

# Days of Awe 5785

resource for reflection and ritual  
between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur

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## Days of Awe 5785

### Overview:

It is traditional in the 10 days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur to reflect on the past year, repent and seek forgiveness. These days are commonly known as the Days of Awe (Yamim Noraim) or the Days of Repentance. The tradition of Tashlich, the ceremonial “casting off” of one’s wrongdoings into a flowing body of water, usually occurs on the afternoon of Rosh Hashanah, but can occur all the way until Sukkot.

Much of the traditional Yom Kippur liturgy involves listing transgressions, the Viddui, which means “confession,” a prayer recited just before Yom Kippur, and repeated many times throughout the holiday. During the Viddui, worshipers gently beat themselves on the chest for each transgression listed. The Viddui includes the *Ashamnu*, an alphabetical acrostic of different harms we have committed. It is said in first-person plural, because while each individual may not have committed these specific transgressions, as a community we surely have, and our fates are intertwined on this day

### Using this resource:

- Print out enough copies of readings to share amongst participants, welcome participants to read aloud.
- Bring a shofar, objects such as twigs and pinecones to throw into the water if fulfilling Tashlich, and sweet and round Rosh Hashanah snacks to share such as round challah bread, pomegranates, Palestinian dates, and apples and honey
- Some people may want to bring candles and wine or grape juice to complete those blessings as well
- Complete whichever prayers and readings you are comfortable with!

## Introduction

The 10 Days of Awe between Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, are traditionally a time of reflection, repentance, and repair. It is a time to take stock of the year that we are closing out and set our intentions for the year ahead. The aim is to make teshuvah, translated as repair, but it literally means return, as if turning back to something you've strayed or looked away from. This year more than ever before, we must make teshuvah, to return to our true Jewish values of Tikkun Olam, healing the world, and to refuse to look away from the ongoing genocides from Turtle Island to Palestine.

Forgiveness is not a requirement of Teshuvah, nor is it the ultimate goal. Rather, the goal is to transform ourselves and our actions, and those who have been wronged are not required to forgive us. The onus of the work of teshuvah is on the people who committed the harm, not on the people who were harmed. This reminds us of the dynamics of oppression, that the onus is on the oppressor to make repentance and reparations, and that reconciliation does not require forgiveness or grace on the side of the oppressed.

The tradition teaches that this is both an individual pursuit and a communal accounting of our action and inaction. We make confessions through the Vidui prayers, and we acknowledge that the actions of few implicate us all by repeating "ashamnu" - we have committed harms. We do not respond to another's wrongdoing by saying "I didn't do that", because we acknowledge the harm caused by our community reflects upon us all. As is often the case in Jewish tradition, we can hold multiple contradicting truths. The State of Israel, their government, their military, they are responsible for their genocidal harms. Simultaneously, we hold the notion that all Jews are responsible for each other, especially when our mainstream communities refuse to acknowledge the decades of violent dispossession they directly support and fund.

We are here together to call out some of the harms that have been committed in our name by people and institutions claiming to act on our behalf while they oppress, degrade, dispossess and kill Palestinians. *Tochekcha* is from the root "to be firm" "to stand" "to be right". This is often translated as loving rebuke. We offer tochekcha to help people see what they have done wrong and encourage them to do better. This is a community responsibility and one of the key ways that we show love to one another. To help each other do better, to show each other paths toward teshuva and repair is to show our love and care.

And finally we remember that the material work of tzadakah is required. Often thought of as charity, tzedakah is more accurately translated as “justice money,” and is more similar to reparations and restitution.

Together this year, we remember that without justice for Palestinians there cannot be a lasting peace.

### **Everyone together:**

May the spirit of justice guide us in the new year so that we may open our ears to truth, open our hearts to the oppressed, and speak our minds courageously in order to end our community’s complicity in genocide, oppression and suffering of the Palestinian people.

### **Justice for Palestine vidui:**

Bring speakers up one at a time to read specific confessions and have everyone gathered respond to each fact with “ashamnu” - we have sinned.

### **Bagadnu בגדנו (betrayal)**

We have betrayed the Jewish value that every life contains an entire universe by dehumanising and demonising Palestinians.

(Everyone: ashamnu)

Our politicians, media, and mainstream institutions are complicit in laying the groundwork to allow for this genocide by spreading false accusations that are based in racism that is Anti-Palestinian, Orientalist, Islamophobic, and anti-Arab.

From Tell Them by Huda Skaik, August 2024

“Tell them,  
Tell them,  
we are more than numbers,  
more than silent echoes  
in a ledger of loss,  
we are families  
entwined in love,  
friends,  
living in the shadows  
of our hopes,  
bound by dreams.”

### **Gazalnu גזלנו (robbery)**

- We have participated in the theft of Palestinian land by supporting the Jewish National Fund and the ever-expanding Israeli settlements.
- (Everyone: ashamnu)
  - The tools of state violence and dispossession can sometimes be hidden in less obvious forms. The JNF convinced us as kids we were doing something noble by planting trees, but it was to mask evidence of expelled villages
  - As we speak, the Jewish National Fund is working with their partners in ethnic cleansing, the Israeli army, to demolish Palestinian Bedouin villages in al Naqab, such as Wadi al-Khalil, and steal the Palestinian Christian home of the Kisyia family in Al-Makhrour near Bethlehem.

### **Chamasnu חמסנו (acting zealously)**

- In our zeal to protect our Jewish community, we have misused and weaponized charges of antisemitism.
- (Everyone: ashamnu)
  - The annual audit of antisemitic incidents released by B'nai Brith uses the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition to decide what should be included in their count. By conflating criticism of Israel with actual antisemitism, this audit silences and penalises dissenting voices, makes Palestinian existence itself antisemitic, and within our own Jewish community, labels Jews of conscience as self-hating antisemites. This also belittles and takes the focus away from the real threats of rising antisemitism within the embolden far right, while siloing Jews from other historically oppressed peoples.

### **Tafalnu Sheker טפּלנו שֶׁקֶר (lying)**

- We have distorted and denied the truth about Israeli crimes against humanity and justified policies including the systematic starvation of Gazans and the torture of Palestinian prisoners
- (Everyone: ashamnu)
  - From the United Nations office of the high commissioner, “We declare that Israel’s intentional and targeted starvation campaign against the Palestinian people is a form of genocidal violence and has resulted in famine across all of Gaza... When a 2-month-old baby and

10-year-old Yazan Al Kafarneh died of hunger on 24 February and 4 March respectively, this confirmed that famine had struck northern Gaza. The whole world should have intervened earlier to stop Israel's genocidal starvation campaign and prevented these deaths."

### **Pashanu פָּשַׁעְנוּ (perverting justice)**

- We have wrongfully exerted influence on Canadian institutions so as to prevent legitimate criticism of Israel's treatment of Palestinians.
- (Everyone: ashamnu)
  - Organisations that claim to represent all Canadian Jews such as The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) — which is muddily funded in part by our local JCCs (Jewish Community Centres) through the Jewish Federations of North America — lobby politicians to vote against ceasefires, arms embargoes, and any recognition of Palestinian self-determination. They ran a campaign against the NDP motion in March 2024 for a ceasefire in Gaza and recognition of a Palestinian state.

### **Kishinu Oref קָשִׁינוּ עֵרֶף (stubbornness)**

- Despite mounting evidence of genocide in Gaza, the expansion of the settlements in the Occupied West Bank, East Jerusalem and Occupied Golan, and war crimes documented by Israeli soldiers themselves, we continue to claim that Israel is the most moral country and only democracy in the region.
  - (Everyone: ashamnu)
  - Rabbi Seth Goldstein says, "Not only is it a positive commandment to seek justice, it is a negative commandment to ignore justice... You shall not hide yourself, meaning that if you see an injustice, you shall not hide. Rashi the famous mediaeval commentators tells us this means you shall not cover your eyes, you shall not look away."
  - In the context of Gaza and Palestine as a whole, we cannot look away. Once we finally see the truth that Palestinians have been sharing since 1948, the old Hasbara talking points we clung so hard to melt away as meritless hypocrisy.

### **Tainu תַּעֲיִנו (straying from a righteous path)**

- We have strayed from the path of justice by refusing to acknowledge the ongoing Nakba, the ongoing Palestinian experience of expulsion and dispossession.
- (Everyone: ashamnu)
  - We know this did not start on October 7th, with 2023 already being the most deadly year on record for Palestinians in the Occupied West Bank since the Second Intifada and more settler expansion projects approved this year since the Oslo process.
  - In Noura Erakat's Policy Paper *Nakba Peace*, she writes, "Israel, along with its Western allies, are demanding an exception to the prohibition on genocide to defend and entrench Zionist settler sovereignty by any means necessary. Israel is pursuing a 'Nakba Peace,' the establishment of security achieved through the removal of native Palestinians who, by their very existence and refusal to disappear, challenge Zionist settler sovereignty."

### **Looking to the year ahead**

The sages of the Talmud tell us that we sound the shofar 100 times because of the 100 cries of the mother of a biblical enemy Sisera in the Book of Judges. If you listen, you will hear the sound of a mother weeping for her child. Why would the rabbis weave the story of an enemy into our most sacred rituals?

Because they understood that grief is an equaliser; that a parent who suffers the loss of a child is in pain regardless of who and where they are. We commit ourselves to holding space for grief, truth, justice, and communal care in the Jewish year of 5785.

תכלה שנה וקללותיה

תחל שנה וברכותיה

May the old year and its curses come to an end,

May the new year and its blessings begin.

## **Blow the shofar**

(if you don't have one, you can listen to a recording or simply listen to the sounds around you that awaken your senses, such as the birds.)

## **Tashlich, “casting off” of transgressions into the water**

This ritual is echoed in the text of Micah (7:19): “You will cast (tashlich) all your sins into the depths of the sea.”

As you stand at the water ask yourself:

*What do I need to let go of?*

*What do I hope lets go of me?*

*How will I be renewed in this next year to continue on the path of justice?*

## **Traditional Brachot (Prayers) over ceremonial items**

It is traditional on Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, to enjoy round foods to represent the cyclical nature of the year and sweet foods for a sweet year. Common examples being apples and honey, round and sweet challah bread, pomegranates, dates, and even fish or ram's heads to represent the head of the year.

A note on language. Our prayers are ancient and use many words that today have very different meanings and connotations. Throughout prayers, we speak of *Yisrael*, Israel. This does not refer to the modern nation-state based on Jewish supremacy and settler colonialism. Rather, it comes from the name given to Ya'akov, Jacob, meaning “one who wrestles with G-d.” When we say *Yisrael* in blessings, we are speaking to our history as a people who wrestle with power, Torah, ourselves, and the injustices we face alongside our non-Jewish friends and family.



## Candle Lighting

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הֵאֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ  
לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל יוֹם טוֹב:

*Baruch atah, Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav,  
v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Yom Tov*

Holy One of Blessing, Your Presence fills creation, who sanctifies us with mitzvot and calls upon us to kindle the lights of the Festival day.

## Shehechyanu - blessing for a special occasion

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעַנוּ לְזִמְנָן הַזֶּה.

*Barukh ata adonai elohenu melekh ha'olam, shehecheyanu, v'kiyimanu, v'higiyanu  
la'z'man ha'zeh.*

Holy One of Blessing, Your Presence fills creation, who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season.

## Kiddush, blessing on wine or grape juice

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ,  
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ,  
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
אֲשֶׁר בְּחַרְבָּנוּ מִכָּל עָם,  
וְרוֹמַמְנוּ מִכָּל לְשׁוֹן,  
וְקִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו.  
וַתִּתֵּן־לָנוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, בְּאַהֲבָה אֶת  
יוֹם הַזְּכוֹרֹן הַזֶּה,  
יוֹם תְּרוּעָה,  
מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ,  
זָכָר לִיצִיאַת מִצְרָיִם.  
כִּי בָנוּ בְּחַרְתָּ,  
וְאוֹתָנוּ קִדְּשָׁתָּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים,  
וַיְדַבֵּר אֱמֶת וְקִיָּם לְעַד.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ, מֶלֶךְ עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ,  
מִקְדָּשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל

*Baruch atah, Adonai,  
Eloheinu melech haolam,  
borei p'ri hagafen.  
Baruch atah, Adonai,  
Eloheinu melech haolam,  
asher bachar-banu mikol am,  
v'rom'manu mikol lashon,  
v'kid'shanu b'mitzvotav.*

*Vatiten-lanu, Adonai Eloheinu, b'ahavah et  
Yom HaZikaron hazeh:  
yom t'ruah,  
mikra-kodesh,  
zeicher litziat Mitzrayim.  
Ki vanu vacharta,  
v'otanu kidashta mikol haamim;  
udvar'cha emet v'kayam laad.*

*Baruch atah, Adonai, melech al kol haaretz,  
m'kadeish Yisrael  
v'Yom HaZikaron.*

Source of blessing, Eternal our God,  
Your majestic power creates the fruit of the vine.

Source of blessing, Eternal our God, in Your majestic power  
You chose us to make known Your aspirations among all the many peoples,  
making our lives holy through Your commandments.

In Your love, Eternal our God,  
You have given us this Day of Remembrance:  
a day for the shofar's joyful sound  
a day of sacred assembly;  
a day to be mindful of our people's going-out from Egypt.

A unique place among nations You have chosen for us —  
and Your word is true; it endures forever.  
Blessed are You, Eternal Sovereign over all the earth,  
who sanctifies Yisrael and the Day of Remembrance.

## Blessing over fruit

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם בורא פרי העץ

*Baruch ah-tah ah-doh-noi eh-loh-hay-noo meh-lekh hah-oh-lahm boh-ray peh-ree hah-aytz.*

Holy One of Blessing, Your Presence fills creation, who creates the fruit of the tree.

## Blessing for a sweet year, usually while eating sweet fruit and honey

Pick up a slice of apple, dip it in honey, and say:

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, בורא פרי העץ.

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-eitz.*

We praise You, Holy One of Blessing, Whose Presence fills creation, Creator of the fruit of the tree.

יהי רצון מלפניך, יי אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו ואמותינו,

שתחדש עלינו שנה טובה ומתוקה.

*Y'hi ratzon milfanecha, Adonai Eloheinu v'Elohei avoteinu v'imoteinu, shetchadesh aleinu shanah tovah um'tukah.*

May it be Your will, Eternal our God, that this be a good and sweet year for us

## Blessing over pomegranate

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, שנהיה מלאים מצות כרמון

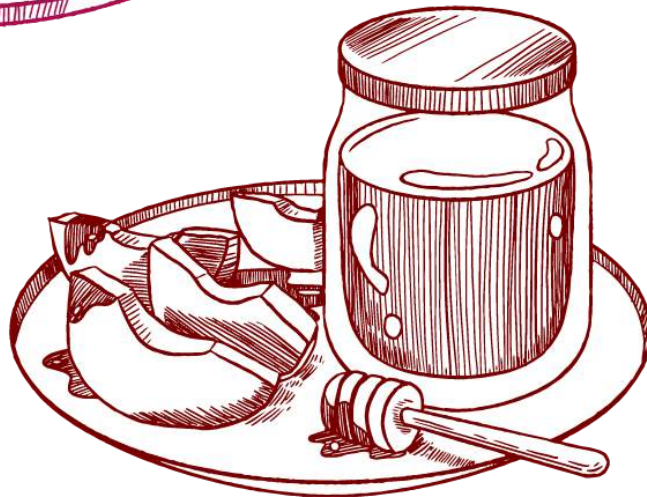
*May it be Your will, Holy One of Blessing and the G-d of our ancestors, that we be filled with mitzvot like a pomegranate*

### **Blessing over bread, traditionally round and sweet challah**

ברוך אתה, יי אלהינו, מלך העולם המוציא לחם מן הארץ.

*Baruch atah, Adonai  
Eloheinu melech haolam,  
hamotzi lechem min haaretz.*

Blessed are You, Holy One of Blessing, Whose Presence fills creation, who brings forth bread from the earth.



## **Additional Thoughts and Prayers you may add:**

### ***On Prayer, by Rabbi Abraham Jashua Heschel, 1969***

Public worship is an act of the highest importance. However, it tends in our days to become a spectacle, in which the congregation remains passive, inert spectators. But prayer is action; it requires complete mobilisation of heart, mind, and soul. What is the worth of attending public worship when mind and soul are not involved? Renewal of liturgy involves renewal of prayer.

### ***An Urgent Prayer for the Protection of Human Life, by Rabbi Andy Vogel and Rabbi Seth Goldstein***

May the destruction of innocent life come to an end.  
May the ruin that comes from war cease now.  
May each life be treated as a sacred treasure, as You have intended.  
In a time of growing darkness, grant us the strength to be beacons of light,  
defenders of the vulnerable, and champions of justice.  
May our hearts be filled with compassion, our minds with wisdom,  
and our hands with action, as we strive to safeguard the dignity and well-being of  
all Your children.  
May none stand idly by the blood of any other.  
For we know that the lives, security and peace of us all are bound up with each  
other, all as one. We are all one and connected.  
So, may we fulfill the words of the Psalms:  
סור מִרַע וְעֲשֵׂה-טוֹב  
בְּקִשׁ שְׁלוֹם וְרַדְּפֵהוּ  
*Sur mé-ra va'aseh tov,*  
*baqesh shalom v'radféhu*  
“Turn away from harm and do good;  
Seek peace and pursue it.” (Psalm 34:15)  
May we be among those who speak out and resist evil.  
May peace and justice fill Your world.  
And may we be among those who make peace and pursue justice.  
Amen.

***Prayer for Reparation and Restoration, an alternative to the Prayer for Welfare of the Government, by Rabbi Brant Rosen (Tzedek Chicago 2020)***

To the One who demands justice: inspire us to become *rodfei tsedeq*, pursuers of justice in our lives and in our communities. Give us the strength to resist power wielded with fear and dread; fill us with the vision and purpose to build a power yet greater, a power rooted in solidarity, liberation and love.

Grant us the courage to dismantle systems of oppression – and when they are no more, let us dedicate our wealth and resources toward the well-being of all.

May we abolish all forms of state violence that we might make way for a world free of racism and militarization, a world where no one profits off the misery of others, a world where the bills owed those who have been colonized, enslaved and dispossessed are finally paid in full.

Inspire us with the knowledge that real justice is indeed at hand, that we may realize the world we know is possible, right here, right now, in our own day.

May our thoughts and our hopes, our words and our deeds

guide us toward a future of reparation, of restoration, of justice, *al kol yoshvei teivel*, for all who dwell on earth,

*amen.*

***A Jewish Prayer on Nakba, by Rabbi Brant Rosen***

לְאֵל שֶׁחָפֵץ תְּשׁוּבָה

*Le'el she'hafets teshuvah*

to the One who desires repentance

Inspire us to make a full accounting

of the wrongdoing that was

committed in our name

Help us to face the terrible truth of the Nakba

and its ongoing injustice

that we may finally confess our offences

that we may finally move toward a future

of reparation and reconciliation

לְאֵל מְלֵא רַחֲמִים.

*L'El malei raḥamim*

to the One filled with compassion  
show us how to understand the pain  
that compelled our people to inflict  
– such suffering upon another  
dispossessing families from their homes  
in the vain hope of safety and security  
for our own

עוֹשֵׂה הַשְּׁלוֹם

*Osei hashalom*

Maker of peace

guide us all toward a place  
of healing and wholeness  
that the land may be filled  
with the sounds of joy and gladness  
from the river to the sea  
speedily in our day

וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן

*V'nomar Amen.*

*And let us say Amen.*

