

A woman blowing on a dandelion pappus



MORE THAN WISHING

Creating a
Happy New Year



High Holidays
5785-5786

Alternative text is available on photos for accessibility purposes.



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Opening *Peticha* פְּתִיחָה MORE THAN WISHING



עַל כֵּן נִקְוָה לָךְ יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְרֵאוֹת מְהֵרָה בְּתַפְאֶרֶת עֶזְךָ.
לְהַעֲבִיר גִּלּוּלִים מִן הָאָרֶץ. וְהָאֵלִילִים כָּרוֹת יִכְרֹתוּן.
לְתַקֵּן עוֹלָם בְּמַלְכוּת שְׁדֵי.

*al ken nekve le'ha adonai eloheinu lir'ut mehera betif'eret
uzzech. leha'avir gilulim min ha'aretz. vehaelilim karot
yikaretun. letak'en Olam bemaalchut shaddai*

Let the time not be distant, O God, when all shall turn to
You in love, when all the brokenness in our world is
repaired by the work (*tikkun olam*) of our hands and our
hearts.



From the *Aleinu* prayer, Metsudah Linear Siddur Ashkenaz

The Jewish year begins with the High Holidays—*Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*—a sacred season of *teshuvah* (return), reflection, and renewal.

Opening *Peticha* פְּתִיחָה MORE THAN WISHING

This year, as we step into the new year, the world around us is filled with war, violence, and turmoil. In the face of such brokenness, it may feel difficult to imagine joy or hope and to remember the beauty and goodness that also exists in the world.

Fortunately, our tradition offers us timeless practices to prepare our hearts: not by turning away from pain, but by turning inward and toward one another. Through *teshuvah* (return), *tefillah* (prayer), and *tzedakah* (acts of justice), we ground ourselves in what is possible.

Rosh Hashanah invites us to walk through gates that open toward change and possibility. As autumn leaves shift their colors, we remember that we, too, can transform—for the sake of ourselves, our communities, and the wider world. At *Yom Kippur*, the gates close, but our capacity for growth, choice, and justice continues long after.

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Opening *Peticha* פְּתִיחָה MORE THAN WISHING

This booklet is designed to accompany you through these Days of Awe. Inside, you'll find writings from Ritualwell's creative contributors, along with prompts to help you engage actively in *teshuvah*, *tefillah*, and *tzedakah*. Each reflection and practice is an invitation to bring your whole self into this season, to listen deeply, and to respond with intention.

As the *Aleinu* reminds us, the sacred work of repairing the world begins with each of us. May these words and practices help you step into the new year as a partner with the Divine Presence—co-creating a world of justice, compassion, and possibility, and opening the gates to a year of meaning and blessing.

Continue on the next page

תְּשׁוּבָה

TESHUVAH

RETURNING

Rays of sunshine coming out from orange clouds to a blue sky above



אָמַר רַבִּי לֵוִי: גְּדוּלָה תְּשׁוּבָה, שְׁמִיגַעַת עַד כִּסֵּא הַכְּבוֹד;
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "שׁוּבָה יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ" (הושע יד ב)

Rabbi Levi said: Great is *teshuvah*/returning, as it reaches the heavenly throne, as it is stated: “Return, Israel, to Adonai your God”

(Hosea 14:2)



Yoma 86a

The root of *teshuvah* means “return.” In our busy lives, it’s natural to be pulled in many directions, losing sight of what matters most.

The Days of Awe give us a sacred structure to return—to our values, our priorities, and our most essential relationships. When we practice *teshuvah*, we renew our energy and open ourselves to step into the new year with hope and possibility.

In a world where compassion can feel undervalued and human life too often disregarded, the call to return is more urgent than ever. *Teshuvah* invites us to reconnect with the Divine Presence, the Source of Life greater than ourselves. It reminds us that we are part of an ancient chain of tradition, one that continues to guide us in repairing the world.

The poems and prayers that follow, along with the creative prompt, are here to help you enter your own *teshuvah* process—turning back to what matters, and turning forward toward renewal.



A path made of wooden planks surrounded by small white flowers on both of its sides

FIRST LIGHT: A REFLECTION ON ROSH HASHANAH & CREATION

by Shalen Lowell

The First Light—

the tangible evidence of the Genesis of our universe
created by the Unseen Mover—

lacks the intensity of that first flash.

Time creeps past, dying stars waste into supernova,

yet we can feel that First Light's emotional pull, its residence in our
lives:

The Divine Spark which each of us cradles with precious fragility,
glittering sunshine dancing with blooming deciduous trees as we
pray *shacharit*,

the fabric of the universe stitched in constellations and in aurora.

We don't need to see with our eyes

to know

to feel

to trust

that we are not alone in this Grand Expanse.

We are connected in, and by, Creation.

We have been connected—to God, to humanity, to our fellow beings, to our Jewish family—since the Beginning.

Today, mirroring the primordial, cosmic Creation Moment, we renew this connection;
we renew and refresh ourselves with *teshuvah*;
we return to our origin, to the day of Creation—today!—
to give thanks for that First Light and
to acknowledge there is yet more light
we must usher into our world.



Yellow sparks in a shape of a ball on a dark background

IN AN ACT OF TESHUVAH

by Tiferet Welch

I raise my voice
In the song of prayer,
As an act of *teshuvah*,
Where the heavens collapse
And the dust expands.
Where fractal,
Upon fractal,
Upon fractal
Serve to remind to me,
To teach me,
As I embody
The very truth of *Echad*;

Making itself known
Through Life's own
Vibration:
All form,
And all matter,
Cannot help but elevate,

Be elevated,
By The Source
In all Its shimmerings.

We are allowed *teshuvah*
Simply because,
In all truth,
We never left;
Even when

We did not know it.



A close up on a hand holding Tibetan sound bowl



RETURN

by Joanne Fink

As we embark on a journey of *teshuvah*,
may reflection, introspection and soul-searching
help us discover our sacred purpose.

As we turn, return and repent,
may the cry for justice
kindle a flame of hope,
and a spark a fire of commitment
within each of our hearts.

May this sacred, spiritual journey
light the way to a future based on
equality, justice, hope and peace
and help us return to ourselves,
to our community and to our God.

THE TIDES OF TESHUVAH

by Rabbi Janet Madden, PhD

Midrash Tehilim 65:4:

“*Teshuvah* is like the sea which is never barred, so that whoever desires to bathe in it can do so whenever they desire.”

As the moon draws the tides,
so this month pulls our souls
to the way of our ancestors,
to *teshuvah*.

Return is always possible.

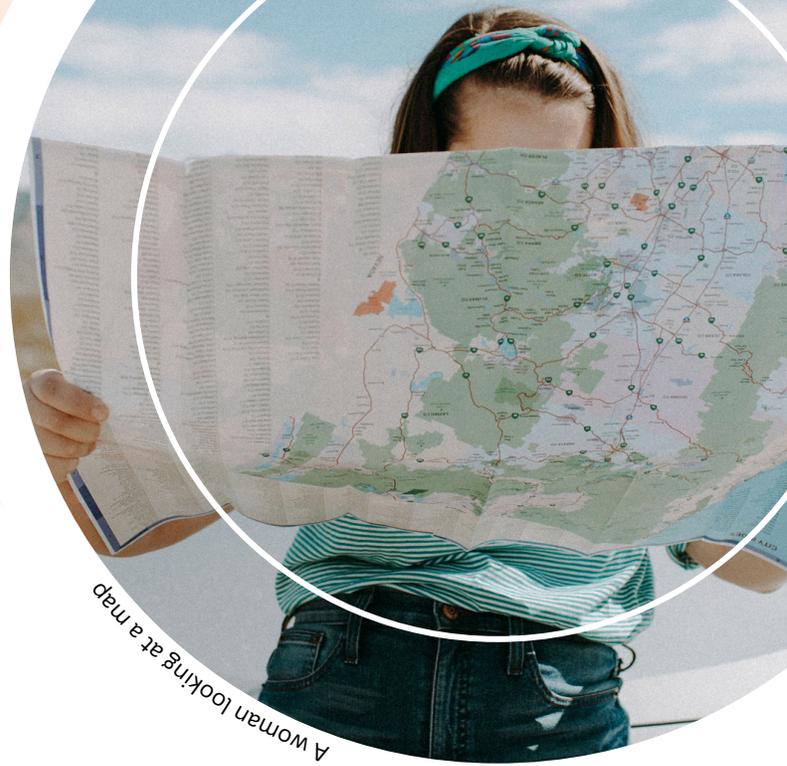
But in *Elul*, resistance dissolves,
Desire engulfs us like a swelling wave,
and we, made mostly of water,
carried on currents of time and memory,
sea-change, returning to ourselves.

HEALING FROM WITHIN: SEEKING CLOSURE WITHOUT AN APOLOGY

by Marc Jacobs

That relationship meant so much to me.
Then it exploded in the caldron of anger.
Something in me was wounded by the loss.
I carry that pain deep within me.
I've hoped somehow that an apology,
A coming together again, might be in the offing.
But alas it seems not likely to be.
And each memory is another stab into my wound.
I'm finding a way to live again.
I turn my attention to other things.
Yet that ugly scab covers my scar.
How can I shed that scab and find healing for my scar?
Who is responsible for my hurt?
Did you cause it?
And so now must I wait for you to fix me?
Or does the pain come from my own internal reaction?
If my hurt comes from my internal reaction and not from you,
Then perhaps I can begin the repair process of changing my
belief.
If I feed self-love to my scar,
Can I begin healing from within?

תְּשׁוּבָה
TESHUVAH
RETURNING



Prompts & Practices

Write about one thing you want to return to in the coming year that will help you thrive—maybe a practice, a relationship, or a dream you’ve set aside. Describe how it might bring you joy or growth.

You might begin with the words “This year, I will return to...” and let the sentence carry you into a short poem or story about the life you want to nurture.

Alternately, you might draw or collage a “map of return,” with images, colors, or symbols that represent what you want to move toward in the new year.

תפילה
TEFILLAH
PRAYER



A man and woman wrapped in prayer shawls looking at a book

“ Legs are not lips and walking is not kneeling. And yet our legs uttered songs. Even without words, our march was worship. I felt my legs were praying.

”

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

During the Ten Days of Awe, *tefillah*—prayer—offers us a powerful pathway to co-create a new year of meaning, joy, and connection. As Rabbi Heschel reminds us, prayer takes many forms. It may be spoken, sung, or written, but it can also be embodied in the ways we move, act, and show up in the world.

Our tradition embraces many ways to pray. You might pray at home or in synagogue, in the quiet of the woods like Rebbe Nachman of Breslov, or in the depths of struggle like Jonah.

Your prayers may ask for what you need, express gratitude for what you already have, or simply voice wonder at the world around you. Prayer can be spontaneous or ritual, whispered in solitude or shared to bring comfort to others.

What matters most is our willingness to engage. In the midst of busy days, setting aside even a few moments for prayer opens us to Divine presence and strengthens our vision of a world grounded in love and compassion.

Read the following poems and prayers, and continue with the creative prompt to explore your own practice of *tefillah* in this season of renewal.



A woman walking between trees in a forest where the sun shining between the trees

GATHER ME UP: PRAYER FOR DAYS OF AWE

by Leslea Haravon Collins

Adonai,
Gather me up.

Like a child heavy with sleep.
Like a scared child hiding alone.
Like a sad child who yearns for comfort.

Gather me with your other sheaves. Hold us together.

On these days, we come together
To be gathered.

We are your harvest.

We grow only
To be gathered
By you.

PRAYER FOR 5785: HOPE IS THE ANTIDOTE TO DESPAIR

by Yochanan ben Avraham v'Sarah/John Riehl

Hope is the antidote to despair.

Hope is shedding tears of grief and pain
and then getting on with the hard business of *tikkun olam*.

Hope is the knowledge that the world does not have to be as it is,
but as we wish it to be,
if we work to make it so.

The whole world is a very narrow bridge, the rabbis say;
hope is the courage to keep walking on the bridge,
with our eyes and hearts fixed on what could be on the other side.

Hope is our voices singing and praying together;
hope is the smile and the kind word and the selfless gesture.

Hope is the knowledge that we can never complete the work,
and that the world can be a better place
if we work to make it so.

May we embrace hope as this new year unfolds with its limitless
possibilities.

WE ARE VERBS: A POEM FOR THE DAYS OF AWE

by Blaze Ardman

I asked God what I can do to
improve myself and the world.

The Source of Consciousness
blessed me with an answer.

Remember, God said, that I am
becoming what I am becoming, as are you.
Know that from each fresh moment to the next,
you are born and reborn again.
We are verbs, you and I, said God.
Kindness is a verb. When you do kindness,
you give wings to hope;
Compassion is a verb. When you do compassion,
you activate the energy of empathy;
Generosity is a verb.
When you do generous, you raise the vibration of gratitude;
Listening is a verb.
When you do listening, you awaken understanding;
Peace is a verb.

When you do peace, the energy of wisdom reverberates;
Stillness is a verb.

When you do stillness, the energy of faith is restored;
Prayer is a verb.

When you do prayer, the energy of joy, healing potential, and
return ignites.

May you be blessed to know that your seemingly small acts
kindle everlasting flames of love, goodness, repair.

May you be blessed to know

You are the redeemed and the redeemer

You are the blessed and the blessing

You are the lover and the beloved.

And so together,

we are the unbounded light of consciousness,

the unending essence of divine spark,

life unfolding through eternity.

May you be so blessed.



Two set of hands underwater, each making heart shapes

תפילה TEFILLAH PRAYER

Prompts & Practices

Take a moment to write your own prayer for the coming year—one that not only expresses your hopes and gratitude, but also lifts up how you will engage in creating a better world for yourself, your loved ones, your community, the wider world, and the earth itself.

Research indicates that engaging in regular gratitude practices can enhance happiness by lowering stress hormones and fostering connections with others. You may start with the words *Modah/Modeh Ani* (I give thanks...) and allow your heart to lead the way.

After naming your gratitude, expand your prayer into commitments—intentions for how you want to live in the year ahead. These may be for health, peace, compassion, justice, or any other qualities you hope to nurture.

Your prayer can be written down, and you might also consider an embodied prayer. In Jewish tradition, *hitbodedut* is a simple practice of articulating whatever is in your heart to God. Take some time for quiet reflection and discover how it feels to voice your prayer.

Continue on the next page

צְדָקָה
TZEDAKAH
JUSTICE

A red heart inserted into a narrow slot of a donation box



צְדֵק צְדֵק תִּרְדּוּף

tzedek tzedek tirduf

Justice, justice you shall pursue



Deuteronomy 16:20

Tzedakah is often translated as “charity,” but at its root the word means “justice.” Our tradition teaches that the world is filled with brokenness—what the Kabbalists, the Jewish mystics, described as scattered shards waiting to be made whole. Through *tikkun olam*—repairing the world—we are called to gather those pieces and help bring healing.

Each act of *tzedakah* is a step toward *olam haba*, the world as it could be: whole, just, and filled with compassion.

Giving to charity is one expression of this work, but every choice we make, every action of kindness and fairness, brings us closer to creating that better world.

As we enter the new year, *tzedakah* reminds us that we are not only receivers of blessing but also co-creators of it. By acting with justice and generosity, we help shape a year of meaning and possibility—not just for ourselves, but for our communities and for the world.

Read the following poems and prayers, and continue with the creative prompt to explore your own practice of *tzedakah* in this season of renewal.



many hands holding to a small globe

WHY DO YOU SLUMBER?

by Alden Solovy

מָה לָךְ נִרְדָּמָה? / מָה לָךְ נִרְדָּמָה?
Mah lekha nirdam? / Mah lakh nirdama?

Why do you slumber? (Jonah 1:6)

Child of humanity?

When your brothers die?

While your sisters cry?

While anger shakes us?

When terror breaks us?

קוּם קְרָא אֱלֹהֶיךָ!
Koom kra el elohekha!

Koom kra el elohekha!

Get up, cry out to your god (Jonah 1:6),

Cry out for justice and for peace.

מָה לָךְ נִרְדָּמָה? / מָה לָךְ נִרְדָּמָה?
Mah lekha nirdam? / Mah lakh nirdama?

Why do you slumber? (Jonah 1:6)

Child of God?

Your heart is noble,

The need is global.

This is the hour,

To act with power.

קוּם קְרָא אֱלֹהֶיךָ!
Koom kra el elohekha!

Koom kra el elohekha!

Get up, cry out to your god (Jonah 1:6),

Cry out for justice and for peace.

מָה לָךְ נִרְדָּמָה? / מָה לָךְ נִרְדָּמִים?
Mah lekha nirdam? / Mah lakh nirdama?

Why do you slumber? (Jonah 1:6)

Child of love?

The call is urgent,

The cry resurgent,

To embrace each other,

And bless one another.

To rise from slumber.

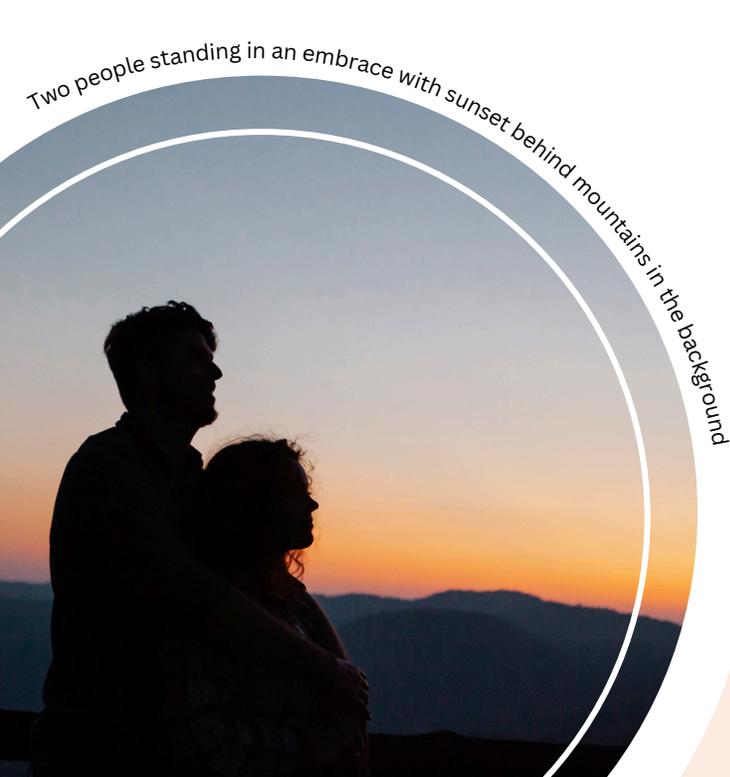
To live in wonder.

קוּם קְרָא אֱלֹהֶיךָ!

Koom kra el elohekha!

Get up, cry out to your god (Jonah 1:6),

Cry out for justice and for peace.



PRAYER FOR THE NEW YEAR: WE SIT ON THE CHAIR TOGETHER

by Rabbi Lisa S. Greene

When we name a baby,
we place the infant on Elijah's chair
to symbolize possibility in the child,
its potential to better our broken world.
This new year we all sit on Elijah's chair,
each with the potential in our hands, our hearts, and our voices,
to better our world
even when we think not.
In this new year, let us bring our potential to bear.
With no magic recipe or instruction
we each remember:
we sit on that chair,
and we sit together,
poised to move forward
for goodness.

CHANGING YOUR FATE FOR THE COMING YEAR

by CLAL

Our tradition teaches that we can have a direct and active role in changing our fate for the coming year. While our desire to change our lives is particularly strong during the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we can make important changes all year long.

Uteshuvah utefilah utzedakah ma'avirin et ro'a hagezeirah.

Turning, prayer, and deeds can change our fate.

Meditation:

Help me to take a good look at my life and give me the courage to make changes I want to make. Guide me on my journey as I strive to make good changes, in myself and in the world in which I live.

[Read More](#)

Prompts & Practices

Together, we can mend the world by using the distinct gifts we possess in the pursuit of justice.

Create a list of the special skills, attributes, and qualities unique to you. For instance:

- Are you particularly adept at connecting with children or animals?
- Do you excel in organization?
- Perhaps you have a specific artistic talent?

Review your list and consider how you can apply your gifts to promote justice and equity in the upcoming year. Embrace every possibility!

You might ignite your creativity with the prompt: “This year, I will help to repair the world by...” and let your thoughts flow freely onto the page.

Additionally, consider illustrating, collaging, or doodling your vision of a just world—make sure to include yourself in that picture.

Closing *Ne'illah* נְעִילָה MORE THAN WISHING

Through your reading, reflection, actions, and creative responses, you have taken meaningful steps toward creating a new year that can be both happy and deeply fulfilling, even amidst the strife in the world.

As the rhythm of the Jewish year carries us forward, Yom Kippur gives way to Sukkot—*Z'man Simchatenu*, the Season of Our Joy. Sukkot invites us to celebrate harvest and abundance, to practice hospitality, to honor our ancestors, and to deepen our connection with the natural world. May you leave this holiday season inspired by ritual, tradition, and creativity, carrying with you the knowledge that even in a world so greatly in need of repair, we can still cultivate happiness, gratitude, and joy.

We warmly invite you to stay connected with the Ritualwell community so you are never alone on this journey:

- Weekly Holding Each Other minyan, every Monday
- Live and interactive events and Immersions
- Self-paced learning modules to meet you wherever you are

Wishing you L'shanah Tovah—a happy, meaningful new year!



Apples, honey and pomegranates on a white background

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