizy wanted me to blow the Shofar to get the table some attention and I mused whether people could hear the Shofar over the din of the fountain. But I did. And just then a kid came running from the other side of the podium! He had heard the call of the Shofar and just earlier his father had called to remind him to find out about Rosh Hashanah services on campus. And then he heard our Shofar! We blew again, and a face of

another student popped out from behind the shades of one of the campus offices behind us and smiled. So yes, you can hear the Shofar above the din and noise, it cuts through all that! It is a Jewish wake-up call! Speaking of a kid, it reminds me of the time we saw a goat nudging the latch of his enclosure with his horns. I told my (own) kids: This goat has the right idea! A Shofar breaks through boundaries, it opens closed doors...

(6) CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW? Remember the old Verizon commercial? The guy sloshing through a stream in the woods, or popping out of a manhole cover, or some other bizarre or strange scenario, each time asking the same question into his cell-phone: "Can You Hear Me Now?... Good!" The message is that despite the physical distance or barriers, you got service and the call comes through. Same with Shofar! It reaches us everywhere, no matter our physical or spiritual or emotional distance – the Rebbe's holiday letters would be addressed "to the sons and daughters of Israel, wherever they may be!" – we can call and reach G-d and G-d can reach us. It's a local call! (for those who remember that type of thing).

(7) THE DIAL-UP MODEM'S SCREECH! Do you remember the screeching sounds of old dial-up modems trying, striving, yearning to connect? Very Shofar-esque! And that screeching crazy cry is because sometimes normal words just don't cut it. The soul's deepest core expression transcends all the words of the Machzor. Over the years we've been blessed to witness many heartfelt and soulful "Cockadoodledo" as in the classic Baal Shem Tov story https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/148250/jewish/On-the-Teachings-of-Chassidus-Chapter-Three.htm – moments, when people (sometimes whom you'd least expect) express such innermost soulful feelings or connections, in ways that are above and beyond and totally different than their usual expression and style. Shofar comes

straight from the heart – it bares the soul.

(8) THE FLAT 5: Here's <https://www.shabboshouse.org/mendels-messages/lazer-lloyd-flat-5/> something we heard from Lazer Llyod (a Jewish blues/jazz musician) about the "Flat 5" which expresses a lot about the mixed betwixt feelings Jews have around the High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. And it says something about the Shofar being both a mournful cry as well as a bold strong sound – at the same time.

(9) OUR PLACE IN HISTORY: Jews have been listening to the Shofar every Rosh Hashanah in every generation, in every circumstance, for many centuries, from antiquity to this day. There are many stories of Jews doing this at great sacrifice & personal peril. Shofars blown during the Spanish Inquisition, in the wastelands of Siberia labor camps, the recently displayed Shofar blown at Auschwitz, it was blown at the Kotel despite the odd prohibition during the British Mandate. We who live in unprecedented freedom ought to live up to their example and hear the Shofar no matter the circumstance!

(10) TROUBLE-SHOOTING: I saw this great line/meme just before Rosh Hashanah: "I signed up for a gym six months ago but didn't lose any weight. I'm going to go in there tomorrow in person to find out what's wrong." This line is a great update to old parables (poor man eyeing rich man's service bell, or villager eager to get big city's fire alarm without even thinking about a firefighting system) about Shofar's effect... Yes! It is a great and important Mitzvah just to hear the Shofar! No doubt about that. But then we ought to internalize and apply its call to our lives, it ought to have a transformative personal effect through our efforts... What happens on Rosh Hashanah should NOT stay in Rosh Hashanah. But more than all the reasons, symbolism and meanings... the most important thing is to actually fulfill the biblical Mitzvah: hear the Shofar blown on Rosh Hashanah Day!

REBBE'S SHOFAR RISING FROM THE BROWN PAPER BAGS

A vivid, uplifting memory of the Rebbe's Shofar blowing in 770 – Lubavitch:

Before Rosh Hashanah the Rebbe would receive many thousands of letters known as Pan/Panim/a soulful letter. Some came by mail from all corners of the world, and he would also stand by the door of his office and accept these letters in person at designated times before Rosh Hashanah.

It was very meaningful to pass by the Rebbe and hand him this soulful letter in person. The picture here is one example of such a Panim letter reception. The interior of Rebbe's room is visible, in his hand are a few letters that he received from each passing visitor. But that visitor, for that moment, it is a connection frozen in time.

Other times of the year, after responding to the letters each accordingly, the Rebbe would take these letters to the gravesite of (now the Ohel at Old Montefiore Cemetery in Queens where he also is buried alongside) his father-in-law, the previous Chabad Rebbe, where he would read each one, sometimes showing great visible emotion, then tear it and leave it at the Ohel gravesite.

You can see many pictures of the Rebbe going to the Ohel holding big brown paper bags brimming with letters. Today, if you go to the Rebbe's Ohel, you can look down and see thousands of such torn (for privacy) letters, written in all languages, in child and adult handwriting, that were read there with feeling. But on Rosh Hashanah, the letters were brought onto the Bima in the center of the synagogue where the Rebbe would blow Shofar. I remember the Bima filled with brown paper bags filled with heartfelt letters of

the Jewish people. And it was from that pile of bags, from all those deeply personal letters, that the sound of the Rebbe's Shofar arose.

There's significance to the shape of the Shofar. It has a tight narrow mouthpiece and a broader, wider end reflecting these verse said at Shofar blowing: "Min HaMeitzar... Anani BaMerchav! " I call out to you from the narrow straights, G-d answer me broadly! (Psalms)

Seeing the paper bags and hearing the Rebbe's Shofar rise from within them, helped me understand that the Shofar's narrow straits are not only the narrowness of the mouthpiece, but the letters in those paper bags. Think of the life challenges and struggles in all those letters, people's issues and concerns with family matters, livelihood and health, their spiritual struggles, mental issues, emotional stresses, their dreams and aspirations, their quests and yearnings. It is from that rich diversity of the individual stories of those letters that the sound and call of the Shofar arose. From those narrows, hoping and striving for the broadness of G-d's response.

This whole image makes me read one of the Rosh Hashanah Amidah blessings in a new light: "Blessed are you G-d... who hears the Shofar sound of his people, with compassion!"

Indeed, the Shofar sound is borne out of the voices of His people, the Shofar arises out of the letters, out of the story of people's lives. And like the Rebbe who lovingly listened and read and felt and connected with each person, their letter and their story, G-d hears our Shofar sound with compassion!

THROWBACK TO 2019: ROSH HASHANAH AND THE WINDOWS 7 TO 10 UPGRADE

First a word about Windows 7 in Fall 2019:

This tech issue won't affect most in 2019, as most of you (Apple folks aside) have laptops made after Windows 7, most of you should be running Windows 10 for some time now. For you Windows 7 would be way behind the times. But many large corporations and state agencies are still running Windows 7 because they never wanted to make the upgrade to 8 (which wasn't a stable operating system) and just kept it at Windows 7. Remember, cash registers and data entry machines are computers, too, but don't need all the bells and whistles that individual consumers crave. Stability and reliability is the most important thing. But as of January 2020 Microsoft will no longer be supporting Windows 7. No patches, no updates, no security fixes, no drivers. That forces all Windows 7 users to update to Windows 10 by the end of 2019. Think of what this means to a large supermarket chain or a state agency with thousands of terminals and computers on board. It is a major system upgrade. But they have no choice. Windows 7 is no longer an option.

Now about Rosh Hashanah:

According to Kabbalah and Chassidic teaching, G-d's investment and commitment to our world is on an annual basis. A contract that runs one year at a time. Each year on Rosh Hashanah the contract is up for review and thankfully renewed. Think of it as planned obsolescence, the way that manufacturers of phones and cars and appliances keep us coming back for more, nothing is meant to last forever, so too, the one-year contract has us coming back to the table

each Rosh Hashanah, and renews G-d's investment and commitment to us and our world.

More than a renewal, it's an upgrade!

But back to the Windows 7 concept, each new year is more than just a contract renewal, it's an upgrade. This year at Rosh Hashanah we downloaded and installed version 5780. And there are features and opportunities and fixes in 5780 that weren't available in version 5779. Windows 7 doesn't work forever, you have to take it up to the next level, we are forced to upgrade. Same with Rosh Hashanah. It's not enough to keep up the same old. We have to download the next version, we have to take it to the next level. Let's find one Mitzvah, or one area of focus in which to improve, increase, add or change as version 5780 (and this year 5781!) is installed.

This explains the long prayers...

One of the big questions on everyone's mind is why so many pages? Why is the High Holiday Machzor prayer so long? But think of it as a system install! Not only are we installing a new program or app but a total overhaul, it's a new Operating System version 5780. That takes time! You know how such installs go... you're watching the screen go from 23% to 28% and then it goes stuck at 37% forever, and finally it jumps to 56% and on. It's a big deal because the install is deleting old files, installing new ones, finding corrupted or missing files and moving files from one place to another. And so, too, on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, it takes time because of the download and install of the new Operating System version for the new year!

R O S H H A S H A N A H

T W E E T S

@SHABBOSHOUSE

GENERAL ROSH HASHANAH

“Inscribed & Sealed for a Good Year!” Think of email’s COMPOSE vs SEND, WRITING the paper vs. UPLOADING it. The seal clinches. #HighHolidays

#RoshHashana begins tonight: #jewishnewyear, apple&honey, #shofar, #highholidays, #reboot, #reset. #ShanaTova!

Sometimes a computer needs to shutdown & restart. If too many conflicting things running, a fresh start might be all it needs. #RoshHashanah

#RoshHashanah images: #shofar, or someone blowing it wearing a #tallit, #machzor book, apple dipped in honey, waterside #tashlich.

Of course, pomegranates (may our deeds be as numerous as their seeds) are a #RoshHashanah staple.

Not to knock brisket but evidently there’s more to #RoshHashanah than what’s on the menu, even as were busy with such prep at Chabad.

Fear not... We’re serving full course delicious festive meals all #RoshHashanah wknd, lunches & dinners. But we need to keep perspective!

It takes 2 million+ #bee flower visits to make 1cup of #honey. Think of huge effort to make something #sweet - naturally. #roshhashanah

Always 7 days between #RoshHashana & #YomKippur. Each day we reflect on another day of the week in the past year. #highholidays #Teshuvah

Best known symbolic #RoshHashanah food is apple dipped in honey. Did u know #Talmud suggests beets, leeks, & fenugreek for their symbolism?

#Apple&Honey, round #Challah, #pomegranate & #Tashlich are all #RoshHashanah customs but most important #mitzvah by far is hearing #Shofar!

The traditional #RoshHashanah wish is #ShanaTova which means “good year” not #HappyNewYear. @goodyear got it right!

#RoshHashanah vs. #NewYears: what’s similar, different? What’s the optimum mood for the #JewishNewYear? How to get that feel?

#HighHolidays are certainly important, but wish people’s taste of #Judaism would include joys & celebrations of #Sukkot, #SimchatTorah etc.

SHOFAR

#Shofar is many things: alarm clock, a herald, soul's inner wordless cry, recalls Isaac's ram, & symbol of narrow turning & opening broader.

#Shofar is all at once: wakeup alarm, child's cry, heralding call, historical memory & the Jewish future. It pings & pines, it tells & asks.

#Shofar pings? Yes, it tests the connection w/ our "server" using broken bits (shvarim & truah) in data packs w/ headers & footers (tekiah).

> as in pinging the server. #Shofar parable: testing/showing connection, with header & footer (Tekiah) data packets (Teruah).

The broken #shofar sounds of shevarim & teruah are always surrounded (and supported!) by solid strong tekiah blasts. They are never alone.

Chassidus views the first night of #RoshHashanah as in limbo: suspense, anticipation... until the #Shofar is blown the following morning.

At #ShofarFactory a student compared it to #Ollivander's... more than us choosing, the #Shofar chooses us, there's a soul match.

#Shofar is Hebrew for horn but is also related to the word Shipru/Lshaper which means to improve, to beautify.

#Shofar has a similar root to a Hebrew word for improvement. #Shofar is an alarm clock for change, a catalyst for spiritual growth.

Look at text of #Shofar blessing. It's not to blow Shofar, but to listen to its sound. It's more about taking it in, than blowing it out.

Does your dryer sing at end of load? Oven beep when food is ready? Another way to hear #Shofar. We're back on w/ G-d, ready for a new year!

MACHZOR GENERAL

#Machzor (#highholiday prayerbook) really means "#cycle": Think #spiral, returning to same point, but a few degrees higher than last year.

The #Machzor is filled with liturgical poetry: alphabetical, paraphrase, allegory, wordplay.. all with layers of meaning & history.

But like poetry or song lyrics, the #Machzor is most meaningful when it strikes a chord, when it touches something inside, hits home!

The #onphraseperpage #RoshHashanah challenge. It's hard to find all the #Machzor relevant & meaningful so try to find one phrase per page.

A 770 #RoshHashanah memory: "Men zol visen vu men shtayt un far vemen mem shtayt!" fierce passionate proclamation by the old Gabbai MP Katz. Which translates to... "Know where you stand and before whom you stand!" Timely & relevant for #RoshHashanah and throughout life.

The copper snake on a pole had no healing powers other than its ability to turn people heavenward.
#Mishna #RoshHashanah #Chukat #caduceus

There's a lot to say, hence all the #HighHoliday prayers & a lot we can't find words for, it goes far deeper - hence #Shofar a wordless cry.

Benefits of sitting/standing in synagogue: exercise, minimizes restless leg syndrome, & it balances respect for & comfort with our Judaism.

When you get called to open the ark, think beyond physical coverings. Think of layers to peel away within ourselves to reveal Torah within.

What better way to proclaim G-d as king than to commit to or enhance a #Mitzvah observance? #RoshHashanah jumpstarts the Jewish year!

#CollarStays @SwissStays, Live TV & a #RoshHashanah message: <http://www.shabboshouse.org/collar-stays-and-live-tv/> ...

MACHZOR SPECIFIC

Who ascends the Mountain of G-d? (#Psalm24)
Think #Kilimanjaro or #Everest, one must be fit for the climb, oxygen gets thinner up there.

Lift up the gates! (#Psalm24) Are these garage doors? stores in the inner city? Why lift? Heaven's doors open upwards, not push or pull!

"This is a generation of seekers" (#Psalm24)
Underneath what we're looking for, what do we seek? What do we really want? #RoshHashana

An abbreviation of the 3rd, 4th & 5th Hebrew words of #Psalm24 is what we wrote in all of our Yeshiva books before writing our own names.

#Psalm150 uses musical instruments to praise G-d: thru tension of a drum, breath blown into a flute, a touch of life's strings.

Tension can create music, if drawn just tight enough but not too tight. Too much slack doesn't elicit sound. Drums in #Psalm150

Timing is everything for clashing cymbals, they meet in the middle to make the desired sound - so it is with life's contrasts. #Psalm150

#Psalm150 is all about praising G-d with instruments. Hey, but what if u can't play or don't have an instrument? >>

<< that's why #Psalm150 ends with: "Every being that has a soul - praise the L-rd!" No instruments or specific talent or ability necessary.

"All my limbs" i.e. everything I've got. Go big or go home. Prayer works best when we don't hold back, when we throw yourself into it 100%.

Every #HighHoliday #Machzor has a bigger bolder font for this one word: The King! It sets the tone, sets the bar: It's not just about us!

1/3: Rabbi Aharon of Karlin fainted when reaching the word "The King" in #HighHoliday #Machzor. Why? He recalled the Talmud story of >

2/3: Roman general asked R' Yochanon b. Zakkai: "If I'm King, why didn't you come earlier!" - R' Aharon saw this as reflection of us & G-d..

3/3: This story of non-@Chabad Rebbe, is one of the only (if not the only) story printed in the original @chabad #HighHoliday #Machzor.

"Song of Ascents" (#Psalm130) literally = steps. One step at a time, step in right direction, journey of 1000 miles begins w/ single step.

"Out of the depths" (#Psalm130) can be from lowest point, from the pits, or it can mean from depths of one's soul, from innermost core.

"More than night watchmen awaiting dawn" (#Psalm130) all on work shifts know this feeling, but is also figurative: from darkness to light!

The #Amidah was so good the first time, we're going to do it all over again! (Reasons for Chazzan's aloud repetition of silent #Amidah)

Seriously, #Amidah may be repeated but it's not superfluous. We pray as individuals & as a community, each has its own power & purpose.

1/3: Repetition of #HighHoliday #Amidah in #Machzor has short "Misod" paragraph about leading the congregation based on secret traditions.

2/3: btw: chabad #Machzor doesn't translate it as secret, perhaps bcuz for @chabad the mystical inner tradition is normal part of life.

3/3: But what's the secret? How we humans (despite all our limitations) can open up to speak to G!d. This communicative channel of prayer.

LIFE is a very Jewish word, especially around #HighHolidays. Quick Hebrew lesson: #Chaim = life, the root is #Chai, & #Lchaim is TO LIFE!

"suspends earth in empty space" isn't only a matter of astronomy. It's about life in limbo, the world in balance, awaiting that one deed.

Another repeated #Machzor word is #Kadosh, usually = holy, after all it's the High HOLY Days! But #Kadosh also means different/designated.

MLCH = Hebrew root for king. By changing vowels it can be WAS King, IS King, WILL be King. Melech = is, Moloch = was, Yimloch = will be.

Timelessness is a big in Judaism. G-d is timeless & therefore so are His Mitzvot. They span centuries, never out of style.

#CapeofGoodHope was named by the Portuguese. Term dates back to #RoshHashanah #Machzor prayer: Tikvah Tova (good hope) to those who seek U!

"Good hope" in the #Machzor recalls "Cape of Good Hope" in Africa, & makes you wonder: Is there such a thing as bad hope? Isn't all hope good?

"Nes" on #Chanukah #Dreidel means miracle. In the #Amidah it means a flag or banner. Both are about uplift, rising higher, going beyond!

In #Shofar too, there's the wordless broken cry from the depths, & the great triumphant blast of redemption! #Shofar from below & above!

"Orech Din" He who arranges the law, is modern Hebrew word for lawyer, but in #HighHoliday #Machzor it = G-d in a famous liturgical poem.

“He opens the gate to those who knock in repentance”. Forget the song itself, does “Knocking on Heaven’s Door” ring a bell?

The mere act of knocking on heaven’s door is already a form of return/repentance, even before anything is said. I want in!

knockingonheavensdoor is saying we are outside & eager to come in. It says “We are here” before any specific request or #prayer. #Teshuvah

3 biblical #Mothers: #Sarah, #Hagar & #Chana all featured in #RoshHashana readings - on praying, protecting & caring for their #children

In #Haftorah 2ndday of #RoshHashanah, Jeremiah hauntingly & reassuringly describes “Rachel weeping for her children”. A voice heard on high!

As parents #RoshHashanah Torah readings & Haftorahs r esp moving. “For this child I prayed” & “hear the voice of the youth from where he is”

From #RoshHashanah #Torah reading: “Arise, lift up the child, hold onto him” about helping challenged youth reach their potential & beyond.

Most vivid #RoshHashanah memory #Rebbe’s singular clarion call saying verses b4 #Shofar responded by thunderous united roar of Chassidim.

Indeed! the notes, the setting... the notes in paperbags on bima @ #Rebbe’s #Shofar blowing.

#Psalm47 before #Shofar ends with the words “Me’od Na’alah” very high or very exalted. Recalls the Peretz story: “If Not Higher!”

#Psalm47 b4 #Shofar is by Sons of Korach. They

returned from their father’s rebellion & reached for truth despite their circumstances.

The 8 responsive verses before #Shofar are my most powerful memory of hearing #Shofar from the #Rebbe in 770.

Rebbe’s singsong of the 8 pre-#Shofar verses, a clarion call in a pregnant silence, answered by a thunderous crowd - all in one unified voice.

Of 8 by #Rebbe- these 4 pre-#Shofar verses stuck the most: MinHaMeitzar, ArovAvedecha, SasAnochi & TuvTaam. Can’t read them any other way.

1st verse after #Shofar: “People who know the sound of the #Shofar” - we get it, it resonates with us, it speaks to our hearts.

3rd verse after #Shofar says “Tiferes Uzomo” - the beauty of their strength! google Tiferes Uzomo for a Russian Chassidic interpretation or see it here: <https://www.shabboshouse.org/mendels-messages/tiferes-uzomo-beauty-strength/>

“You Holy One enthroned on the praises of Israel” see the #BaalShemTov “Baruch Hashem” story on this verse.

See that bold word “Ometz”? It means inner strength or courage. In the #Machzor its about our forefathers, but really its for us.

“Who is strong?” asks Avot= “who conquers inclination” Ometz in #RoshHashanah #Machzor is about valiantly subduing desire, it takes courage!

“As sure His Name, likewise His praise” confidence, assurance & certainty play big roles in all areas of life expression, prayer, too!

On #RoshHashanah heard a dramatic #Sephardic poem about #Akeidah. A striking biographical detail adds much meaning. <http://www.shabboshouse.org/the-akeidah-poem-by-yehudah-samuel-abbas/>

Unesaneh Tokef is a frightfully haunting prayer, but the “as a shepherd” line reassures G-d looks after each of us individually. We matter!

I heard this beautiful story on #RoshHashanah. It recalls a line about counting in the famous Unesaneh Tokef prayer. <http://www.shabboshouse.org/translation/>

#BookofLife “reads itself” says UnesanehTokef #RoshHashanah prayer. Indeed it does, actions speak for themselves, our choices tell a story.

3 Bold Loud Words at end of UnesanehTokef prayer: Repentance, Prayer & Charity. #Rebbe says they are all mistranslated.

One of the key prayers of the #RoshHashanah & #YomKippur #Machzor is Unetana Tokef which (especially this year during #Covid) speaks to the many uncertainties & unknowns of life, but ends off with one bold loud line of clarity, confidence & certitude.

#RoshHashanah isn't Creation start date but birthday of man. This is true start date of G-d's works, when Creator's purpose can be realized.

#Aleinu is usually stuck at the end of the prayer, but on #RoshHashanah is smack in middle of the #Musaf #Amidah. Prime real estate!

#Aleinu opens with a commitment, a sense of responsibility. It is incumbent upon us and it is up to us. Demanding yet empowering.

#Aleinu one of our oldest prayers dating back to Joshua. Last verse of this paragraph goes back to Moses & is at heart of @chabad thought.

You know #TikkunOlam, a famous modern Jewish communal buzzword? It comes from V'al Kayn, 2nd paragraph of #Aleinu. Read the context!

“Bayom Hahu...” many Jews know that tune at end of #Aleinu. But how many know its about #Moshiach?

“G!d & His Name will be One” our external image & reputation doesn't always jive & sync with who we are inside, but we strive for that day!

Ask (knowledgeable) Jews for their most important #RoshHashanah prayer in the #Machzor book. It can be quite telling philosophically.

Crux of #RoshHashanah prayers for a #Chabad #Chassid? “May every effect know its cause, every creation know its Creator!” #Machzor

Just realized that the colloquial #ifyouknowyouknow meaningfully & richly applies to the (Chabad favorite #Machzor line) “may every effect (creation) know You are its cause (creator)” phrase in the central blessing of #RoshHashanah #Amidah.

Read the intro to Dr. Brawer's book “Something from Nothing” to get a glimpse into the verse “May every creation know its Creator”.

#Memory is huge in #RoshHashanah prayers, think RAM/active memory vs storage memory (more like history). Memory is how we function as Jews.

Now with computers we have greater insight into role of memory in #RoshHashanah prayers. Think Jewish RAM, not storage but active memory!

All year long I call Gala Apples “Galei” (Reveal G-dliness!), not a bad type of apple but not my favorite, but this is another hopeful & uplifting, energizing (encouraging & demanding) Chabad favorite line from the #RoshHashanah #Machzor.

There’s a blessing before the priestly blessing which ends with the word Love! To bless your people with love.

The last word of the priestly blessing is SHALOM, which means: hello & goodbye, peace and wholesomeness.

SHALOM (hello & bye, peace & whole) may be one of the universally best known words of the Hebrew language!

The “Hayom” #Machzor poem celebrates TODAY. Old Chassidim said “tomorrow” is the name of an evil inclination.

“Hayom” TODAY also signifies: clear & obvious as day, urgent as the immediate present, and personally relevant.

YOM KIPPUR GENERAL

More than Day of Atonement, #YomKippur is a Day of At-ONE-Ment. It may be a pun, but it reflects true @Chabad perspective.

Ironically, the Hebrew word #Shabbaton (for Jewish weekend retreats) appears in #Torah re: #YomKippur (no food, no games, no fun).

Because #YomKippur is a retreat into the soul, a getaway from everyday life, a trip deep within ourselves, to refresh at the innermost core.

#YomKippur is only day a year Jews pray 5x. Weekdays 3, Shabbat & Holidays 4, YomKippur 5. Represents & reveals all 5 levels of the soul!

#5Alive (was?) the name of a @CocaCola drink, very apt description for the 5 Prayers on #YomKippur - prayers full of life for #BookofLife!

5 is important Kabbalistically, refers to 3 conscious levels of soul, the 4th transcendent level, 5th is innermost core - the #PinteleYid!

#YomKippur’s full name is “YomHaKippurim” which literally can read as “A Day Like (but not quite) Purim” --- But #Purim & #YomKippur!?!? >

> #Purim = #YomKippur bcuz both reveal inner essential core identity of the Jew. “I am a Jew!” via Haman’s hate or via spiritual connection.

> #Purim’s edge on #YomKippur is that it reveals the Jewish core within and as part of the human experience, not a retreat away from it.

Without forgiveness who could survive? Imagine a keyboard with no delete or backspace! #Teshuva & forgiveness are true blessings!

Add/Remove Programs allows us to uninstall/change. Not everything has to be uninstalled, change might be just right. #Teshuvah #HighHolidays

2 yr old daughter: “I’m not stinky, my diaper is stinky” what a #Teshuvah message! #RoshHashanah #YomKippur (see Beruriah in Talmud)

#FrenchToast & #Teshuvah: Both build onto a stale, no longer desirable past, enriching & giving it new life in a transformative way.

#Teshuvah can be from love or from fear, closeness or distance, passion or concern. The love way is

better but fear may be more effective.

#YomKippur is very potent, but here's what it can't do: absolve sins between people, or substitute for a full year of vibrant Jewish living.

YOM KIPPUR MACHZOR GENERAL

All these poems about G!d? #YomKippur is about getting closer to G-d. These poems are to help us get to know each other better.

Underneath all the Hebrew words is the #Cockadoodoo story w/ BaalShemTov. The words are the body, but the feeling within is the soul.

Or heartfelt Jewish woman who offered up her entire #Machzor to G-d, or illiterate Jew who recited AlefBais & asked G-d to put it together.

Funny thing in #Machzor some poems run responsively: left column to right. Recalls old typewriter #carriagereturn. Pull down & go back.

There's meaning in that typewriter #carriagereturn: Pull the level down a notch, bring it back to the beginning, start fresh on a new line.

But #carriagereturn isn't about erasing old: It pulls down & back to create new lines of type in our lives. Each line builds on one prior!

If #Machzor feels especially long this year, think of Greenberg's Machzor: painstakingly written, used & preserved in Soviet Labor camp: http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/168704/jewish/My-Fathers-Machzor.htm

#Machzor (#highholiday prayerbook) really means

"#cycle": Think #spiral, returning to same point, but a few degrees higher than last year.

The #Machzor is filled with liturgical poetry: alphabetical, paraphrase, allegory, wordplay.. all with layers of meaning & history.

But like poetry or song lyrics, the #Machzor is most meaningful when it strikes a chord, when it touches something inside, hits home!

Why is #Machzor so long? Think of it as software update, may take time but moves us up to new version.

Some resist software updates, they prefer old & familiar. But when G-d provides download, rest assured there's no bloatware. #HighHolidays

The #onphraseperpage #YomKippur challenge. It's hard to find all the #Machzor relevant & meaningful so try to find one phrase per page.

Benefits of sitting/standing in synagogue: exercise, minimizes restless leg syndrome, & it balances respect for & comfort with our Judaism.

When you get called to open the ark, think beyond physical coverings. Think of layers to peel away within ourselves to reveal Torah within.

AL CHAIT

Why tap our chests at #YomKippur #AlChait? It's a signal to our hearts, seat of passion & desire: "You got me into this mess!"

Tapping chests at #YomKippur #AlChait can be a form of knocking, not beating. We tell our hearts: we want IN! Seeking to go deeper within!

#YomKippur's tapping chests can also be a Jewish Defibrillator of sorts, waking up our hearts, getting back into healthy rhythm. #AlChait

For the most part, #YomKippur's #AlChait isn't listing of specific sins, rather its factors, conditions & circumstances.

Acknowledgment of a problem & verbal confession are central to rehabilitative programs like AA, and key to the #YomKippur experience.

There are 22 letters of the Hebrew Alphabet, 2x #AlChait beginning with each letter, for a total of 44 #AlChait each time on #YomKippur.

Willingly/Duress, Knowing/Unknowing, Intentional/Unintentional... a few ways #AlChait tells us that we must rectify even the unintentional.

The last of alphabetical #AlChait: "for sins of a confused heart" Clarity is such a blessing, there's too much #50shadesofgray in our lives.

UNESANEH TOKEF

Rabbi Amnon's medieval #HighHoliday prayer reminds us of life's uncertainty, all of 21st century tech & progress hasn't changed that much.

Rabbi Amnon's #HighHoliday prayer is anti-@Snapchat: nothing is fleeting, all is recorded, nothing forgotten. Hopefully it won't shame us.

The Great Shofar and the Still Soft Voice: #Judaism values both words & silence, fullness & void, our active & passive roles.

Unesaneh Tokef is a frightfully haunting prayer, but the "as a shepherd" line reassures G-d looks after each of us individually. We matter!

I heard this beautiful story on #RoshHashanah. It

recalls a line about counting in the famous Unesaneh Tokef prayer. <http://www.shabboshouse.org/translation/>

#BookofLife "reads itself" says UnesanehTokef #RoshHashanah prayer. Indeed it does, actions speak for themselves, our choices tell a story.

3 Bold Loud Words at end of UnesanehTokef prayer: Repentance, Prayer & Charity. #Rebbe says they are all mistranslated.

One of the key prayers of the #RoshHashanah & #YomKippur #Machzor is Unetana Tokef which (especially this year during #Covid) speaks to the many uncertainties & unknowns of life, but ends off with one bold loud line of clarity, confidence & certitude.

MORE MACHZOR SPECIFIC...

“Answer Us!” This common #Selichot #Poem is like Jeopardy - all reasons why G-d should answer us. Underneath it though: what’s our question?

“Hear Our Voice” in #YomKippur recalls @Verizon’s (now @sprint’s) famous ad: “Can you hear me now?” We’re looking for (spiritual) signal!

Politics aside, #YomKippur Machzor’s “Return us back to You...” may evoke similar language to #MakeAmericaGreatAgain “Renew days of yore!”

“Answered us in past... Answer us now!” #Machzor’s walk thru the centuries, is more than past history. It’s reliving Jewish memory!

“To Him who lives forever” perhaps a richer translation: “To the Life of the Worlds” bcuz ironically: world & forever share a Hebrew root.

One year with many French visitors on #SimchatTorah #Rebbe sung “Ha’Aderet V’Emunah” to #LaMarseillaise - the French national anthem.

The Chassidim didn’t know the French anthem, but the #Rebbe singing it to a prayer poem made all those French guests feel right at home!

But why that poem? Perhaps: French are very nationalistic! French food, French language, French culture... but this poem says >>

>> to whom is the majesty & strength? beauty & splendor? Not to your foods & traditions, your pride & joy, but “To the Life of the Worlds!”

#Psalm150 uses musical instruments to praise G-d: thru tension of a drum, breath blown into a flute, a touch of life’s strings.

Tension can create music, if drawn just tight enough but not too tight. Too much slack doesn’t elicit sound. Drums in #Psalm150

Timing is everything for clashing cymbals, they meet in the middle to make the desired sound - so it is with life’s contrasts. #Psalm150

#Psalm150 is all about praising G-d with instruments. Hey, but what if u can’t play or don’t have an instrument? >>

<< that’s why #Psalm150 ends with: “Every being that has a soul - praise the L-rd!” No instruments or specific talent or ability necessary.

“All my limbs” i.e. everything I’ve got. Go big or go home. Prayer works best when we don’t hold back, when we throw yourself into it 100%.

Every #HighHoliday #Machzor has a bigger bolder font for this one word: The King! It sets the tone, sets the bar: It’s not just about us!

1/3: Rabbi Aharon of Karlin fainted when reaching the word “The King” in #HighHoliday #Machzor. Why? He recalled the Talmud story of >

2/3: Roman general asked R’ Yochanon b. Zakkai: “If I’m King, why didn’t you come earlier!” - R’ Aharon saw this as reflection of us & G-d..

3/3: This story of non-@Chabad Rebbe, is one of the only (if not the only) story printed in the original @chabad #HighHoliday #Machzor.

“Song of Ascents” (#Psalm130) literally = steps. One step at a time, step in right direction, journey of 1000 miles begins w/ single step.

“Out of the depths” (#Psalm130) can be from lowest point, from the pits, or it can mean from depths of one’s soul, from innermost core.

“More than night watchmen awaiting dawn” (#Psalm130) all on work shifts know this feeling, but is also figurative: from darkness to light!

The #Amidah was so good the first time, we’re going to do it all over again! (Reasons for Chazzan’s aloud repetition of silent #Amidah)

Seriously, #Amidah may be repeated but it’s not superfluous. We pray as individuals & as a community, each has its own power & purpose.

1/3: Repetition of #HighHoliday #Amidah in #Machzor has short “Misod” paragraph about leading the congregation based on secret traditions.

2/3: btw: chabad #Machzor doesn’t translate it as secret, perhaps bcuz for @chabad the mystical inner tradition is normal part of life.

3/3: But what’s the secret? How we humans (despite all our limitations) can open up to speak to G!d. This communicative channel of prayer.

LIFE is a very Jewish word, especially around #HighHolidays. Quick Hebrew lesson: #Chaim = life, the root is #Chai, & #Lchaim is TO LIFE!

“suspends earth in empty space” isn’t only a matter of astronomy. It’s about life in limbo, the world in balance, awaiting that one deed.

Another repeated #Machzor word is #Kadosh, usually = holy, after all it’s the High HOLY Days! But #Kadosh also means different/designated.

MLCH = Hebrew root for king. By changing vowels it can be WAS King, IS King, WILL be King. Melech = is, Moloch = was, Yimloch = will be.

Timelessness is a big in Judaism. G-d is timeless & therefore so are His Mitzvot. They span centuries, never out of style.

1st Chazzan paragraph #YomKippur #Shacharit ends off by referring to Jewish people as G-d’s “adopted son”: bonds of family, yet by choice!

G-d’s “cloak is zeal” says #Machzor. Can’t you just feel the swish of #superman’s cape? Never limp or a drag, its alive with alacrity.

“Kochacha Yigdal Na” can be read as a praying for power surge. But its for the power of forbearance: restraint, tolerance, forgiveness.

“Heaven as a Curtain” like partition & concealment. But maybe also as mysterious, drama, theater - all the world is G-d’s stage.

#Machzor says: heavenly chariot wheel rims are “full of eyes.” Journey forward is all about vision. Vision moves us, makes world go round.

One of #YomKippur #Machzor’s longest poems (filled w/ praise for G-d) ends with 2 words: “Vhee Kevodecha” and THAT’s G-d’s greatest glory. >

“Vhee Kvodecha” G-d’s greatest glory is that despite all His heavenly glory, He’s most interested in us, and in our turning to Him.

> Like with parents, even very successful career-wise, greatest glory is pride in one’s children and the connection with them.

And the next #Machzor poem “Al Yisrael” reflects and ends with same theme: G-d’s greatest beauty or glory is our people.

“Lekach” = what you take in or understand (like #Torah or #Honeycake), “Libuv” = heartfelt feeling, sensitivity or perception. Mind & heart.

“Keriah vhaKedusha” is the name of a @Chabad publication during WWII. Roughly translates to “calling it with holiness” or “A holy calling.”

4x “uv’Chayn” #Machzor #Amidah. In @Chabad lingo this word implies: So, Therefore, NU??? What are you going to do about it? The takeaway!

#YomKippur “given to us in love” fasting is not a treat but opportunity for fresh start & clean slate is a real gift.

“You will seek from THERE” The search must be where we lost it, not where light is better. #Teshuvah is from where you are at.

“Renew our days as of old” Judaism blends old & new, interconnected generations & centuries, modern applications of age-old tradition.

“Orech Din” He who arranges the law, is modern Hebrew word for lawyer, but in #HighHoliday #Machzor it = G-d in a famous liturgical poem.

“He opens the gate to those who knock in repentance”. Forget the song itself, does “Knocking on Heaven’s Door” ring a bell?

The mere act of knocking on heaven’s door is already a form of return/repentance, even before anything is said. I want in!

knocking on heavens door is saying we are outside & eager to come in. It says “We are here” before any specific request or #prayer. #Teshuvah

Robbery & Violence? Can all of us confess to that? A) It’s said collectively as a people B) maybe not in literal sense, but in subtle forms.

.@Chabad the opening #AvinuMalkeinu negative line about our sins is drowned out by the positive “We have no King but You!” Typical Chabad!

#AvinuMalkeinu was first said by #RabbiAkiva in the #Talmud as a prayer for rain. How many AvinuMalkeinu’s are there? Only One!

#RabbiAkiva invented the @AvinuMalkeinu formula to relate to G-d on 2 tracks at once: closeness & distance, love & respect, father & king.

This “Elul Audit” story illustrates the dual-power of #AvinuMalkeinu on #RoshHashanah and #YomKippur: <http://www.shabboshouse.org/the-elul-audit/>

#SongoftheDay: we don’t know the tune they used but we know today the exact words the Levites sang in the Temple each day of the week!

#HolyofHolies is the theme of #YomKippur Torah reading. A unique one-time service, once a year, by one person. Day of At-One-Ment.

#FrenchToast & #Teshuvah: Both take a stale no longer desirable past, build onto it, enriching, giving it new life in a transformative way.

A verse in #Torah reading that’s key to #YomKippur’s power: “Before G-d you’re purified.” The words “Before G-d” can mean a few things: >

“Before G-d you’re purified” = before G-d and no one else. #Teshuvah is a personal private process that’s between you & G-d alone.

“Before G-d you’re purified” = one must come before G-d. Like Moses had to step aside & come closer to the Burning Bush. Come closer!

“Before G-d you’re purified” = beyond the Names of G-d, for #YomKippur reveals soul’s inner essence as it connects w/ Divine Essence.

E.T. is mentioned in #YomKippur’s #Torah reading at least phonetically. There too, it refers to that which ought to be elsewhere, out there.

Order of #KohenGadol’s #YomKippur atonement prayers went from personal to family to community. It all must begin within.

In #YomKippur #Haftarah, #Shalom (hello) greeting is first to one from afar, and then to the one who is close. “Shalom LaRachok v’Lakrov”

#Rebbe’s chief of staff Rabbi Hodakov read #YomKippur’s “Solusolu” (make way make way) #Haftarah. Indeed, he paved way for all the #Shluchim.

“All believe!” Do all believe? Chassidus says deep down at the soul-core, everyone connects. But it’s not always that way on the outside.

“Those who knock with repentance” same Hebrew word “Dofek” for knock & pulse. Knock is sign of life. Keep knocking! “AllBelieve” #Machzor

Judaism isn’t communist, but G-d is a great equalizer. “He treats great and small alike” #YomKippur “All Believe” in #Machzor

Each of #KohenGadol’s 8 garments was exquisitely beautiful, deeply symbolic & richly significant from breastplate’s stones to robe’s bells.

Yet when #KohenGadol entered #HolyofHolies on #YomKippur, he didn’t wear the 8 garments; only the simplest white linen clothes.

#YomKippur cuts away at all the sophistication & elegance, the rich layers of meaning - reaches deep within instead for the innermost core.

We’re going to pray here for hours this #YomKippur many #Machzor pages, fancy poetry, but it climaxes with #Shma the most basic: I am Jew!

Why read about sacrifices 2,000 years after destruction of Jerusalem Temple? Connection to history is a secret of Jewish survival >

>more than history, its destiny! And sacrifices continue today, albeit with animal within. A life of meaning is filled with self-sacrifice.

Heads-up. Actually down. We’re going to do something VERY different here that you ONLY see in synagogues on the High Holidays.

All year we do a lot of slight bowing in the #Amidah prayer, but on #RoshHashanah & #YomKippur we do the full bow, down on the floor.

A reminder of Jerusalem Temple & the full bow symbolizes the extent of spiritual surrender #YomKippur evokes, far more than all year round.

Many #YomKippur poems & praises are in Hebrew alphabetical order, the prayer for a good year when #KohenGadol exited, is full of A-Z wishes!

Why #YomKippur #Torah reading about relationships? It's the ultimate earthly expression of holiness. >

> and teaches us that Judaism is not limited to the Temple or synagogue, but Judaism is about the home, the bedroom & our personal lives.

The longest Haftorah of the year, we read the entire book of Jonah at Mincha on the afternoon of #YomKippur. A whale of a tale!

Why Jonah story? can't run away from mission, power of repentance, feel responsible 4 others, don't underestimate people or effect of words.

Jonah and the _____. Everyone will say Whale, but no one associates him with the Kikayon - the temporary shading plant.

But the coming & going of the Kikyaon plant is where G-d teaches Jonah his greatest lesson, and it ends Jonah's story with a question.

Rather than end #YomKippur #Mincha #Haftorah with G-d's rhetorical question to Jonah, we add 3 verses from the prophet Micha: >

The #Micah verses said at #Tashlich on #RoshHashanah: throw our sins into the sea - an appropriate bookend for the #Jonah story.

#Neilah is the closing #YomKippur prayer. Think closing of a window, of an opportunity, of last chances.

Or think of #YomKippur #Neilah as "finalizing CD" which allows the burned music to be played on external devices, such as a car's CD-player.

#Neilah allows #YomKippur spirituality to be "played" on non-#YomKippur "devices" transferring the holiness to all year round.

#Musaf may be #YomKippur's longest prayer but #Neilah is its climax & crescendo. The ark remains open through whole #Neilah prayer.

My favorite #Neilah story: "Most Memorable Neilah" is in Dr. Brawer's "Eyes that See" book.

#BaalShemTov's Siddur has 1-letter change in graceaftermeals that thanks G-d not only for filled-up blessings but for overflowing blessings!

"In the shadow of G-d's hand" sometimes we may see/feel G-d guiding & directing, or sometimes we only see its shadow (indirect effect).

"Gates of tears never close" See Volf Kitzes #BaalShemTov story with the lost #Shofar meditations.

At #Neilah's final #Shema, the mystical Shaloh says we envision total sacrifice for Judaism, baring our soul as our core identity.

Ark opens & closes all #YomKippur, revealing layers as day goes on. Wide open @ #Neilah, all layers off, up to #Shema climax: I am a Jew!