



A STUDENT'S GUIDE

TO HIGH HOLY DAYS

YOM KIPPUR EDITION

INTRODUCTION

This booklet is a way for students to access further information about Yom Kippur and different ways to celebrate the festival. In a time where accessing communal facilities and face-to-face contact might be more difficult than in previous years, this is an easy and accessible way to celebrate the High Holidays and to engage positively and in new ways with your own Judaism.

Many Jews view Yom Kippur as a communal day, a time to come together to pray and reflect. This a great way to bring the J-Soc together on this holy day. In this guide there are some points for discussion that may be useful for these sessions on campus as well as other activities that you could do.

Across the country, many local communities will be issuing strict guidance on how services will be run on the High Holidays. There will be different services throughout the days, and different ways of accessing these services. Some synagogues are sadly not opening to full capacity, so when looking to join a service for the High Holidays at your local synagogue, whether in person or digitally, research how they are delivering services and get in contact with them on how you would be able to attend. If you are finding it challenging, please be in contact with UJS who can support you.



YOM KIPPUR

Yom Kippur is known as one of the holiest days in the Jewish calendar, as a day where we atone for our sins. Translated as ‘Day of Atonement’ it lasts for 25 hours and many people fast to cleanse their souls and focus completely on praying for forgiveness. Forgiveness and atonement are the key themes of Yom Kippur, as it is said that it is the day where G-d makes the final decision on what the year will be like for everyone. At the end of Yom Kippur, the shofar is sounded to signify the end of the fast.



TEN DAYS OF REPENTANCE AND TESHUVAH

The ten days of Repentance are the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in which it is customary to ask for forgiveness and reflect on the previous year. This is commonly known as Teshuvah. While mistakes happen, Teshuvah allows a time for us to reflect and try to prevent them from happening again. Although Teshuvah is said to translate to repentance, it actually translates to ‘return’ – return to a path of goodness for the new year, and reflection is a key part of that.

Sometimes it can be hard to know where to start when it comes to Teshuvah. To help get you started, here are some ways that you can reflect on the previous year. These suggestions will help to make your festival experience more meaningful.

- Thank a friend for something they have helped you achieve
- Think positively rather than noticing the flaws, focus your energy on the good
- Make a commitment to do something you have always wanted to do
- Check in on yourself. *How are you doing?* Your mental health is just as important as everyone else's
- Offer your help at a J-Soc event or a local charity
- Be your authentic self. Don't let anyone tell you who you are
- Recognise one habit that you would like to change in the coming year
- Write your future self a letter
- Text or call a friend you haven't spoken to in a while
- Reflect on something you are proud to have achieved this year

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

THE STORY OF JONAH

On Yom Kippur the story of Jonah is read in many synagogues. Jonah refuses to follow G-d's order to go to Nineveh and preach to them as they were wicked. Jonah tried to run away by boat to Tarshish. G-d then sent a storm upon the ship, and the other men on board the ship blamed it on Jonah.

Consequently, they threw him overboard, stopping the storm. Jonah was then swallowed by a big fish, which some call a whale, who stopped Jonah from drowning. In the fish, Jonah prayed for help, repented and praised G-d. For three days, he was in the belly of the fish, until he was thrown up on to the shores of Nineveh.



He then preached to Nineveh warning them to repent before the city is destroyed in 40 days. The people believed Jonah and turned from their wickedness, so G-d was merciful on them. Jonah became angry because G-d did not destroy the Ninevites. When Jonah sat to rest, G-d provided a vine to give him shade.

The next day, G-d sent a worm to eat the vine, leaving Jonah sat in the hot sun complaining, and wanting to die. G-d scolded Jonah for being so concerned about a plant, while G-d was concerned by those that lived in Nineveh and their actions.

- Often our moral principles are tested, and we are faced with questionable situations which we may not understand. How should one react to a situation which is out of your control?
- How can we work to help other people, instead of turning a blind eye? How do we stand up tall, speak loud and proud against injustice?
- How can we help someone who doesn't have a strong community?
- On Yom Kippur, everyone asks to be forgiven. How can we confront our regrets head-on and learn to ask for forgiveness?
- All humans should be perceived as being equal, regardless of difference in background and experience. How do we actively treat people like equals?

YIZKOR - THE MEMORIAL PRAYER

Yom Kippur is the first day in the Jewish calendar in which we say 'Yizkor,' the memorial prayer recited for those who have passed away. Meaning Remembrance in Hebrew, Yizkor is recited four times in the year, on Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Passover and Shavuot. Often it is a common belief that by saying Yizkor, remembering a loved one and giving charity in their name, it helps their soul gain merit from our good deeds. Jewish people believe in the eternity of the soul. It is hugely important to use Yom Kippur as a time to reflect and remember the past whilst also using these memories to enhance your future.

Yizkor can be recited with a specific person in mind, or we can use Yizkor to reflect on communal loss, such as those who have passed away during the Covid-19 pandemic.

LOUD AND PROUD!

There is a significance on Yom Kippur to 'cry with full throat' and 'without restraint.' This can be interpreted as bearing your heart on your sleeve and being whole-heartedly authentic in your approach to atonement. Repentance can be a very cathartic experience. We urge you all to use Yom Kippur as a time to reflect, and to take this reflection forward, becoming Loud and Proud of who you are, apologising and then unapologetically being WHO YOU ARE, regardless of the judgement of your peers. All you can do is be you!

Cry with full throat, without restraint; Raise your voice like a ram's horn! Declare to My people their transgression, To the House of Jacob their sin. (Isiah 58: 1)

ART CORNER

On Yom Kippur, sometimes it can be easier to understand the High Holy Day visually, rather than in words. As Yom Kippur is such a powerful day, focused on repentance and prayer, some artists have put this into imagery. This is a powerful way to understand Yom Kippur and can be very useful when trying to learn and understand the day itself. Here are 4 pieces of art that we have picked, each of a different style and different artists. These are great points of discussion, as well as very thought provoking images, each which can mean something different to different people.

Maybe creating your own piece of artwork may help you to celebrate the festival? Art is a great way to do this and express yourself in a way that only you know how as well as a great way to reflect on the year before, and look towards the year ahead.



*Shofar Blast - Yitzchok Mouilly,
Jewish Pop Art 2019*



*On the Eve of Yom Kippur -
Marc Chagal 1912*



*Jonah the Prophet and the Fish -
Rapael Beca*



*Jews Praying in the Synagogue on
Yom Kippur - Maurice Gottlieb 1878*

ACTIVITIES ON CAMPUS

VOLUNTEERING

Yom Kippur is a great time to help others and help them get involved in Yom Kippur and feel a part of the community. Volunteering is a great way to ask for a better year and improve. There are many ways that this can be done throughout the year. Think creatively about how you can be supportive to those around you and how you can help the wider community. Especially during these times volunteering is a great activity for Yom Kippur.



BREAKING THE FAST

For those that fast on Yom Kippur and those that do not, coming together for a meal is a great time to reflect on the previous year and look towards the year ahead. Coming together helps you bond as a community, as well as sharing great food.

Top Tip! Avoid meat when breaking the fast as this can be difficult to digest! Many uses to fish, Challah and Salad! Weather dependent, it might be nice to break the fast over a (socially distant) picnic outdoors with friends.

MEDITATION AND MINDFULNESS

As Yom Kippur is a day of inwards looking and cleansing the soul, one way of doing this may be through Meditation and Mindfulness. By reflecting and clearing your mind this helps to cleanse your soul and breathe, and this is a great way to do this. Yoga may be another method to help clear your mind and prepare yourself for the year ahead. This is an activity that can be done alone or in a group (socially distanced of course!).

ACTIVITIES ON CAMPUS

WRITE A LETTER

Writing a letter whether to G-d, to yourself or to a friend, this activity helps you process and can help you to express your discomfort and regrets over the last year. This is an active way of doing this, as it forces you to confront things that you may not have liked, or situations you can no longer hide from. Writing this in a letter could be a great way to process this and verbalise in a pro-active way that helps you to reflect and repent for the previous year. As a letter to yourself rather than to others, this becomes a very personal way of reflection; a method that helps you to more deeply reflect and focus on your own wellbeing.

WEARING WHITE

On Yom Kippur, it customary to wear white as a symbol of purity. As we are asking for atonement, pale colours are simplistic, and places us as equal, rather than above each other. In some traditions, a Kittel is worn on Yom Kippur, a white cotton or linen material to fulfil this purpose. It is also made from a pure material, therefore emphasising the purity on Yom Kippur. Some also wear a Kittel as it is also used as a burial shroud. This therefore reminds people to the morality of life, and to stay humble, whilst reminding us of the need for repentance. By simply wearing white, this can help you connect to the festival, in a very passive manor. This is a simple way to celebrate the festival, that holds a deep meaning of equality behind it.

Gmar Chatima Tova!

גמר חתימה טובה

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