

מחזור קורן לראש השנה • מנהג אנגליה  
The Koren Rosh HaShana Maḥzor • Minhag Anglia





THE LEE FAMILY EDITION

מחזור קורן לדאש השנה  
THE KOREN ROSH HASHANA MAḤZOR



TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY BY

Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks שליט"א

MINHAG ANGLIA

Dayan Ivan Binstock שליט"א



KOREN PUBLISHERS JERUSALEM

The Lee Family Edition  
The Koren Rosh HaShana Maḥzor,  
First UK Hebrew/English Edition, 2011

Koren Publishers Jerusalem Ltd.  
POB 4044, Jerusalem 91040, ISRAEL  
POB 8531, New Milford, CT 06776, USA

[www.korenpub.com](http://www.korenpub.com)

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Koren Siddur Font and text design © 1981, 2010 Koren Publishers Jerusalem Ltd.  
English translation and commentary © 2006, 2010 Jonathan Sacks

The English translation and commentary in this edition are based on the English translation and commentary first published in Great Britain in 2006 in the Authorised Daily Prayer Book of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth: New Translation and Commentary by Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, (Fourth Edition, Compilation © United Synagogue) by Collins, a division of HarperCollins Publishers, London.

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UK Standard Size, Hardcover, ISBN 978-965-301-341-4

RHUK18

אֲשֶׁרִי אִישׁ שְׁלֵא יִשְׁכַּחֲךָ, וּבֶן אָדָם יִתְאַמֵּץ בְּךָ

*Happy the one who does not forget You,  
the child of man who takes courage in You.*

ROSH HASHANA AT HOME was always a special time. Reverence and a sense of occasion combined with festive warmth and an appreciation of the unique characteristics of the holiday to create an unforgettable atmosphere. So many treasured fragments linger in the memory to sustain us at our time of loss.

We are proud to dedicate this Mahzor in tribute to our beloved parents ע"ה, and their legacy. It is our hope that the numerous good deeds and meritorious conduct displayed throughout their exemplary lives will allow them to represent us as worthy advocates in ensuring our prayers find favour during these holiest of days.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Arnold & Helen Lee

אהרן בן ישראל הלל הלוי

וקילא בת אברהם אבא ע"ה

*Dedicated by*

Alan & Marsha Lee

Edward & Agnes Lee

Ilana, Victor, Julia, Emanuelle & Simone



THE LATE ARNOLD AND HELEN LEE, of blessed memory, were outstanding role models of Jewish leadership and life. They gave generously of their time and money to institutions of Jewish learning in Israel and the Diaspora. They were passionate in their attachment to Torah, *avoda* and *gemilut hasadim*, and took care to educate their children to live by these ideals. I counted it a privilege to know them, and to dedicate this work to their memory.

Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks

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## PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

*Let us voice the power of this day's sanctity – it is awesome, terrible.*

On Rosh HaShana, we stand before God in judgement. We fear His *Din*, and crave His *Raḥamim*. We are both humbled and strengthened by the belief that our very future depends on our *tefilla*.

It is with this sense of humility, hope and the awesomeness of the task, that we offer *The Koren Rosh HaShana Maḥzor*. We have created this Maḥzor to mitigate the trepidation with which one enters the High Holy Days, and to highlight the transformative potential they hold. We hope that the Maḥzor helps those seeking to understand their place in the world, and their place before God, and serves as a steady guide through the encounter with God's majesty on Rosh HaShana.

A project of this scope would have been virtually impossible without the partnership of the Lee family, in memory of whose parents, Helen and Arnold Lee נ"ע, it is dedicated. Leaders of the British Jewish community for generations, the Lee family's passion for Jewish education and Jewish continuity come together in their support for the creation of this Maḥzor. On behalf of the scholars, editors and designers of this volume, we thank you; on behalf of the users and readers of this Maḥzor, we are forever in your debt.

We could not have embarked on this project without the moral leadership and intellectual spark of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks. Rabbi Sacks provides an invaluable guide to the liturgy through his remarkable translation, introduction and commentary. His work not only clarifies the text and explains the teachings of our sages, but uniquely and seamlessly weaves profound concepts of Judaism into the reality of contemporary life. It was our distinct privilege to work with Rabbi Sacks to create a Maḥzor that we believe appropriately mirrors the complexity and richness of life itself.

Dayan Ivan Binstock's immense scholarship and understanding are exemplified in this restoration and modern evolution of the centuries-old tradition that is *Minhag Anglia*. This distinct and important *minhag* has been revitalised every century, from the Isaac Levi edition of 1807 and the Routledge Maḥzor of 1906. We are honoured that the Koren Maḥzor of 2011 joins this distinguished tradition. We thank the Dayan for his historic and remarkable achievement.

◀ We only

We only hope that Rabbi Sacks' and Dayan Binstock's contributions are matched by the scholarship, design and typography that have been hallmarks of Koren Publishers Jerusalem for more than fifty years. Raphaël Freeman led Koren's small but highly professional team of scholars, editors and artists. Rabbi David Fuchs supervised the textual aspects of the work. Rachel Meghnagi edited the English texts. Efrat Gross edited the Hebrew texts, and these were ably proofread by Barukh Brener and Naor Kahalani. Jessica Sacks supplied the superb translation to *Mishnayot Rosh HaShana* and Rabbi David Fuchs elucidated the *Mishnayot* commentary. Rabbi Eli Clark contributed the informative and useful Halakha Guide, and we are grateful to Jessica Sacks, Binyamin Shalom and Adina Luber for their translation of the *piyutim*.

We pray that this Maḥzor, like all our publications, extends the vision of Koren's founder, Eliyahu Koren, to a new generation to further *Avodat HaShem* for Jews everywhere.

Matthew Miller, Publisher  
Jerusalem, 5771 (2011)

## FOREWORD

The translation, commentary and introduction to this new Koren Maḥzor by Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks fully reflect his view of the community he leads. He has satisfied the need for a Maḥzor that can be used by people of all backgrounds, knowledge and practice. He has produced a Maḥzor that combines his legendary erudition with the broadest accessibility. The Chief Rabbi is a communicator without equal. His books, broadcasts, webcasts, lectures and *shiurim* attract an enormous worldwide following. In his dissemination of ideas and interpretations, the Chief Rabbi has always adhered to the need to speak to all. This Maḥzor follows in that fine tradition.

The United Synagogue comprises a family of communities each with its own distinct character. Their common feature is that they are open to all, regardless of background or practice. We are proud of our position as the world's largest inclusive orthodox community. At the heart of this is the principle of *kol Yisrael arevim zeh bazeh* – the unconditional mutual responsibility of all within the community. Our synagogues, our schools and our communal institutions treat all on equal terms.

Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur attract the broadest cross section of the community to the synagogue. The regular synagogue-goers sit beside those who come just three times a year. Some come for the full duration of the services and some come just for specific parts of the service. Some have a deep knowledge and understanding of the prayers and the structure of the services. Others have little understanding of the liturgy and may have poor Hebrew reading skills. All however seek to gain from the synagogue experience. Is it possible for us to contemplate a Maḥzor that responds to the needs of this diverse group? That was the challenge confronting Chief Rabbi Sacks. He has risen to this admirably. There is much here for everyone.

Over recent years we have seen the enormous growth in our communities of different styles of service and this is especially apparent on Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur. The challenge is to provide traditional services with a *Hazan* and choir alongside more informal *minyán* styles, services for youth, explanatory services, and children's services. This Maḥzor not only provides the individual with the translation and commentary

◀ needed

needed to navigate through the prayers, it also gives tools and resources to those organising the different styles of service.

I would like to express our thanks to and appreciation of Dayan Ivan Binstock who gave unstinting expert assistance to the Chief Rabbi in the preparation of this Koren Maḥzor. He points out in his introduction that in the century since the first publication of the Routledge Maḥzor, the increasingly diverse communities within the United Synagogue have given rise to differences in practice within *Minhag Anglia*. This Maḥzor recognises this change and provides a level of choice for communities which adopt *Minhag Anglia*.

I would also like to convey our gratitude to Koren Publishers Jerusalem for the publication of this beautiful Maḥzor. The famous Koren font and the aesthetic layout combined with a careful alignment of the Hebrew text with the English translation will, I sincerely hope, attract wide adoption across our community and beyond.

Dr. Simon Hochhauser  
President of The United Synagogue  
London, 5771 (2011)

## PREFACE TO THE UK EDITION

For many years, the *Routledge Maḥzor* was the mainstay of the Anglo-Jewish community. First published in 1906, under the sanction of Chief Rabbi Dr. Herman Adler it has been reprinted many times. However, unlike the *Singers Prayer Book* which underwent numerous revisions and reflected the changes taking place in the community, the *Routledge Maḥzor* was never updated, apart from changes to the Prayer for the Monarch and the State of Israel. In recent years, its place has become increasingly superseded by other maḥzorim with clearer text and more accessible English translation. In many places this has led to an erosion of *Minhag Anglia* where the particular features of the Anglo-Jewish tradition are being lost.

The *Routledge Maḥzor* had a great impact on Anglo-Jewry, replacing maḥzorim like that of Isaac Levi of 1807. It was based on the maḥzor of Wolf Heidenheim (Rodelheim, 1800) but also reflected changes in liturgy that had taken place in the nineteenth century. Thus the 1847 regulation of Chief Rabbi Nathan Adler, that the Ark should be kept open for the entire repetition of the Amida, was incorporated as well as Chief Rabbi Herman Adler's permission in 1892 to omit the first *Yekum Purkan*. Nevertheless, some congregations did not follow the Routledge completely. There was never a lectern edition of the maḥzor, and many *Ḥazanim* prayed from the *Kol Bo* lectern maḥzor or their own personal maḥzor. Thus, prayers like Psalm 130 before *Barekhu*, or *Hineni* before Musaf, absent from the Routledge, were nevertheless said in a number of communities. Many a *Ba'al Toke'a* would recite the verses beginning from *Min HaMetzar* before blowing the shofar even though it was not in the Routledge. In recent years the divergence from the Routledge has increased as other maḥzorim have become popular.

In this Koren edition we have retained the essential features of *Minhag Anglia* as reflected in the Routledge and the *Singers Prayer Book*, whilst incorporating the changes that have taken place in many communities.

Some of these features are indicated below:

The weekday Amida reflects the *nusah* in the *Singers Prayer Book*. In *Korbanot*, we indicate which parts are said according to our custom (based on Tosafot, *Sanhedrin* 24a, s.v. *belula*, and *Shulḥan Arukh* 48:1).

◀ Although

Although the *Mishna Berura* (582:16) cites the practice that the first addition to the Amida should be *Zokhrenu leḥayyim*, not *Zokhrenu laḥayyim*, the latter usage is well attested in England and other communities. (Its correctness is justified in an extended essay by Rabbi Shabbetai Sofer in his siddur [*Hakdama Peratit* 29].)

The number of *piyutim* recited has varied from community to community. In this edition we reflect the ones from the Routledge that are most commonly said. Certain *piyutim*, like *Hayom Te'amtzenu*, had a *nusah* that was particular to England and had been known at least since the beginning of the nineteenth century; this version is retained in this edition.

However some customs have lapsed. For example, the old custom was to sound only twelve notes of the shofar in the repetition of the Amida, a practice that is retained in only a few communities in the world. Nowadays, sounding one hundred notes on Rosh HaShana has become very widespread, making for thirty notes in the repetition of the Amida. In most communities, the Ark is now opened and closed repeatedly during the repetition of the Amida instead of being left open for the duration as had been directed by Chief Rabbi Nathan Adler.

After sounding the shofar during the Amida we say, “*Areshet sefateinu ye'erav lefanekha* – May our mouths' words rise beautiful before You.” It is our hope and prayer that this exceptional Maḥzor will renew our pride in our heritage, deepen our appreciation of our prayers, and inspire us to produce those words of beauty that will be acceptable on High.

Dayan Ivan Binstock  
London, 5771 (2011)

## INTRODUCTION

The ten days that begin on Rosh HaShana and culminate in Yom Kippur are the holy of holies of Jewish time. The atmosphere in the synagogue is intense. You can almost touch the Divine Presence. Isaiah said: “Seek God where He is to be found, call on Him when He is close” (Is. 55:6). The rabbis wrestled with this verse. What could it mean? God is the God of everywhere and all time. He is always to be found, always close. The verse seemed to make no sense at all.

This was their reply: “These are the Ten Days of Repentance between Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur” – meaning, God is always close to us, but we are not always close to Him. He is always to be found, but we do not always seek Him out. To sense the closeness of God needs some special effort on our part. To reach out to the Infinite in finite space, to meet the Eternal in the midst of time, to sense what ultimately lies beyond the senses, requires a focus far beyond the ordinary.

It needs a drama of holiness, enacted in our holiest place, the synagogue, at the holiest of times, *Yamim Nora'im*, the Days of Awe. To begin it needs a sound – the shofar – so piercing and strange that it wakes us out of our everyday consciousness into an awareness of being present at something vast and momentous. We need to come close to God for God to feel close to us. That is what happens on the Ten Days of Repentance, and it begins on Rosh HaShana.

It is as if the world has become a courtroom. God Himself is the Judge. The shofar announces that the court is in session, and we are on trial, giving an account of our lives. Properly entered into, this is a potentially life-changing experience. It forces us to ask the most fateful questions we will ever ask: Who am I? Why am I here? How shall I live? How have I lived until now? How have I used God’s greatest gift: time? Who have I wronged, and how can I put it right? Where have I failed, and how shall I overcome my failures? What is broken in my life and needs mending? What chapter will I write in the book of life? The unexamined life, a philosopher said, is not worth living. No one who has genuinely experienced Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur lives an unexamined life.

These are days of reflection and introspection when we stand in the conscious presence of Infinity, knowing how short and vulnerable life

◀ really

really is, and how little time we have here on earth. This can be, and should be, a life-changing experience. Unfortunately, it not always is. The prayers are long. Some of them, especially the *piyutim*, the liturgical poems with their elaborate acrostics and obscure wordplays, are hard to understand. Others use imagery that can seem remote. The central image of Rosh HaShana is of God as King enthroned in the seat of judgement. That image would once have been self-evident, but there are fewer kings today than there once were, and even in the monarchies that remain, the role of royalty is often more symbolic than judicial. The prayers we say on Rosh HaShana span more than thirty centuries, and some need decoding if they are to speak to us today.

Yet Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur have retained an undiminished hold on the Jewish imagination. They remain days on which even Jews estranged from Judaism for much of the year come to synagogue, and the world's longest courtroom drama continues: the extended argument between God and His people about the fate of justice and the justice of fate that has been running since the day when Abraham first called God "Judge of all the earth," and that led Albert Einstein to speak about that "almost fanatical love of justice" that made him thank his stars that he was born a Jew.

No people has believed as lucidly and long as have Jews, that life has a purpose; that this world is an arena of justice and human dignity; that we are, each of us, free and responsible, capable of shaping our lives in accordance with our highest ideals. We are here for a reason. We were created in love and forgiveness by the God of love and forgiveness who asks us to love and forgive. However many times we may have failed to live up to our aspirations, God always gives us the chance and the power to begin again. On Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur, the holiest days of a holy people, God summons us to greatness.

I want in this introduction, to tell the story of Rosh HaShana and what it might mean for us.

### *The Mystery*

No sooner do we open the Torah, seeking to understand the significance of the day, than we are plunged into mystery. Only twice does the Torah

◀ touch



touch on the subject, and in neither case does it provide much information:

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the Israelite people thus: In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe complete rest, a sacred occasion commemorated with loud blasts [*zikhron terua*]. (Lev. 23:23–24)

On the first day of the seventh month you shall hold a sacred assembly. You shall do no laborious work, and you shall mark a day of the blowing of the shofar [*yom terua*]. (Num. 29:1)

Other than details of the sacrifices to be offered, that is all. There is no explanation of what the day represents, or what the sound – *terua* – signifies. Nor does the Torah specify what instrument is to be used. It might be a horn. But equally it might refer to the silver trumpets the Israelites were commanded to make to summon the people (Num. 10:1–10). The central motifs of the other festivals, the unleavened bread and bitter herbs of Pesah, the booth of Sukkot, the affliction (fasting) of Yom Kippur, all have symbolic value. We know what they mean and how they connect with the mood of the day. But the Torah does not tell us what the sound of *terua* symbolises. Is it the sound of celebration, of warning, of fear or tears? We do not know (Rabbeinu Bahye, *Kad HaKemah, Rosh HaShana* [2]).

Nor does the Torah use the phrase *Rosh HaShana*, the beginning or “head” of the year, in this context or any other. The only time it appears in Tanakh, the Hebrew Bible as a whole, it refers to Yom Kippur: “In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year [*berosh hashana*], on the tenth of the month, in the fourteenth year after the fall of the city” (Ezek. 40:1). In fact the Torah seems to make it clear that Rosh HaShana is *not* the beginning of the year. It is the first day, not of the first, but the seventh month. The first month is Nisan.

How then do we arrive at the festival as we know it today?

In the earliest stages of an embryo, when a foetus is still no more than a small bundle of cells, already it contains the genome, the long string of DNA, from which the child and eventually the adult will emerge. The genetic structure that will shape the person it becomes is there from the beginning. So it is with Judaism. “Bible, Mishna, Talmud and Aggada,

◀ even

even what a senior disciple is destined to teach in the presence of his master, was already stated to Moses at Sinai” (Talmud Yerushalmi, *Pe’ah* 2:4). The evolution of Rosh HaShana was already prefigured at the outset, but to see how it developed we have to decipher the clues.

### *Creation’s Anniversary*

The first thing we notice is that it is “the first day of the seventh month.” The number seven, especially when applied to time, always signifies *holiness*. The first thing declared holy in the Torah is the seventh day, Shabbat (Gen. 2:1–3). The seventh or “sabbatical” year is likewise holy. There is to be no work in the fields. The land is to enjoy rest. Debts are released. A similar provision applies to the fiftieth or Jubilee year (at the end of seven seven-year cycles) when, in addition, most ancestral land returned to its original owners. The seventh month fits this pattern. It is to the year what Shabbat is to the week, the sabbatical to a cycle of years, and the Jubilee to an era. It is holy time.

What is specific about the holiness of the seventh in a sequence of time is that it is marked by a cessation of work. It marks a period during which we cease creating and remember that we are creations. We stop making and remember that we are made. We, the universe and time itself are the work of a hand greater than merely human, greater in fact than anything we can conceive. On the seventh, be it day, month or year, we focus our attention on God the Creator of all. Rosh HaShana is a festival of Creation.

No sooner have we said this than we see that in Judaism there is a dual structure of time, just as there is a unique duality in Judaism as a whole. On the one hand God is the *Creator*, who made heaven and earth and all that lives. But God is also the *Redeemer* who rescued His people from slavery in Egypt and led them through the wilderness to the Promised Land. He is the *Revealer* who appeared to the people at Mount Sinai, made a covenant with them, gave them laws, and from time to time sent them, through the prophets, His word.

God’s creation is universal. God’s redemption and revelation are particular to the people of Israel who, by their history and way of life, testify to His existence and involvement with the world. The two cycles of time in Judaism represent this duality. One cycle – Pesah, Shavuot and

◀ Sukkot

Sukkot – is about redemption and revelation, about the way God acts in history through the shaping events of the Jewish people. The other – the seventh day, seventh month and seventh year – is about creation, God in relation to the cosmos as a whole.

This is the first insight into the meaning of the day. Rosh HaShana is a celebration of the universe as God's work. The sages called it the anniversary of creation. This is the theme of the middle section of the Musaf Amida, *Zikhronot*, "Remembrances." "You remember all of creation, and all things that were formed ... for this day is the opening of all Your works, a remembrance of the very first day" (page 532). It is echoed in the prayer *Hayom Harat Olam*, "This day is the birth of the world" (page 616).

Because it is about creation and humanity, the prayers of Rosh HaShana have a universalism not shared by Pesah, Shavuot and Sukkot. The central section of the Amida on those days begins with the words, "You have chosen us from among all peoples," a declaration of Jewish chosenness. By contrast, in the Amida on Rosh HaShana we say, "And so place the fear of You ... over all that You have made," an expression of complete universality. Pesah, Shavuot and Sukkot are about what it is to be a Jew. Rosh HaShana is about what it is to be human.

### *The Kingship of God*

The next hint is given in the biblical names for the festival, *Yom Terua* and *Zikhron Terua*, "the day of *terua*" and "a commemoration or remembrance of *terua*." What is *terua*? In all other biblical contexts, it refers to a sound, usually produced by a wind instrument, though sometimes it may mean a shout or cry on the part of a crowd.

What instrument is the Torah referring to? The silver trumpets used by the Israelites in the wilderness were used to sound both a *tekia* and a *terua*, a *tekia* to summon the people and a *terua* to signal that it was time to begin a further journey (Num. 10:1–7). So the *terua* of Rosh HaShana might refer to a trumpet. The sages ruled out this possibility for a simple reason.

Rosh HaShana turns out not to be the only time that a *terua* was sounded in the seventh month. It was also sounded on the tenth of the month, Yom Kippur, in the Jubilee year, when slaves went free and ancestral land returned to its original owners. The Jubilee was the occasion

◀ of the

of the famous words, taken directly from the biblical text, written on the Liberty Bell of America, “Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof” (Lev. 25:10). The previous verse (25:9) states specifically that one should sound the *terua* with a shofar:

Then you shall sound the horn loud [*shofar terua*]; in the seventh month on the tenth day of the month, on the Day of Atonement, you shall have the horn sounded throughout the land.

Indeed the Hebrew word for Jubilee, *yovel*, also means a ram’s horn (Ex. 19:13). It became a simple inference to conclude that this applied to the *terua* of the first day of the seventh month as well.

What was special about the shofar? In several places in Tanakh it is the sound of battle (see for example, Joshua 6; I Samuel 4; Jeremiah 4:19, 49:2). It could also be the sound of celebration. When King David brought the Ark into Jerusalem, he danced and the people rejoiced with “*terua* and the sound of the shofar” (II Samuel 6:15). But in a number of places, especially the historical books, the shofar was sounded at the coronation of a king. So we find at the proclamation of Solomon as king:

Tzaddok the priest took the horn of oil from the sacred tent and anointed Solomon. Then they sounded the shofar and all the people shouted, “Long live King Solomon!” (I Kings 1:39)

Likewise when Jehu was appointed king:

They quickly took their cloaks and spread them under him on the bare steps. Then they blew the shofar and shouted, “Jehu is King!” (II Kings 9:13)

When Absalom sought to have himself proclaimed king in the lifetime of his father, David, we read:

Then Absalom sent secret messengers throughout the tribes of Israel to say, “As soon as you hear the sound of the shofar, then say, ‘Absalom is King in Hebron!’” (II Samuel 15:10)

The book of Psalms associates the shofar not with a human king but with the declaration of God as King. A key text is Psalm 47, said in many congregations before the shofar blowing on Rosh HaShana:

◀ God

God has been raised up in sound;  
 raised, the LORD, in the voice of the shofar [ ... ]  
 For God is King over all the earth... (Ps. 47:6, 8)

Psalm 98 makes a clear connection between God's kingship and his judgement:

With trumpets and the sound of the shofar,  
 shout for joy before the LORD, the King. [ ... ]  
 For He is coming to judge the earth.  
 He judges the world with righteousness  
 and all nations with equity. (Psalm 98:6, 9)

We have now arrived at the second great dimension of Rosh HaShana. It is the day on which we celebrate the kingship of God. This has left its mark throughout the Rosh HaShana prayers. The key word is *Melekh*, "King." The Leader begins in the morning service with a dramatic rendition of *HaMelekh* (page 341). The third blessing of the Amida, that normally ends with the words "the holy God," on Rosh HaShana and throughout the Ten Days of Repentance, becomes "the holy King." In particular, Musaf on Rosh HaShana begins with an entire section dedicated to *malkhiyot*, verses relating to divine kingship. Rosh HaShana is the day we celebrate God not just as Creator of the world, but its Ruler also.

### *The Coronation*

The concept of divine kingship sounds simple, even routine, but it is not. It made ancient Israel unique. Eventually it had an impact on the development of freedom in the West. It was a Jewish scholar, Philo, who lived in Alexandria in the first century, who realised how radical it was. Philo was writing about Judaism for a Greek-speaking audience, and when it came to the political structure of Jewry he found that the Greek language had no word for it. The Greeks had words for most things. They were the world's first systematic thinkers, and in Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Politics* they surveyed every known type of political structure – tyranny, monarchy, oligarchy, aristocracy and democracy. But there was no word for the Jewish system, and Philo was forced to invent one to explain it.

The word he chose was *theocracy* – rule by God alone. This was the

◀ thought

thought expressed by Gideon, the man who led the Israelites to success in their battle against the Midianites. When the people sought to make him king, he replied: "I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The LORD will rule over you" (Judges 8:23).

Eventually the Israelites did appoint a king, and in the course of time they developed other systems of governance: judges, elders, patriarchs, exilarchs, city councils and, in the modern state of Israel, democracy. But the ultimate Ruler of the Jewish people was God alone. This meant that no human ruler had absolute authority. Prophets could criticise kings. People could disobey an immoral order. The sovereignty of God meant that there are moral limits to the use of power. Right is sovereign over might. These were, and remain, revolutionary ideas.

They were also responsible for the single most astonishing phenomenon of Jewish history, the fact that Jews retained their identity as a nation for two thousand years in exile, scattered across the world. Wherever they were, God remained their King. They remained His people. Rarely was this better expressed than in the great prayer, *Aleinu* (page 87), originally written for Rosh HaShana as a preface to the verses about God's kingship:

He is our God; there is no other.  
Truly He is our King; there is none else.

There is an integral connection between kingship and creation, and it can be stated simply. God made the universe. Therefore God owns the universe. Therefore God is its ultimate Sovereign since He can specify the terms and conditions under which we exist within the universe. This applies to all humanity.

Hence the second paragraph of *Aleinu*, with its vision and hope of a time "when all humanity will call on Your name," and "all the world's inhabitants will realise and know that to You every knee must bow." The God of revelation and redemption is the God of Israel. The God of creation is the God of all humankind. But they are the same God. Hence the vision of Zechariah with which *Aleinu* ends, when "the LORD shall be King over all the earth; on that day the LORD shall be One and His name One" (Zech. 14:9).

Underlying this is perhaps the most remarkable idea of all. "There is no King without a people" (*Kad HaKemah, Rosh HaShana* [2]). The fact

◀ that

that the people of Israel accepted God as their King, and His covenant as their constitution, means that they bear witness to Him by their very existence and way of life. That is what the psalm means when it says “You are the Holy One, enthroned on the praises of Israel” (Ps. 22:4). The praises of Israel are the visible symbol of God’s majesty. That confers extraordinary dignity on us.

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, doyen of Jewish thinkers in the twentieth century, used to explain this by telling the story of his first Hebrew teacher, a Chabad Hasid who made an indelible impression on him as a child by telling him that Rosh HaShana was God’s coronation. “And who puts the crown on His head? We do.” He spoke about his memories of praying as a child among the Hasidim on the first night of Rosh HaShana:

I can feel the unique atmosphere which enveloped these Hasidim as they recited the prayers by which they proclaimed Him their King. The older Hasidim termed this night the “Coronation Night” as they crowned Him as their King. These poor and downtrodden Jews, who suffered so much during their daily existence, were able to experience the enthroning of the Almighty and the true meaning of the Kingship prayers of the Rosh HaShana liturgy.\*

The shofar on Rosh HaShana is our way of participating in God’s coronation.

### *Exile and Return*

The anniversary of creation; a kingship renewal ceremony – there Rosh HaShana might have remained had it not been for one overwhelming historical fact: the Babylonian exile. It is one thing to celebrate the harmony of the created universe when you are at home with the universe, another when you are reminded daily that you are not at home, when you are strangers in a strange land. It is one thing to celebrate divine sovereignty when you enjoy national sovereignty, another when you have lost it and are subject to another power. The destruction of the Temple and the Babylonian exile were a trauma for the Jewish people, physically and spiritually, and we have an indelible record of how the people felt: “By

\* Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff, *The Rav*, Vol. 2 (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing House), p. 171.

the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept as we remembered Zion... How can we sing the Lord's song on foreign soil?" (Ps. 137:1–4).

Judaism and the Jewish people might have disappeared there and then, as had happened to the ten tribes of the northern kingdom, Israel, a century and a half before. There was one difference. The religious identity of the southern kingdom, Judah, was strong. The prophets, from Moses to Jeremiah, had spoken of exile and return. Once before, in the period between Joseph and Moses, the people had experienced exile and return. So defeat and displacement were not final. There was hope. It was contained in one word: *teshuva*.

There is no precise English translation of *teshuva*, which means both "return": homecoming, a physical act – and "repentance": remorse, a change of heart and deed, a spiritual act. The reason the Hebrew word means both is because, for the Torah, sin leads to exile. Adam and Eve, after they had sinned, were exiled from the Garden of Eden. Cain, after he had murdered his brother, was punished by being sentenced to eternal exile. (Gen. 4:12). The idea of justice in the Torah is based on the principle of *mida keneged mida*, "measure for measure." A sin, *het*, is an act in the wrong place. The result, *galut*, is that the agent finds himself in the wrong place. Sin disturbs the moral harmony of the universe.

But God forgives. That one fact rescues life from tragedy. The sages said that God created repentance before He created humanity. (Nedarim 39b). What they meant was that God, in creating humanity and endowing the human person with freewill, knew that we would make mistakes. We are not angels. We stumble, we sin. We are dust of the earth and to dust we will one day return. Without repentance and forgiveness, the human condition would be unbearable. Therefore God, creating humanity, created the possibility of repentance, meaning that when we acknowledge our failings, we are forgiven. Exile is not an immutable fate. Returning to God, we find Him returning to us. We can restore the moral harmony of the universe.

It follows that on a national scale, *teshuva* means two things that become one: a spiritual return to God and a physical return to the land. This is how Moses put it in the key text of *teshuva betzibbur*, collective national repentance:

When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come on you and you take them to heart wherever the LORD your God disperses

◀ you



you among the nations, and when you and your children return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where He scattered you. Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the LORD your God will gather you and bring you back. (Deut. 30:1–4)

That was the theory and the hope. The question was: would it actually happen that way? It did, in the return of the Babylonian exiles to the land of Israel, and it was solemnised in one of the shaping events of Jewish history. It took place in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah on Rosh HaShana itself.

### *The Great Renewal*

Jews, not all but many, had returned from the Babylonian exile. The ruined Temple had been rebuilt. But the nation was in disarray. Religious knowledge was slight. Many had intermarried with local populations. They could not even speak Hebrew. “Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod or the language of one of the other peoples, and did not know how to speak the language of Judah” (Neh. 13:24).

On the first day of the seventh month, Ezra the scribe and Nehemiah the governor convened a national assembly at the Water Gate in Jerusalem. Ezra, standing on a wooden platform, publicly read from the Torah while Levites were stationed throughout the crowd to translate and explain what was being said. As they began to realise how far they had drifted from the divine mission, the people started weeping:

And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law... Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher of the Law, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, “This day is holy to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep.” For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. And he [Nehemiah] said, “Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our LORD. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your

◀ strength

strength.” The Levites calmed all the people, saying, “Be still, for this is a holy day. Do not grieve.” Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them. (Neh. 8:3; 8:9–12)

That Rosh HaShana (which incidentally extended for two days: the people returned the next day to continue the reading) became the start of a period of national rededication, a covenant renewal ceremony. It was a turning point in Jewish history, and it is not too much to say that we owe to it the survival of Jews and Judaism.

What Ezra and Nehemiah had understood was that religious identity was at the heart of Jewish survival. The Israelites had undergone almost a controlled experiment into what enables a nation to endure. Following the split of the nation into two after the death of Solomon, the northern kingdom had been conquered by the Assyrians. Transported, its people had, for the most part, acculturated into the general population and disappeared, to become known to history as the Lost Ten Tribes. The southern kingdom of Judah, conquered and forced into exile by the Babylonians, had sustained their identity. Inspired by people like Ezekiel, they studied Torah. They prayed. They listened to the prophets, who told them that their covenant with God was still intact. They stayed Jews. Indeed the very fact that we are today called Jews (*Yehudim*, i.e. members of the southern kingdom of Judah) is testimony to this phenomenon.

Ezra and Nehemiah, seeing the sad state of Jewish identity among the Jews of Israel, realised that a major programme of religious revival was called for, beginning with the public reading of the Torah that Rosh HaShana, the first ever national adult education seminar. The strength of the Jewish nation, they saw more clearly than any of their contemporaries, lay not just in armies and physical defence but in identity and spiritual defence. Ezra was a new type in history: a “scribe,” the teacher as hero.

Slowly over the course of the next five centuries, new institutions emerged, most significantly the synagogue and the house of study, which would allow Jewry to survive even military and political defeat. By the first and second century of the common era, when Jews suffered two catastrophes at the hands of the Romans, they had become a people whose

◀ heroes

heroes were teachers, whose citadels were schools, and whose passion was study and the life of the mind. That transformation was responsible for a phenomenon that has no parallel, a people capable of surviving two thousand years of exile, their identity intact. It began with that gathering on the first of Tishrei, when Ezra recalled a people to its ancient mission, and the people wept as they became aware of how far they had drifted from the Torah, their constitution as a nation.

Thus was born the association of the day with *teshuva*, national return. It was Nahmanides in the thirteenth century who most clearly understood that the return of Jews from Babylon and their renewal of the covenant was the historical realisation of Moses' prophecy about return, which was itself, for Nahmanides, the source of the command of *teshuva*. (commentary on Deut. 30:2).

### *Individual Responsibility*

The Babylonian exile had another effect as well. As a nation in their own land, the Jewish people experienced their fate collectively. War and peace, poverty and prosperity, famine or fruitfulness, these are things a nation experiences as a nation. The Torah is intimately concerned with the fate and dignity of individuals, but it was first and foremost a covenant with the nation as a whole.

Things are different in exile. The nation is no longer in charge of its destiny. It experiences fate primarily as a group of individuals. It remains a nation, but an injured nation, a nation not at home in the world. It was then that an idea present in Judaism from the beginning, took on a new significance. The key figure who brought this message to the exiles was a priest and prophet who was with them in Babylon: Ezekiel.

Ezekiel reminded the people of the power and possibility of individual responsibility. In so doing, he gave expression to the idea of *teshuva* in a way that has remained salient from his day to now. The first principle he taught the people had already been emphasised by his elder contemporary, Jeremiah. We are each responsible for our own sins, and no one else's:

The one who sins is the one who will die. The child will not share the guilt of the parent, nor will the parent share the guilt of the child.

◀ The righteousness

The righteousness of the righteous will be credited to them, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against them. (Ezek. 18:20)

Then he gives precise articulation to the idea of *teshuva*:

But if a wicked person turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all My decrees and does what is just and right, that person will surely live; they will not die. None of the offences they have committed will be remembered against them. Because of the righteous things they have done, they will live. Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign LORD. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live? (Ezek. 18:21–23)

That is it. No Temple, no sacrifice, no sin offering, no ritual of atonement, but simply the act of turning – *teshuva* – understood as an abandonment of sin and a change of behaviour to embrace the holy and the good. These and other verses from Ezekiel became key texts in the rabbinic understanding of *teshuva*.

Ezekiel relates this to the shofar:

The word of the LORD came to me: “Son of man, speak to your people and say to them: ‘When I bring the sword against a land, and the people of the land choose one of their men and make him their watchman, and he sees the sword coming against the land and blows the shofar to warn the people, then if anyone hears the shofar but does not heed the warning and the sword comes and takes their life, their blood will be on their own head... (Ezek. 33:1–4)

The task of the prophet is to sound the shofar as a warning to the people that their sins are about to be punished and that they must now do *teshuva* if they are to avert the coming catastrophe. Ezekiel is not the only one to speak of the shofar in these terms. As we read in Isaiah: “Raise your voice like a shofar. Declare to My people their rebellion and to the descendants of Jacob their sins” (Is. 58:1). Hosea (8:1), Joel (2:1, 15) and Amos (3:6) all understood the shofar as the sound of warning of imminent war, itself a sign that the nation had sinned. But Ezekiel, more lucidly than anyone else, set out the doctrine of *teshuva* in the way we understand

◀ it today

it today, as something done by individuals as well as a nation, as a change of mind and deed, initiated by the sound of the shofar.

\*

So the basic shape of Rosh HaShana emerged from potentiality to actuality. What was originally a festival of divine creation and sovereignty, accompanied by the shofar as a clarion proclaiming the King, became also – through the prophets, the Babylonian exile, and the return – a day of national and individual rededication, a remembrance of sins and a turning with new commitment to the future.

The rabbis fleshed out this sketch with detail and colour. First was the name Rosh HaShana itself. The sages knew of four New Years: the first of Nisan as the New Year for kings and festivals, the first of Elul for the tithing of cattle, the first or fifteenth of Shevat for trees, and the first of Tishrei for “years, and Sabbatical years and Jubilees” (Mishna, *Rosh HaShana* 1:1; see pages 125–127). However it was the first of Tishrei that became known as the New Year per se.

The Mishna states that on Rosh HaShana all creatures pass before God (ibid. 1:2). How they do so depends on the precise text of the Mishna, which exists in two variants: *kivnei Maron* or *kivenumeron*. *Numeron* is thought to be derived from a Greek word meaning “a troop of soldiers.” Accordingly the Talmud reads this as meaning “like the troops of the house of David.” The alternative reading, “like the children of Maron,” is given two interpretations in the Talmud. One is “like a flock of sheep” passing one by one through a wicket so that they can be counted by the shepherd, or “like the ascent of Beit Maron,” a narrow pass through which only one person can go at a time.

The first reading, “like the troops of the house of David,” sees the primary meaning of Rosh HaShana as a festival of divine kingship. God is King, the shofar proclaims His presence, and we, His retinue, gather to pay Him homage. The second and third see it as a day on which God judges us, one at a time. The biblical phrase about the land of Israel, “the eyes of the LORD your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end” (Deut. 11:12) was understood to imply that “from the beginning of the year, sentence is passed as to what the end shall be” (*Rosh HaShana* 8a).

◀ The rabbis

The rabbis also articulated the concept of a book of life. Moses, pleading for the people after the making of the golden calf, says, “But now, please forgive their sin, but if not, then blot me out of the book You have written” (Ex. 32:32). In Psalms 69:29 David says about the wicked, “May they be blotted out of the book of life and not be listed with the righteous.”

The book of Esther contains a famous episode in which, “That night the king could not sleep; so he ordered the book of records [*sefer hazikhronot*] ... to be brought in and read to him” (Esther 6:1). There were times when the king read a record of events that had happened and passed verdict, whether for punishment or reward.

Rabbi Yoḥanan taught that on Rosh HaShana three books lie open in heaven: one for the completely wicked, one for the completely righteous, and one for the intermediate. The completely righteous are immediately inscribed in the book of life; the thoroughly wicked are immediately inscribed in the book of death; the verdict on the intermediate is suspended from New Year till the Day of Atonement. If they deserve well, they are inscribed in the book of life; if they do not deserve well, they are inscribed in the book of death (*Rosh HaShana* 16b). It became a particularly beautiful custom to wish people, on the first night of the year, that they be written and sealed immediately for life, implying that those around us are completely righteous. Those who judge others favourably are, we believe, themselves judged favourably.

Both the Babylonian Talmud and the Jerusalem Talmud specify that, whatever the decree, there are certain acts that have the power to avert or annul it, or at least mitigate its harshness. The Babylonian Talmud lists four: charity, prayer, change of name and change of deed – some add a fifth: change of place (*Rosh HaShana* 16b). The Jerusalem Talmud lists three: prayer, charity and *teshuva* (Talmud Yerushalmi, *Ta’anit* 2:1), deriving all three from God’s answer to Solomon’s prayer at the inauguration of the Temple:

If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray [= prayer] and seek My face [= charity] and turn from their wicked ways [= *teshuva*], then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and heal their land. (11 Chronicles 7:14)

◀ All of

All of these motifs – God’s kingship, His sitting in the throne of judgement, opening the book in which our deeds and signatures are written, the sound of the shofar that makes even the angels tremble, the shepherd counting his flock, the verdict written on Rosh HaShana and sealed on Yom Kippur, and the power of repentance, prayer and charity to avert the evil decree – are brought together in the liturgical poem *Untaneh Tokef*, one of the great prayers and the most vivid image of Rosh HaShana as we might imagine it in the heavenly court.

We have travelled a long way from the starting point of Rosh HaShana as the anniversary of creation, yet there is a fine rabbinic midrash that brings us back to our starting point. According to Rabbi Eliezer, creation began on 25 Elul, making the first of Tishrei the day on which humanity was created. That day, Adam and Eve were made, and that day they sinned. Yet God forgave them, or at least mitigated their punishment. Initially He had said, “You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die” (Gen. 2:17). Yet Adam and Eve ate but did not die. Evidently they were forgiven. The midrash continues:

God said to Adam: This will be a sign to your children. As you stood in judgement before Me this day and were pardoned, so will your children in the future stand in judgement before Me and will emerge from My presence pardoned. When will that be? *In the seventh month, on the first day of the month.* (*Vayikra Raba* 29:1)

On Rosh HaShana we are like Adam and Eve, the quintessential representatives of the human condition. We may have sinned. We may have lost the paradise of innocence. We all do. But we are alive. We live in the radiance of God and the generosity of his compassion. In the simplest yet most moving of prayers, Rabbi Akiva turned to God and said, *Avinu Malkenu*, “Our Father, our King.” (*Ta’anit* 25a) God is our King, Sovereign of the universe, Author of our laws, the Judge who administers justice. But He is also our Father and we are His children, and can a father withhold compassion from his children? Time and again He forgives us and never loses patience. Human parents may lose faith in a child but God never does: “Were my father and my mother to forsake me, the LORD would take me in” (Ps. 27:10).

◀ *Past, Present*

### *Past, Present and Future*

All of these ideas have left their mark on the Maḥzor and appear in our prayers, especially in the central section of the Musaf Amida. On all other festivals, there is one central blessing, *Kedushat HaYom*, “the special sanctity of the day.” Uniquely Rosh HaShana has three central blessings, *Malkhiyot*, Kingship; *Zikhronot*, Remembrances; and *Shofarot*, verses about the Shofar. These correspond to the sentence (not found in Tanakh, but pieced together from biblical phrases), “The Lord is King, the Lord was King, the Lord will be King, forever and all time.”

*Malkhiyot* refers to the present. *Zikhronot* is about memories of the past. *Shofarot* is about the future. The shofar is always a signal of something about to come: the imminent arrival of the king, a warning of impending danger, or the sound of a trial about to begin.

*Teshuva* sensitises us to the full significance of time. There are those who live purely in the present, but their lives have no overarching meaning. They react rather than act. They travel with no ultimate destination. They are “like chaff blown by the wind” (Ps. 1:4). To be a Jew is to live poised between past and future: the past and future of our individual lives, of our ancient but still young people, and of humanity as a whole.

*Teshuva* tells us that our past does not determine our future. We can change. We can act differently next time than last. If anything, our future determines our past. Our determination to grow as human beings – our commitment to a more faithful, sensitive, decent life in the year to come – gives us the courage and honesty to face our past and admit its shortcomings. Our *teshuva* and God’s forgiveness together mean that we are not prisoners of the past, held captive by it. In Judaism sin is what we do, not what we are. Therefore we remain intact, able to acknowledge our failures and then move on.

My predecessor Lord Jakobovits made a profound comment about Rosh HaShana. Given that it is the start of the Ten Days of Repentance, surprisingly it contains no explicit confessions, no penitential prayers. These form the text and texture of Yom Kippur but not Rosh HaShana. Why so? Because, he suggested, *teshuva* is driven by two different mindsets: commitment to the future and remorse about the past. Rosh HaShana is about the first, Yom Kippur about the second. *Rosh* means “head” and the default position of the head is looking forward not back.

◀ The placing



The placing of Rosh HaShana before Yom Kippur means that our determination to act better in the future is prior to our feelings of remorse about the past. To which we might add that this is why we blow shofar on Rosh HaShana. The shofar, too, turns our attention to what lies ahead, not behind.

### *What Rosh Hashana Says To Us*

What then does Rosh HaShana say to us? Of what is it a reminder? How can it transform our lives?

The genius of Judaism was to take eternal truths and translate them into time, into lived experiences. Other cultures have constructed philosophies and theologies, elaborate systems of abstract thought. Judaism prefers truth lived to truth merely thought. Ancient Greece produced the logical imagination. Judaism produced the chronological imagination, truth transposed into the calendar. Rosh HaShana, the anniversary of the creation of humanity, invites us to live and feel the human condition in graphic ways.

The first thing it tells us is that life is short. However much life expectancy has risen, we will not, in one lifetime, be able to achieve everything we might wish to achieve. *Untaneh Tokef* tells the poetry of mortality with haunting pathos:

Man is founded in dust and ends in dust.  
 He lays down his soul to bring home bread.  
 He is like a broken shard,  
 like grass dried up,  
 like a faded flower,  
 like a fleeting shadow,  
 like a passing cloud,  
 like a breath of wind,  
 like whirling dust,  
 like a dream that slips away.

This life is all we have. How shall we use it well? We know that we will not finish the task, but neither are we free to stand aside from it. That is the first truth.

The second is: life itself, each day, every breath we take, is the gift of God:

◀ Remember

Remember us for life,  
O King who delights in life,  
and write us in the book of life –  
for Your sake, O God of life.

Life is not something we may take for granted. If we do, we will fail to celebrate it. God gives us one gift above all others, said Maimonides: life itself, beside which everything else is secondary. Other religions have sought God in heaven, or the afterlife, the distant past or the distant future. Here there is suffering, there reward; here chaos, there order; here pain, there balm; here poverty, there plenty. Judaism has relentlessly sought God in the here-and-now of life on earth. Yes, we believe in life after death, but it is in life before death that we truly find human greatness.

Third, we are free. Judaism is the religion of the free human being freely responding to the God of freedom. We are not in the grip of sin. We are not determined by economic forces or psychological drives or genetically encoded impulses that we are powerless to resist. The very fact that we can do *teshuva*, that we can act differently tomorrow than we did yesterday, tells us we are free. Philosophers have found this idea difficult. So have scientists. But Judaism insists on it, and our ancestors proved it by defying every law of history, surviving against the odds, refusing to accept defeat.

Fourth, life is meaningful. We are not mere accidents of matter, generated by a universe that came into being for no reason and will one day, for no reason, cease to be. We are here because a loving God brought the universe, and life, and us, into existence – a God who knows our fears, hears our prayers, believes in us more than we believe in ourselves, who forgives us when we fail, lifts us when we fall, and gives us the strength to overcome despair. The historian Paul Johnson once wrote: “No people has ever insisted more firmly than the Jews that history has a purpose and humanity a destiny.” He concluded: “The Jews, therefore, stand right at the centre of the perennial attempt to give human life the dignity of a purpose.”\* That too is one of the truths of Rosh HaShana.

Fifth, life is not easy. Judaism does not see the world through rose-tinted lenses. The sufferings of our ancestors haunt our prayers. The world

\* Paul Johnson, *A History of the Jews* (London: Phoenix, 2004), Prologue, p. 2.

we live in is not the world as it ought to be. That is why, despite every temptation, Judaism has never been able to say the messianic age has come, even though we await it daily. But we are not bereft of hope because we are not alone. When Jews went into exile the *Shekhina*, the Divine Presence, went with them. God is always there, “close to all who call on Him in truth.” (Ps. 145:18) He may hide His face, but He is there. He may be silent, but He is listening to us, hearing us and healing us in ways we may not understand at the time but which become clear in retrospect.

Sixth, life may be hard, but it can still be sweet, the way the *halla* and the apple are on Rosh HaShana when we dip them in honey. Jews have never needed wealth to be rich, or power to be strong. To be a Jew is to live for simple things: the love between husband and wife, the sacred bond between parents and children, the gift of community where we help others and others help us and where we learn that joy is doubled and grief halved by being shared. To be a Jew is to give, whether in the form of *tzedaka* or *gemilut hasadim*, acts of loving kindness. It is to learn and never stop seeking, to pray and never stop thanking, to do *teshuva* and never stop growing. In this lies the secret of joy. Throughout history there have been hedonistic cultures that worship pleasure, and ascetic cultures that deny it, but Judaism has a different approach altogether: to sanctify pleasure by making it part of the worship of God. Life is sweet when touched by the divine.

Seventh, our life is the single greatest work of art we will ever make. Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, in one of his earliest works, spoke about *Ish HaHalakha*, the halakhic personality and its longing to create, to make something new, original. God too longs for us to create and thereby become His partner in the work of renewal. “The most fundamental principle of all is that man must create himself.” That is what *teshuva* is, an act of making ourselves anew. On Rosh HaShana we step back from our life like an artist stepping back from his canvas, seeing what needs changing for the painting to be complete.

Eighth, we are what we are because of those who came before us. Our lives are not disconnected particles. We are each a letter in God’s book of life. But single letters, though they are the vehicles of meaning, have no meaning when they stand alone. To have meaning they must be joined to other letters to make words, sentences, paragraphs, a story, and to be

◀ a Jew

a Jew is to be part of the strangest, oldest, most unexpected and counter-intuitive story there has ever been: the story of a tiny people, never large and often homeless, who nonetheless outlived the greatest empires the world has ever known: the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, the Greeks and Romans, the medieval empires of Christianity and Islam, all the way to the Third Reich and the Soviet Union. Each in turn thought itself immortal. Each has gone. The Jewish people still lives.

So on Rosh HaShana we remember and ask God to remember those who came before us: Abraham and Isaac, Sarah, Hannah and Rachel, the Israelites of Moses' day, and the Jews of every generation, each of whom left some living legacy in the prayers we say or the melodies in which we sing them. And in one of the most moving verses of the middle section of Musaf we recall the great words said by God through the prophet Jeremiah: "I remember of you the kindness of your youth, your love when you were a bride; how you walked after Me in the desert, through a land not sown" (Jer. 2:2). Our ancestors may have sinned, but they never stopped following God though the way was hard and the destination distant. We do not start with nothing. We have inherited wealth, not material but spiritual. We are heirs to our ancestors' greatness.

Ninth, we are heirs to another kind of greatness too, that of the Torah itself and its high demands, its strenuous ideals, its panoply of mitzvot, its intellectual and existential challenges. Judaism asks great things of us and by doing so makes us great. We walk as tall as the ideals for which we live, and those of the Torah are very high indeed. We are, said Moses, God's children. (Deut. 14:1) We are called on, said Isaiah, to be His witnesses, His ambassadors on earth. (Is. 43:10) Time and again Jews did things thought impossible. They battled against might in the name of right. They fought against slavery. They showed that it was possible to be a nation without a land, to have influence without power, to be branded the world's pariahs yet not lose self respect. They believed with unshakable conviction that they would one day return to their land, and though the hope seemed absurd, it happened. Their kingdom may have been bounded by a nutshell yet Jews counted themselves kings of infinite space. Judaism sets the bar high, and though we may fall short time and again, Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur allow us to begin anew, forgiven, cleansed, undaunted, ready for the next challenge, the next year.

◀ And finally

And finally comes the sound of the shofar, piercing our defences, a wordless cry in a religion of words, a sound produced by breath as if to tell us that that is all life is – a mere breath – yet breath is nothing less than the spirit of God within us: “Then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being” (Gen. 2:7). We are dust of the earth but within us is the breath of God.

And whether the shofar is our cry to God or God’s cry to us, somehow in that *tekia, shevarim, terua* – the call, the sob, the wail – is all the pathos of the Divine–human encounter as God asks us to take His gift, life itself, and make of it something holy, by so acting as to honour God and His image on earth, humankind. For we defeat death, not by living forever but by living by values that live forever; by doing deeds and creating blessings that will live on after us, and by attaching ourselves in the midst of time to God who lives beyond time, “the King – the living, everlasting God.”

The Hebrew verb *lehitpalel*, to pray, more precisely means “to judge oneself.” On Rosh HaShana we stand in judgement. We know what it is to be known. And though we know the worst about ourselves, God sees the best; and when we open ourselves to Him, He gives us the strength to become what we truly are.

Those who fully enter the spirit of Rosh HaShana emerge into the new year charged, energised, focussed, renewed, knowing that to be a Jew is to live life in the presence of God, to sanctify life for the sake of God, and to enhance the lives of others – for where we bring blessings into other lives, there God lives.

Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks  
London, 5771 (2011)

## GUIDE TO THE READER

This new edition of the Koren Maḥzor continues the Koren tradition of making the language of prayer more accessible, thus enhancing the prayer experience.

One of the unique features of the Maḥzor is the use of typesetting to break up a prayer phrase-by-phrase – rather than using a block paragraph format – so that the reader will naturally pause at the correct places. No commas appear in the Hebrew text at the end of lines, but in the English translation, where linguistic clarity requires, we have retained the use of commas at the end of lines. Unlike other Hebrew/English maḥzorim, the Hebrew text is on the left-hand page and the English on the right. This arrangement preserves the distinctive “fanning out” effect of the Koren text and the beauty of the Koren layout.

### PRONUNCIATION AIDS:

- ▶ Most Hebrew words are pronounced with a stress on the last syllable. For words where the stress is placed on the penultimate syllable, a short vertical line (the *meteg*) appears next to the vowel of that syllable, so readers know how to pronounce the word correctly [מִלְךָ]. However, this system is not used in the text of the Shema and the Torah readings because their pronunciation is indicated by the *ta'amei hamikra*.
- ▶ We have differentiated between the *kamatz katan* (the “oh” sound) and the *kamatz gadol* (the “ah” sound in Sephardi pronunciation) by using a larger symbol for the *kamatz katan*. See *Hokhma* [חֻכְמָה]. Similarly, we have differentiated between the *sh'va na* (a pronounced vowel) and the *sh'va nah* (an unpronounced vowel) by using a larger symbol for the *sh'va na*. See *Nafshekha* [נַפְשְׁךָ]. We have followed the rules of grammar for the placement of the *kamatz katan* and *sh'va na*.
- ▶ As is traditional in the Koren Tanakh, the furtive *pataḥ* is placed slightly to the right, rather than centred underneath the letter, to indicate to the reader that the vowel is pronounced before the consonant rather than after; for example, פִּיתָח is pronounced *pote'ah* and not *poteḥa*.

◀ A small

A small arrow (◄) indicates the suggested starting point for the *Shaliah Tzibbur*. However, where the local custom differs, the *Shaliah Tzibbur* should certainly follow that custom.

We have tried to provide concise instructions for prayer within the text. Expanded explanations and *halakhot* are provided in the Halakha Guide at the end of the Maḥzor.

For those who are using the Maḥzor in Israel, changes in the prayers have been indicated throughout the text. In transliterating Hebrew, we have followed modern Israeli pronunciation. We have transliterated the Hebrew פ with a *h* and the כ with a *kh*. We have also compromised on strict consistency in favour of clarity and ease of use. For example, although we have generally omitted the *h* at the end of words like “Amida,” we have retained it in the word “Torah,” because that is the common spelling. In addition, the *sh’va na* is sometimes represented by an apostrophe and sometimes with an *e* (for example, *Barekhi, sh’va*). We have also used an apostrophe to separate syllables where the correct pronunciation is not readily apparent, as in *mo’ed*.

There are two Koren typefaces: one used exclusively for Tanakh, and one for the Maḥzor. Sections of the Maḥzor that reproduce complete paragraphs from the Tanakh, such as much of *Pesukei DeZimra*, have been set in the Tanakh typeface. However, where verses from the Tanakh are quoted within the prayers, we have in general used the Siddur typeface to maintain a consistent look and feel. Nevertheless all verses from Tanakh conclude with the *sof pasuk* (:), the double diamond that is the “period” of the Tanakh. This differs from the colon (:) which is used where appropriate in prayers that are not quotations from Tanakh.

We hope that these innovations will make praying with the Maḥzor a more profound and uplifting experience.

Raphaël Freeman, Editor  
Jerusalem, 5771 (2011)





מחזור קורן לראש השנה  
THE KOREN ROSH HASHANA MAḤZOR

## ANNULMENT OF VOWS

*On the morning before Rosh HaShana, one should annul vows  
before three men, who sit as judges, saying:*

שמעו נא Listen, please, my masters (expert judges): every vow or oath or prohibition or restriction or ban that I have vowed or sworn, whether awake or in a dream, or that I swore with one of the holy names that may not be erased, or by the holy Tetragrammaton of God, blessed be He, or any naziriteship that I accepted on myself, even a naziriteship like that of Samson, or any prohibition, even against enjoyment, whether I forbade it to myself or others, by any expression of prohibition, whether using the language of prohibition or restriction or ban, or any positive commitment, even to perform a [non-obligatory] commandment, that I undertook by way of a vow or voluntary undertaking or oath or naziriteship or any other such expression, whether it was done by handshake or vow or voluntary undertaking or commandment-mandated custom I have customarily practised, or any utterance that I have verbalised, or any non-obligatory commandment or good practice or conduct I have vowed and resolved in my heart to do, and have done three times without specifying that it does not have the force of a vow, whether it relates to myself or others, both those known to me and those I have already forgotten – regarding all of them, I hereby express my retroactive regret, and ask and seek their annulment from you, my eminences. For I fear that I may stumble and be trapped, Heaven forbid, in the sin of vows, oaths, naziriteships, bans, prohibitions, restrictions and agreements. I do not regret, Heaven forbid, the performance of the good deeds I have done. I regret, rather, having accepted them on myself in the language of vow, oath, naziriteship, prohibition, ban, restriction, agreement or acceptance of the heart.

Therefore I request annulment for them all.

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Judaism is a religion that stresses the sanctity of language, especially when used to accept or impose obligations on oneself. Deep significance attaches to vows and the other verbal undertakings: “If a man makes a vow to God, or makes an oath to obligate himself, he must not break his word. He must do everything he said” (Num. 30:3). In general, it is preferable not to invest voluntary commitments with the sacred status of a vow. “If you refrain from making a vow, you will not be guilty” (Deut. 23:23). “It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfil it” (Eccl. 5:4).

## התרת נדרים

On the morning before ראש השנה, one should annul vows  
before three men, who sit as judges, saying:

שְׁמַעוּ נָא רִבּוֹתַי (דַּיָּנִים מִמַּחֲסִים), כָּל נָדָר אֲו שְׁבוּעָה אֲו אֶסֶר אֲו קוֹנָם  
אֲו חֵרֶם שְׁנִדְרָתִי אֲו נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי בְּהַקִּיץ אֲו בַחֲלוּם, אֲו נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי בְּשִׁמּוֹת  
הַקְּדוּשִׁים שְׂאִינָם נִמְחָקִים וּבִשְׁם הוֹי"ה בְּרוּךְ הוּא, וְכָל מִינֵי נִזְיוֹת  
שֶׁקִּבַּלְתִּי עָלַי וְאֶפְלוּ נִזְיוֹת שְׁמִשׁוֹן, וְכָל שׁוּם אֶסֶר וְאֶפְלוּ אֶסֶר הַנָּאָה  
שְׂאֶסְרָתִי עָלַי אֲו עַל אַחֲרִים בְּכָל לָשׁוֹן שֶׁל אֶסֶר בֵּין בְּלָשׁוֹן אֶסֶר אֲו  
חֵרֶם אֲו קוֹנָם, וְכָל שׁוּם קִבְּלָה אֶפְלוּ שֶׁל מִצְוָה שֶׁקִּבַּלְתִּי עָלַי בֵּין בְּלָשׁוֹן  
נָדָר בֵּין בְּלָשׁוֹן נִדְבָה בֵּין בְּלָשׁוֹן שְׁבוּעָה בֵּין בְּלָשׁוֹן נִזְיוֹת בֵּין בְּכָל  
לָשׁוֹן, וְגַם הִנְעֵשֶׂה בְּתַקִּיעַת כֶּף. בֵּין כָּל נָדָר וּבֵין כָּל נִדְבָה וּבֵין שׁוּם מִנְהָג  
שֶׁל מִצְוָה שְׁנִהַגְתִּי אֶת עֲצָמִי, וְכָל מוֹצֵא שְׁפָתַי שִׁיֵּצֵא מִפִּי אֲו שְׁנִדְרָתִי  
וְגַמְרָתִי בְּלִבִּי לַעֲשׂוֹת שׁוּם מִצְוָה מִהַמְצוּת אֲו אִיזוּ הִנְהַגָה טוֹבָה אֲו  
אִיזָה דָבָר טוֹב שְׁנִהַגְתִּי שְׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמִים, וְלֹא הִתְנַתִּי שִׁיְהֵא בְּלִי נָדָר. הֵן  
דָּבָר שֶׁעָשִׂיתִי, הֵן עַל עֲצָמִי הֵן עַל אַחֲרִים, הֵן אוֹתֵן הַיְדוּעִים לִי הֵן אוֹתֵן  
שֶׁבָר שֶׁכַּחֲתִי. בְּכֹלֵהוֹן אֶתְחַרְטָנָא בְּהוֹן מַעְקָרָא, וְשׁוֹאֵל וּמִבְקֵשׁ אֲנִי  
מִמַּעַלְתְּכֶם הַתָּרָה עֲלֵיהֶם, כִּי יֵרָאֵתִי פֶן אֶפְשָׁל וְנִלְפַדְתִּי, חֵס וְשָׁלוֹם,  
בְּעוֹן נְדָרִים וּשְׁבוּעוֹת וְנִזְיוֹת וְחֵרָמוֹת וְאֶסְרִין וְקוֹנָמוֹת וְהִסְפָּמוֹת. וְאִין  
אֲנִי תוֹהָא, חֵס וְשָׁלוֹם, עַל קִיּוֹם הַמַּעֲשִׂים הַטּוֹבִים הָהֵם שֶׁעָשִׂיתִי, וְקִ  
אֲנִי מִתְחַרֵּט עַל קִבְּלַת הָעֲנִינִים בְּלָשׁוֹן נָדָר אֲו שְׁבוּעָה אֲו נִזְיוֹת אֲו  
אֶסֶר אֲו חֵרֶם אֲו קוֹנָם אֲו הִסְפָּמָה אֲו קִבְּלָה בְּלִב, וּמִתְחַרֵּט אֲנִי עַל זֶה  
שֶׁלֹּא אֶמְרָתִי הִנְנִי עוֹשֶׂה דָבָר זֶה בְּלִי נָדָר וּשְׁבוּעָה וְנִזְיוֹת וְחֵרֶם וְאֶסֶר  
וְקוֹנָם וְקִבְּלָה בְּלִב.

לְכֵן אֲנִי שׁוֹאֵל הַתָּרָה בְּכֹלֵהוֹן.

## ANNULMENT OF VOWS

To avoid entering the High Holy Days under the pressure of unfulfilled undertakings to God, our custom is to annul or “release” vows on the morning before Rosh HaShana. A related, though more solemn, ceremony takes place immediately prior to Yom Kippur in the form of *Kol Nidrei*.

I regret all these things I have mentioned, whether they related to monetary matters, or to the body or to the soul.

In relation to them all, I regret the language of vow, oath, naziriteship, prohibition, ban, penalty, and acceptance of the heart.

To be sure, according to the law, one who regrets and seeks annulment must specify the vow [from which he seeks release]. But please know, my masters, that it is impossible to specify them, for they are many. I do not seek release from vows that cannot be annulled. Therefore, may it be in your eyes as if I had specified them.

*The judges say the following three times:*

May all be permitted to you. May all be forgiven you. May all be allowed to you. There is now no vow, oath, naziriteship, ban, prohibition, penalty, ostracism, excommunication, or curse. There is now pardon, forgiveness and atonement. And just as the earthly court has granted permission, so may the heavenly court grant permission.

*The one seeking annulment of vows says:*

Behold I make a formal declaration before you that I cancel from now onward all vows and all oaths, naziriteships, prohibitions, penalties, bans, agreements and acceptances of the heart that I may accept upon myself, whether awake or in a dream, except a vow to fast that I undertake at the time of the afternoon prayer. If I forget the conditions of this declaration and make a vow from this day onward, as of now I retroactively regret them and declare them to be null and void, without effect or validity, and they shall have no force whatsoever. Regarding them all, I regret them from now and for ever.

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The basis of release is regret: had one known what one knows now, one would not have undertaken the vow. The release is performed by three adult men sitting as a court, and its effect is retroactive: it is as if the vow had never been made. The entire process emphasises the solemnity of verbal commitments. We must be true to our word and never lightly promise to do what we may not be able to fulfil.

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik explained that the annulment of vows is similar to the process of repentance itself. We express *harata*, remorse, for our sins. We would not have committed them had we fully understood what the consequences would be, and had we been reflective rather than impulsive. Thus repentance has the power, as does the annulment of vows, to undo the past, at least insofar as sins between us and God.

אֲנִי מִתְחַרֵּט עַל כָּל הַנּוֹכַח, בֵּין אִם הָיוּ הַמַּעֲשִׂים מִדְּבָרִים הַנּוֹגְעִים בְּמִמּוֹן, בֵּין מִהַדְּבָרִים הַנּוֹגְעִים בְּגוּף, בֵּין מִהַדְּבָרִים הַנּוֹגְעִים אֶל הַנְּשֻׁמָּה.

בְּכֻלָּהוֹן אֲנִי מִתְחַרֵּט עַל לְשׁוֹן נָדָר וְשִׁבוּעָה וְנִזְרוּת וְאִסּוּר וְחֵטֶם וְקוֹנָם וְקַבְּלָה בְּלֵב.

וְהִנֵּה מֵצַד הַדִּין הַמִּתְחַרֵּט וְהַמְבַקֵּשׁ הַתְּרָה צָרִיךְ לִפְרֹט הַנָּדָר, אֲךָ דְּעוּ נָא רַבּוֹתַי, כִּי אֵי אֶפְשָׁר לִפְרֹטֶם, כִּי רַבִּים הֵם. וְאִין אֲנִי מְבַקֵּשׁ הַתְּרָה עַל אוֹתָם הַנְּדָרִים שְׂאִין לְהַתִּיר אוֹתָם, עַל כֵּן יִהְיוּ נָא בְּעֵינֵיכֶם כְּאִלוֹ הָיִיתִי פּוֹרְטֶם.

*The judges say the following three times:*

הַכֹּל יִהְיוּ מִתְרִים לָךְ, הַכֹּל מְחוּלִים לָךְ, הַכֹּל שְׂרוּיִים לָךְ. אִין כָּאן לֹא נָדָר וְלֹא שְׁבוּעָה וְלֹא נִזְרוּת וְלֹא חֵטֶם וְלֹא אִסּוּר וְלֹא קוֹנָם וְלֹא נְדוּי וְלֹא שְׂמֵתָא וְלֹא אָרוּר. אֲבָל יֵשׁ כָּאן מְחִילָה וְסְלִיחָה וְכִפּוּרָה. וְכִשֵּׁם שְׂמֵתִירִים בְּבֵית דִּין שֶׁל מֵטָה, כֵּךְ יִהְיוּ מִתְרִים מִבֵּית דִּין שֶׁל מַעֲלָה.

*The one seeking annulment of vows says:*

הָרִי אֲנִי מוֹסֵר מוֹדְעָה לְפָנֵיכֶם, וְאֲנִי מְבַטֵּל מִכָּאן וְלַהֲבֵא כָּל הַנְּדָרִים וְכָל שְׁבוּעוֹת וְנִזְרוֹת וְאִסּוּרִין וְקוֹנָמוֹת וְחֵרְמוֹת וְהַסְּפָמוֹת וְקַבְּלָה בְּלֵב שְׂאִקְבֵּל עָלַי בְּעֲצָמֵי, הֵן בְּהַקִּיץ הֵן בְּחֵלוֹם, חוּץ מִנְדְרֵי תַעֲנִית בְּשַׁעַת מִנְחָה. וּבָאֵם אֶשְׁכַּח לְתַנְאֵי מוֹדְעָה הַזֹּאת וְאֲדוֹר מֵהַיּוֹם עוֹד, מַעֲתָה אֲנִי מִתְחַרֵּט עֲלֵיהֶם וּמִתְנָה עֲלֵיהֶם שִׁיְהִיוּ בְּלֵן בְּטֵלִין וּמְבַטְלִין, לֹא שְׂרִירִין וְלֹא קִימִין, וְלֹא יִהוֹן חֵלִין כָּלֵל וְכָלֵל. בְּכֻלָּן אֶתְחַרְטֵנָּא בְּהוֹן מַעֲתָה וְעַד עוֹלָם.

The undertakings involved here relate to vows made to God in respect of behaviour not categorically demanded or forbidden by Jewish law. The declaration covers a range of such commitments. A *neder* is a vow forbidding something to oneself. An *isar* is a more general category of self-imposed prohibition. A *shevua* is an oath relating to an action rather than an object. It is a promise to do, or not do, a certain act. A *herem* renders an object forbidden by designating it as sacred property. A *konam* designates it as if it were a sacrifice. *Nezirut*, the acceptance, usually for a period of thirty days, of the status of a nazirite (Num. 6:1–21), involves abstaining from wine or grapes, cutting one's hair, or contact with a corpse.

## Prozbul

*On the last day of a Shemitta year, all debts which one Jew owes another are annulled. One who wishes to collect his debts nonetheless must give a court of three judges a prozbul – a transfer of the debts to the court – after which he might collect the debts as the court’s representative. This form, and other variations, can be found on the Koren website. See law 4.*

*After the creditor says the declaration marked by quotation marks, the judges sign the following form, and give it to the creditor:*

We three were sitting as a Beit Din, and (name) son of (father’s name) came before us and said:

“As this year is the seventh year, and I am owed money, in debts that are documented or orally agreed upon, by individuals and/or by companies, I hereby present this Prozbul and transfer every debt owed me to you, the judges before whom I make my declaration, and thus authorise you to exact payment of every debt I am owed. Henceforth you will be my executors and may exact repayment in my name. If you do not exact repayment, then I myself, having presented this Prozbul, may henceforth exact repayment of every debt that is owed me at this time, from any debtor, at any time that I choose.”

This being in order we, the Beit Din undersigned – having seen that this person has presented this Prozbul in accordance with the procedure laid out by Hillel and the sages – decree that the seventh year will not cancel the debts owed him, and that he will thus be entitled to exact their repayment at any time he chooses. We undersign this on the (insert date) day of the month of Elul in the year (insert Hebrew year), here in (insert location).

Signed: (signature of judge)

Signed: (signature of judge)

Signed: (signature of judge)

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ing that they might be unable to reclaim their money. This was in direct contravention of the Torah (see Deut. 15:9). Seeing that the poor were suffering, Hillel devised the prozbul, a legal agreement by which the lender transfers his loan to the Beit Din, thus circumscribing the release of debts (Mishna, *Gittin* 34b). A prozbul is usually written on the last day of a sabbatical year.

## פרוזבול

On the last day of a שמיטה year, all debts which one Jew owes another are annulled. One who wishes to collect his debts nonetheless must give a court of three judges a פרוזבול – a transfer of the debts to the court – after which he might collect the debts as the court's representative. This form, and other variations, can be found on the Koren website. See law 4.

After the creditor says the declaration marked by quotation marks, the judges sign the following form, and give it to the creditor:

בְּמוֹתֵב תִּלְתָּא בֵּי דִינָא כַּחְדָּא הוֹינָא, וּבָא לְפָנֵינוּ (פלוני בן פלוני)  
וְאָמַר לָנוּ:

”הֵן שָׁנָה זוֹ הִיא שְׁנַת הַשְּׁבִיעִית, וַיֵּשׁ לִי חוּבוֹת בְּשֹׁטֵר וּבְעַל  
פֶּה עַל אֵיזָה אַנְשִׁים וְ/אוֹ חֲבֵרוֹת, וְהִרֵנִי מוֹסֵר בְּפִינְכֶם פְּרוּזְבוּל  
זֶה וְכָל חוֹב שְׂיִישׁ לִי לָכֶם, הַדִּינִים שֶׁבְּפִינְהֶם אֲנִי מַצְהִיר, וְהִרֵנִי  
מְרִשָּׁה אֶתְכֶם לְגִבּוֹת כָּל חוֹב שְׂיִישׁ לִי, וּמַעֲתָה הָיוּ אֶתְם  
דִּינִים וּגְבוּ אוֹתוֹ בְּשִׁבְלִי; וְאִם לֹא תִגְבּוּהוּ אֶתְם, מַעֲתָה כִּיּוֹן  
שֶׁמְסִרְתִּי פְּרוּזְבוּל זֶה, אֶגְבֶּה אֲנִי כָּל חוֹב שְׂיִישׁ לִי עַד הַיּוֹם אֲצַל  
כָּל אָדָם כָּל זְמַן שְׁאָרְצָה.”

וְאֲנִי, בֵּית הַדִּין הַחֲתוּמִּים מִטָּה, כִּיּוֹן שֶׁרָאִינוּ דְּבָרָיו נְכוּנִים, וְהוֹאִיל  
וּמְסֹר לְפָנֵינוּ דְּבָרֵי פְּרוּזְבוּל כְּתֻקְנַת הַלֵּל וְחֻז״ל, קִבְּעֵנוּ שְׁלֵא תִשְׁמַט  
שְׁבִיעִית חוּבוֹתָיו וַיּוֹכֵל לְגִבּוֹתֶם כָּל יַעַת שְׂרִירְצָה. וּבְאֵנוּ עַל הַחֲתוּמִּים,  
יּוֹם (insert day of month) לְחֹדֶשׁ אֱלוּל שְׁנַת (insert year) פֶּה (insert location).

נֶאֱמַר: (signature of judge)

נֶאֱמַר: (signature of judge)

נֶאֱמַר: (signature of judge)

### PROZBUL

The Torah (Deut. 15:2) prescribes that all debts be cancelled in the seventh year. In the late Second Temple period, however, Hillel noted that the wealthy were refusing to give loans to the poor as the seventh year approached, know-

### EIRUV TEHUMIN

*On Shabbat and Yom Tov it is forbidden to walk more than 2000 cubits (about 3000 feet) beyond the boundary (tehum) of the town where you live or are staying when the day begins.*

*By placing food sufficient for two meals, before nightfall, at a point within 2000 cubits from the town limits, you confer on that place the status of a dwelling for the next day, and are then permitted to walk 2000 cubits from there.*

**ברוך** Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the Universe,  
who has made us holy through His commandments,  
and has commanded us about the mitzva of Eiruv.

By this Eiruv may we be permitted to walk from this place, 2000 cubits in any direction.

### EIRUV HATZEROT

*On Shabbat it is forbidden to carry objects from one private domain to another, or from a private domain into space shared by others, such as a communal staircase, corridor or courtyard. If the first day of Rosh HaShana falls on Shabbat an Eiruv Hatzerot is created when each of the Jewish households in a court or apartment block, before Shabbat, places a loaf of bread or matza in one of the homes. The entire court or block then becomes a single private domain within which it is permitted to carry.*

**ברוך** Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the Universe,  
who has made us holy through His commandments,  
and has commanded us about the mitzva of Eiruv.

By this Eiruv may we be permitted to move, carry out and carry in from the houses to the courtyard, or from the courtyard to the houses, or from house to house, for all the houses within the courtyard.

### EIRUV TAVSHILIN

*It is not permitted to cook for Shabbat when the first day of Rosh HaShana falls on a Thursday unless an Eiruv Tavshilin has been made prior to Rosh HaShana. This is done by taking a loaf or piece of matza together with a boiled egg, or a piece of cooked fish or meat to be used on Shabbat. While holding them, say the following:*

**ברוך** Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the Universe,  
who has made us holy through His commandments,  
and has commanded us about the mitzva of Eiruv.

By this Eiruv may we be permitted to bake, cook, insulate food, light a flame and do everything necessary on the festival for the sake of Shabbat, for us and for all Jews living in this city.

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“guarantor,” who joins another in a bond of shared responsibility; and *arev*, “pleasant,” the mood that prevails when people join in friendship. An *Eiruv* softens the sharp divides of boundaries.



## עירוב תחומין

On *יום טוב* and *שבת* it is forbidden to walk more than 2000 cubits (about 3000 feet) beyond the boundary (תחום) of the town where you live or are staying when the day begins. By placing food sufficient for two meals, before nightfall, at a point within 2000 cubits from the town limits, you confer on that place the status of a dwelling for the next day, and are then permitted to walk 2000 cubits from there.

**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם**  
**אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל מִצְוֹת עִירוב.**  
 בְּדִין עִירובָא יְהִיא שְׂרָא לִי לְמִיּוֹל מֵאַתְרָא הַדִּין תֵּרִין אֶלְפִין אַמִּין לְכֹל רוּחָא.

## עירוב חצרות

On *שבת* it is forbidden to carry objects from one private domain to another, or from a private domain into space shared by others, such as a communal staircase, corridor or courtyard. If the first day of *השנה* falls on *שבת*, an *עירוב חצרות* is created when each of the Jewish households in a court or apartment block, before *שבת*, places a loaf of bread or matza in one of the homes. The entire court or block then becomes a single private domain within which it is permitted to carry.

**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם**  
**אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל מִצְוֹת עִירוב.**  
 בְּדִין עִירובָא יְהִיא שְׂרָא לְנָא לְטִלְטוּלִי וְלֵאֲפּוּקִי וְלֵעִיּוּלִי מִן הַבְּתִים לְחִיצָר וּמִן הַחִיצָר לְבִתִּים וּמִבֵּית לְבֵית לְכֹל הַבְּתִים שְׂבִיחָצֵר.

## עירוב תבשילין

It is not permitted to cook for *שבת* when the first day of *השנה* falls on Thursday unless an *עירוב תבשילין* has been made prior to *השנה*. This is done by taking a loaf or piece of matza together with a boiled egg, or a piece of cooked fish or meat to be used on *שבת*. While holding them, say the following:

**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם**  
**אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל מִצְוֹת עִירוב.**  
 בְּדִין עִירובָא יְהִיא שְׂרָא לְנָא לְמִיפָא וְלְבִשְׂלָא וְלֵאֲטֻמְנָא וְלֵאֲדִלְקָא שְׂרָגָא וְלְמַעֲבָד כָּל צְרָכָנָא מִיּוֹמָא טָבָא לְשַׁבְּתָא, לְנוּ וְלְכֹל יִשְׂרָאֵל הַדְרִים בְּעִיר הַזֹּאת.

### EIRUVIN

*Eiruv* are halakhic devices relating to Shabbat and Yom Tov by which the sages “joined” different domains of space and time. *Eiruv* comes from the same root as *erev*, “evening,” the time that joins day and night; *arev*, a

## CANDLE LIGHTING

*On both nights, say the following blessing and then light the candles.*

*On the second night, the candles must be lit from an existing flame.*

*If the first day of Rosh HaShana is Shabbat, cover the eyes with the hands after lighting the candles and say the following blessing, adding the words in parentheses.*

**בְּרוּךְ** Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the Universe,  
who has made us holy through His commandments,  
and has commanded us to light  
(the Sabbath light and) the festival light.

*The blessing “Shehecheyanu” (“Who has given us life”) is said on both evenings.*

**בְּרוּךְ** Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the Universe,  
who has given us life, sustained us, and brought us to this time.

*Prayer after candlelighting (add the words in parentheses as appropriate):*

**יְהוָה** May it be Your will, LORD my God and God of my forebears, that You give me grace – me (and my husband/and my father/and my mother/and my sons and my daughters) and all those close to me, and give us and all Israel good and long lives. And remember us with a memory that brings goodness and blessing; come to us with compassion and bless us with great blessings. Build our homes until they are complete, and allow Your Presence to live among us. And may I merit to raise children and grandchildren, each one wise and understanding, loving the LORD and in awe of God, people of truth, holy children, who will cling on to the LORD and light up the world with Torah and with good actions, and with all the kinds of work that serve the Creator. Please, hear my pleading at this time, by the merit of Sarah and Rebecca, Rachel and Leah our mothers, and light our candle that it should never go out, and light up Your face, so that we shall be saved, Amen.

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wife, parent and child, sustained and strengthened by the love of God. In the soft lustre of this holy light we see the pristine beauty of the familiar and recover a sense of the sacred, the immanence of transcendence, as it bathes the faces of those we love with its radiance.

## הדלקת נרות

On both nights, say the following blessing and then light the candles.

On the second night, the candles must be lit from an existing flame.

If the first day of ראש השנה is שבת, cover the eyes with the hands after lighting the candles and say the following blessing, adding the words in parentheses.

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם  
 אשר קדשנו במצותיו  
 וצונו להדליק נר של (שבת ושל) יום טוב.

The blessing שְׁהַחֲיֵנו is said on both evenings.

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם  
 שהחיינו וקיימנו, והגיענו לזמן הזה.

Prayer after candlelighting (add the words in parentheses as appropriate):

יהי רצון מלפניך יהוה אלהי ואלהי אבותי, שתחונן אותי (ואת  
 אישׁי / ואת אבי / ואת אמי / ואת בני ואת בנותי) ואת כל קרובי,  
 ותתן לנו ולכל ישראל חיים טובים וארכים, ותזכרנו בזכרון טובה  
 וברכה, ותפקדנו בפקדת ישועה ורחמים, ותברכנו ברכות גדולות,  
 ותשלים בתינו ותשבן שכינתך בינינו. וזכני לגדל בנים ובני בנים  
 חכמים ונבונים, אוהבי יהוה יראי אלהים, אנשי אמת זרע קדש,  
 ביהוה דבקים ומאירים את העולם בתורה ובמעשים טובים ובכל  
 מלאכת עבודת הבורא. אנא שמע את תחנוני בעת הזאת בזכות  
 שרה ורבקה ורחל ולאה אמותינו, והאר נרנו שלא יכבה לעולם ועד,  
 והאר פניך ונושעה. אמן.

### HADLAKAT NEROT – CANDLE LIGHTING

The lights kindled before Shabbat and Yom Tov symbolise the Divine Presence (“The Lord is my light,” Ps. 27:1), as well as *shalom bayit*, the domestic peace that prevails when a home is filled with the love between husband and

## Minḥa for Erev Rosh HaShana

יְשׁוּעָה Happy are those who dwell in Your House;  
they shall continue to praise You, Selah!

Ps. 84

Happy are the people for whom this is so;  
happy are the people whose God is the LORD.

Ps. 144

A song of praise by David.

Ps. 145

I will exalt You, my God, the King, and bless Your name for ever and all time. Every day I will bless You, and praise Your name for ever and all time. God is great and greatly to be praised; His greatness is unfathomable. One generation will praise Your works to the next, and tell of Your mighty deeds. On the glorious splendour of Your majesty I will meditate, and on the acts of Your wonders. They shall talk of the power of Your awesome deeds, and I will tell of Your greatness. They shall recite the record of Your great goodness, and sing with joy of Your righteousness. The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and great in loving-kindness. The LORD is good to all, and

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what matters immediately. That is why prayer in the midst of the day has a special transformative power.

The Ba'al Shem Tov said: Imagine a man whose business hounds him through many streets and across the marketplace throughout the day. He almost forgets that there is a Maker of the world. Only when the time for the afternoon prayer comes, does he remember, "I must pray." And then, from the bottom of his heart, he heaves a sigh of regret that he has spent his day on idle matters, and he runs into a side street and stands there and prays. God holds him dear, very dear, and his prayer pierces the heavens.

### ASHREI

*Ashrei*, at the beginning of Minḥa, is an abridged form of the more extended *Pesukei DeZimra*, the Verses of Praise, of the morning service. It is a meditation prior to the Amida. The Amida is prayer in its purest form, and it requires *kavana*, a direction of the mind, a focussing of our thoughts. *Kavana* involves

## מנחה לערב ראש השנה

תהלים פד  
תהלים קמד  
תהלים קמה

אֲשֶׁרִי יוֹשְׁבֵי בֵיתְךָ, עוֹד יִהְלֹךְ סְלָה:  
אֲשֶׁרִי הָעַם שֶׁבְּכַה לֹ, אֲשֶׁרִי הָעַם שִׁיהוּה אֱלֹהִיו:  
תִּהְיֶה לְדוֹר

אֲרוֹמְמֶךָ אֱלֹהֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ, וְאֶבְרַכֶּה שְׁמֶךָ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:  
בְּכָל־יּוֹם אֶבְרַכֶּךָ, וְאֶהַלְלֶה שְׁמֶךָ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:  
גָּדוֹל יְהוָה וּמְהַלֵּל מְאֹד, וְלִגְדֹלְתוֹ אֵין חֶקֶר:  
דוֹר לְדוֹר יִשְׁבַּח מֵעַשְׂיֶיךָ, וּגְבוּרֹתֶיךָ יִגִּידוּ:  
הַדָּר כְּבוֹד הַדָּרְךָ, וְדַבְרֵי נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ אֲשִׁיחָה:  
וַיַּעֲזוּ נוֹדְאוֹתֶיךָ יֹאמְרוּ, וּגְדוֹלְתְךָ אִסְפְּרָנָה:  
זָכַר רַב־טוֹבְךָ יִבְיָעוּ, וְעִדְקֹתֶיךָ יִרְנְנוּ:  
חֲנוּן וְרַחוּם יְהוָה, אֶרְךָ אַפַּיִם וּגְדֹל־חֶסֶד:  
טוֹב־יְהוָה לְכָל, וְרַחֲמָיו עַל־כָּל־מַעֲשָׂיו:

### MINḤA – AFTERNOON SERVICE

The Afternoon Service corresponds to the daily afternoon sacrifice (Num. 28:8). Minḥa, literally “meal offering,” was not unique to the afternoon sacrifice. The afternoon service may have become known as Minḥa because of the verse in Psalms (141:2), “May my prayer be like incense before You, the lifting up of my hands like the afternoon offering [*minḥat arev*].”

The sages attached special significance to the afternoon prayer, noting that Elijah’s prayer was answered at this time (1 Kings 18:36). It is easier to pray in the morning and evening as we are about to begin or end our engagement with the world for the day. Minḥa is more demanding. It means that we are turning to God in the midst of all our distractions. We are bringing Him into our life when it is maximally preoccupied with other things. Minḥa is the triumph of the important over the urgent, of what matters ultimately over