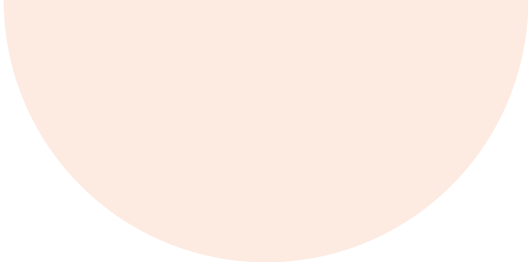


A field of red anemone, or kalamit, at sunset. The bright red poppy is the national flower of Israel, representing hope, resilience, and life in Israel

HOLDING THE WHOLE:

Embracing Grief and
Hope in the New Year



High Holidays 5786-5787

Alternative text is available on photos for accessibility purposes.



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Opening פתיחה *Peticha* HOLDING THE WHOLE



לְכֹל זְמַן וְעַתָּה לְכָל־חֶפֶץ תַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם: {ס}
עַתָּה לְלֵדֶת וְעַתָּה לָמוּת עַתָּה לָטַעַת וְעַתָּה לַעֲקֹר נְטוּעַ:
עַתָּה לַהֲרוֹג וְעַתָּה לְרַפֹּא עַתָּה לִפְרוֹץ וְעַתָּה לִבְנוֹת:
עַתָּה לִבְכוֹת וְעַתָּה לְשַׂחֹק עַתָּה סִפּוֹד וְעַתָּה רִקּוּד:

Lako'l z'man v'et l'kol chefetz tachat hashamayim.

Et laledet v'et lamut, et lata'at v'et la'akor natu'a.

Et laharog v'et lirpo, et lifrotz v'et livnot.

Et livkot v'et lischok, et s'fod v'et r'kod.

To everything there is a season,
and a time for every purpose under the heaven:

A time to be born, and a time to die;

A time to plant,

and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

A time to kill, and a time to heal;

A time to break down, and a time to build up;

A time to weep, and a time to laugh;

A time to mourn, and a time to dance



Kohelet 3:1-4

Opening *Peticha* פְּתִיחָה HOLDING THE WHOLE

These famous words from Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) seem to suggest that the experience of joy and the experience of sorrow happen in separate moments—that they each have their own time. But what if we find ourselves experiencing opposing emotions at the *same* time?

As we enter this holy time on the Jewish calendar—the month of Elul, Rosh Hashanah, the *Yamim Nora'im* (Ten Days of Awe), and *Yom Kippur*—many of us find ourselves holding a paradox of feelings. We may be hopeful for a new year, grateful for our good fortune, or eager for the deep soul diving that these holy days require of us. AND, we may be feeling deeply troubled by ongoing war, continuing ICE presence in our communities, and the continually rising violence—against Jews, Muslims, people of color, queer and trans folks—that we see all around us.

How do we sit with all these contradictory feelings at once? How do we hold the whole?

Continue on the next page

Opening *Peticha* פְּתִיחָה MORE THAN WISHING

The opening lines of Kohelet, הָבֵל הַבָּלִים אָמַר קֹהֶלֶת הָבֵל הַבָּלִים, הֵכָל הָבֵל, are often translated as “Utter futility!—said Kohelet—Utter futility! All is futile!” But the first word, *havel*, can also be translated as “mist.” In this interpretation, it would read, “Mist!—said Kohelet—Utter mist! All is mist!” Rabbi Tamara Cohn Eskenazi teaches that “mist can only exist when hot and cold are found in the same space at the same moment.” In this understanding, mist is not only symbolic of what is fleeting but also of what comes from the holding of opposites. Perhaps those later Kohelet lines about “a time for everything” aren’t pointing us toward separate moments but toward this very moment.

As we approach these High Holy Days, let us be like the mist—holding both what is difficult *and* hopeful, painful *and* joyful, and let us be blessed with the richness that holding the whole can bring.

ELUL אֶלּוּל

A sun on a horizon peaking from behind a sea of clouds set on an orange sky.

“

אֲנִי לְדוּדִי וְדוּדִי לִי

Ani l'dodi v'dodi li

I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine

”

Song of Songs 6:3

The name of the month leading up to Rosh Hashanah is Elul (אֶלּוּל) and the Hebrew letters are traditionally understood to form an acronym for the Song of Songs line, “I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine.” While this phrase is often thought of as a declaration of love between two partners (it appears in many ketubot—Jewish wedding contracts), it also describes an ideal state of love between ourselves and God.

Continue on the next page

During Elul, we are encouraged to take an honest, deep dive into our thoughts, feelings, and actions of the past year to see where we've missed the mark, where we've hurt ourselves and others, and where we can do better in the year to come. This accounting of the soul (called *Cheshbon HaNefesh*) is the central spiritual work of the month and helps to strengthen our relationship with God. Like two romantic partners who choose to renew their vows to one another, our spiritual work during Elul recommits us to priorities of moral action, growth, and love which form the basis of our relationship with Divinity.

The following poems speak to the challenges of this spiritual accounting. Use the creative prompt that follows to explore your own soul work during the month of Elul.



DURING ELUL

by Cathleen Cohen

ritualwell.org/ritual/during-elul/

We're on edge, these days of fear.
News cycles with anger:
eye for eye, tooth for tooth.

Rolling storms split the sky,
splinter air into shards.
We peer from the edge, these days of fear.

How to find peace?
Our holy texts warn:
eye for eye, tooth for tooth, life for life.

Hand to hand, we must build mirrors
from hope, imperfections, our own sharp edges,
then pierce through fear
and gaze. eye to eye. at each other.

ELUL: THE SHOFAR

by Devon Spier

<https://ritualwell.org/ritual/elul-shofar/>

The sound of the shofar calls to us from the realm of ancient longing.

Which though seemingly back there.

Is actually, here.

In the moment we remove the veil of forward and back

And decide, instead to face life as is.

Yes, all of it.

New Moon

New Year

and mourning.

Each of these like a note in the chorus of our living.

Daring us to listen to the power of the blast.

And with all that is in and around us, to receive each moment as a life-giving gift and a symphony of awe.



CHESHBON HANEFESH/ ACCOUNTING OF THE SOUL

by Jodi Rosenfeld

This annual stock-taking is a night-shift job.

Better to count up the inventory without people watching—
it's messy—pulling everything off the shelves, deciding what
gets put back, what gets tossed.

And shameful.

Shameful like thank-God-they-can't-see-my-thoughts,
like thank-God-they-don't-know-what-I'm-really-feeling.

Maimonides taught that human courts only pass judgement on
our actions,

but that God knows our hearts and minds.

That's a problem.

Even on the overnight shift,

with the store doors locked, EarPods in, bar-code scanner in
hand,

there are no secrets.

No pretending we are better than we are,

which is not very good,

our better angels out back, smoking in the parking lot.

If I could only say one word of repentance to this God who
sees it all,

it might simply be

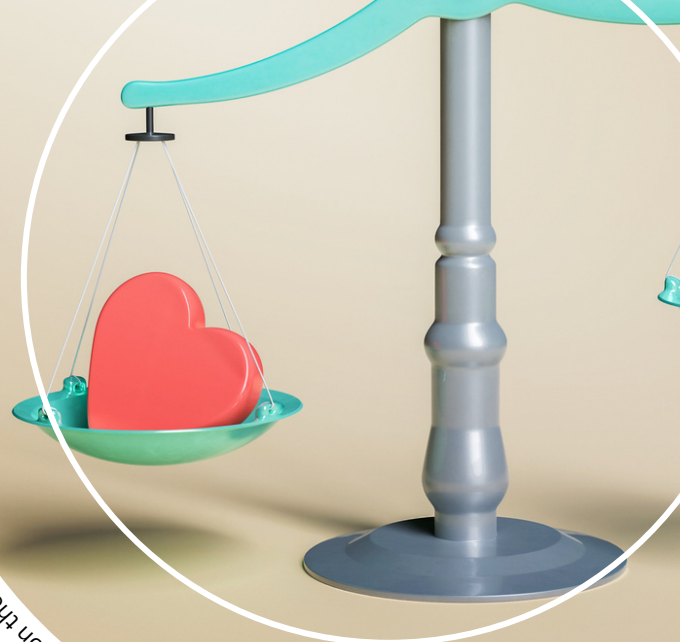
sorry

or perhaps my own name.

ELUL אלול

Prompts & Practices

A scale with a heart on one side, outweighing an item on the other side of the scale, out of view.



The practice of spiritual accounting, *Cheshbon HaNefesh*, requires honest discernment. We need to be able to look at the past year and see clearly which of our actions have been honorable and which have caused damage, which have served to better the world and which have harmed it.

Begin this exercise by reading the following statement slowly to yourself:

I am human. I am not perfect. I do some things right and some things wrong. Elul is an opportunity for me to identify both things so that I can continue to do the former and can change the latter.

Continue on the next page

Take out two pieces of paper. At the top of one, write:
Things I have done this year that I'm proud of...
and at the top of the other, write:
*Things I have done this year that were harmful...**

For each paper, set yourself a 5-minute timer. You don't need to write for the whole five minutes but allow yourself the whole time to sit with the question and come up with what you can. Return to the lists a few different times over the course of Elul and add things as they come to mind.

You might want to bring your lists with you to a *tashlich* ritual at the water's edge over the *Yamim Nora'im*. Whether you are using bread, pebbles, or other safe, dissolvable items to cast into the moving water, toss in one for each thing on your "harmful" list.

*If list-making doesn't feel right for you, try using your papers for journaling or drawing.



ראש השנה ROSH HASHANAH



היום הֵרַת עוֹלָם

Hayom Harat Olam

Today is the birthday of the world!



Rosh Hashanah Musaf Service

Rosh Hashanah, considered the Jewish New Year, is sometimes called the birthday of the world. In its most traditional interpretation, Rosh Hashanah is thought to commemorate the sixth day of creation in the Genesis story, the day when God created Adam and Eve. But we might also think of Rosh Hashanah as the birthday of our personal worlds —the day we get to start again, to reset.

Continue on the next page

The word *teshuvah*, sometimes understood as “repentance” but more accurately translated as “return,” speaks nicely to this idea. When we do *teshuvah*—identifying where we’ve missed the mark in the past year and pledging to do it differently in the year to come—we are birthing a better, more holy version of ourselves. We not only celebrate the start of a new calendar year and the creation of humanity, but we celebrate who we are becoming.

Each of the following poems and blessings addresses an aspect of the right-setting act of *teshuvah*. Read through them and then try the creative prompt that follows as a guide for your own *teshuvah* practice.



ALCHEMY OF TESHUVAH

by Tiferet Welch

ritualwell.org/ritual/alchemy-of-teshuvah/

The Ba'al Shem Tov teaches,
“Mighty creatures make His word.” *

And I am comforted.

Words, sanctified,
Through the flow
Of Eitz Hayim
Break open
The waters
Of Shekhinah's
Earthbound womb.

Words are transformed.
Words become acts.

With the heart space, beautified
An eternity of healing
Moves in balance
With humility.
May my words be embodied.
May my life be lived as prayer.

In an act of
Teshuvah,
I pick up the phone.

*[Psalms 103:20](#)

A PRAYER FOR THE NEW YEAR

by Suzanne Sabransky

ritualwell.org/ritual/prayer-new-year-5781-and-beyond/

Adonai, our souls are crying out;
We have known pain and uncertainty,
Been traumatized by last year's harshness,
Please, shower us with Your Mercy...

Had it been just the pain,
Had it been just the uncertainty,
Had it been just the trauma,
Shehekheyanu would rise from our lips...

Yet the pain has not stopped,
The uncertainty continues, growing even worse,
New traumas compound the old ones,
And the weight is becoming unbearable...

Please, *Adonai*, bring about new beginnings,
Cast off the cloak of darkness,
Illuminate our days as of old,
And help us to reclaim hope...

Continue on the next page

Creator of All, hold us gently,
Guide us with Your steady hand,
Lead us through this modern desert,
Show us a new Promised Land...

Rock and Redeemer, please lift us,
Look upon us in Your favor,
See us through this darkest night
And Bless us, *Adonai*, Bless us...

Amen



A dandelion root with yellow flowers emerges through asphalt to catch the sun's rays.

AT THE PRECIPICE

by Joanne Fink

ritualwell.org/ritual/precipice/

We stand together
on the precipice
of the new year
as it is about to unfold.

What joys and sorrows will it hold?

As we turn, return, and relearn
our Sacred Purpose
may we strengthen our connection
to the Source of All.

May embarking on a journey
of *teshuvah* and reflection,
soul-searching and introspection,
help us hear—and answer—God’s call.

May this be the year we choose
to live our lives fully—
with passion, perspective
purpose and promise.

May the traditions
and teachings of our people
be an ongoing source
of strength and inspiration.

May we listen to the
still, small voice within
and may the unspoken prayer of our hearts
be answered and fulfilled.

Blue canvas sneakers peak out over a precipice at Gran Canaria, looking down at cloudy skies.



ראש השנה

ROSH HASHANAH

Prompts & Practices

As we turn from the accounting of our past year to the act of making amends, or returning to our best selves (*teshuvah*), we need to be able to envision ourselves making change. Before we can “pick up the phone” as Tiferet Welch says in the above poem, we need to be able to see ourselves reaching out, saying we’re sorry.

Start with an image of each person to whom you owe an apology. This could be finding a photograph of them, drawing a picture of them, or cutting out a magazine image of someone who reminds you of them. (And one of the people you are making amends to might be yourself!) After assembling those images, for each one, alter it in some way. This might mean adding something to the picture (perhaps drawing yourself facing them), placing paper hearts around their image... anything that modifies the original and symbolizes your intention to make things right between you.

You don’t need to be a visual artist to do this exercise! This is just for you—a way to explore through imagery how you might repair a relationship in the coming year. Whether that relationship is between yourself and another, yourself and yourself, or yourself and God, allow pictures to guide the way.

יָמִים נּוֹרָאִים YAMIM NORA'IM DAYS OF AWE

A male-presenting human wearing a blue button-down shirt pounds his fist against his chest,

“ בְּרֹשׁ הַשָּׁנָה יִכָּתֵבוּ, וּבְיוֹם צוֹם כִּפּוּר יִחְתָּמוּן

B'rosh hashanah yicatevu u'v'yom tzum kippur y'chamtenu

On Rosh Hashanah it is written, and on the fast of
Yom Kippur, it is sealed.

Unetaneh Tokef

The ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are known as the *Yamim Nora'im*, the Days of Awe. The words that speak most directly to this period are found in the liturgical poem *Unetaneh Tokef* recited on both Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. It is perhaps the scariest reading we do: “On Rosh Hashanah it is written, and on the fast of Yom Kippur, it is sealed...who shall die and who shall live...who by fire and who by water...who by famine and who by thirst...” By the end of the list, we find ourselves shaken. And then we come to the line, “But repentance, prayer, and righteousness avert the severity of the decree” and we breathe a sigh of relief, *There is something we can do to keep ourselves safe!*

What do “repentance, prayer, and righteousness” look like? Are they internal processes? Visible behaviors? Prayer is often a personal, silent practice, but Maimonides taught that repentance (*teshuvah*) for transgressions between two individuals must involve the verbal asking of forgiveness and the granting of that forgiveness. Similarly, righteousness (*tzedakah*) means just and compassionate *deeds*. The work of repentance, prayer, and righteousness cannot simply be done in the seats of the synagogue or on a contemplative walk in nature. This work requires us to act—to make real change in our worlds.

Each of the following poems includes some form of movement—from breathing, to placing ourselves on the path of righteousness, to giving charity and standing in solidarity—each offers images of bodies in motion. As we “move” through these ten days, read the poems and try the movement prompt that follows.



A couple holds hands on a green couch as they have a hard conversation to come back together.

PLACE YOURSELF: AN UNETANEH TOKEF

by Trisha Arlin

ritualwell.org/ritual/place-yourself-unetaneh-tokef/

PLACE YOURSELF in front of the fear.

You will be judged, you will die.

Place yourself in the center of the universe,

You earned that spot simply by existing.

Place yourself under obligation to God

However you understand or don't understand God.

Place yourself on the path of holiness and joy and truth.

Bless and be blessed by *HaMakom*, the Place where we find ourselves.

REMEMBER

Remember what you did wrong

Remember what you did right.

Remember those who came before you.

Remember that you are responsible for those who come after you.

Remember your history.

Remember Torah.

Bless and be blessed by *Shaddai*, remembering us.

DECLARE YOURSELF

Because the truly evil are already condemned,
The truly good are already blessed,
And then, there's the rest of us.

It is said that on Rosh Hashanah God decides your fate: life or death.
And the ten days until Yom Kippur are your opportunity to change
God's mind.

So don't blow it.

This is a powerful day, a fantastic opportunity!
Declare yourself for holiness and joy and truth.

Bless and be blessed by *Shekhinah*, listening.

NOW WE DECLARE

And as a congregation, we proclaim:

Let the holiness rise up!

On Rosh Hashanah it is written

On Yom Kippur it is sealed.

And let us declare together:

We understand nothing.

All that is physical ends.

We die.

But not today.

Except sometimes, today.

We fret about the past and worry about the future

And forget to live with where we are now.

And then we die.

We understand nothing.

But

Teshuvah, tefilah, & tzedakah

Restore us to our place.

Teshuvah, when we return to our true selves;

Tefillah, when we stop time in holy conversation;

Tzedakah, when we transcend self;

And that's when God decrees.

Bless and be blessed by *Ruakh Ha-olam*, breathing mindfulness.

THE DAY IS HOLY

Listen to the *shofar* as it announces:

Awesome and sacred is this sweet day!

The world is filled with the Divine, we are surrounded!

Hear us, know us.

Love us, enjoy us.

Remember us, rouse us.

Forgive us, inspire us,

Bless and be blessed by *Elohim*, the Creator, the Created, Creating.

We place ourselves in front of the fear,

On the path of holiness and joy and truth.

Amen.

A female-presenting person meditates on a beach, with her hands in prayer at her heart's center.



TEKIAH

by Sybil Sanchez Kessler

ritualwell.org/ritual/tekiah/

Let breath be the bridge from despair to hope
Let faith guide my doubts from why to what
Let me find meaning in my questions even as they lack answers
Let my questions reflect my values toward lovingkindness of
self and others
Let my center not be my self but the ground upon which
humanity stands
Let us each seek groundedness in our connections to others,
humanity, and the Universal One
Let us strengthen the ground upon which we walk, through
prayer and positive intent
Let those intentions be the meal with which desire is baked
Let our desires lead us to better places and take others with us
as we pursue righteousness amidst stormy times
Let these times not define our legacy even as history unfolds,
let our legacy be led by our best intentions
Let our intentions augment, elevate, and echo through
consciousness, raising our mores like a shofar calls for our souls

Tekiah: Pronounced tuh-KEE-ah, the tekiah blast is one long note that acts as a kind of summons. Others have suggested that it is the sound of a king's coronation. On Rosh Hashanah, we are traditionally called to reaffirm God's sovereignty.

UNETANEH TOKEF

by Rabbi Lauren Grabelle Herrmann

ritualwell.org/ritual/unetaneh-tokef-5780/

On Rosh HaShanah it is written, on Yom Kippur it is sealed:
Who will die from unclean water? Who will die from an assault
weapon?

Who will die because they were of a particular race or religion?

Who will die because of lack of shelter?

Who will die because of hunger?

Who will die because they were banned from entering a country
to seek asylum?

Who will die because they contracted the flu inside a detention
camp?

Who will die because they were returned to the country of their
birth?



Who will die because they were walking down the street at night, black and trans?

Who will die because they were caught in the crossfire of neighborhood gun violence?

But our tradition teaches:

We can turn in *teshuvah*. We can live with greater awareness, compassion, and involvement.

We can offer *tefilah*. Our prayers may not save those at risk but they can motivate us to act.

We can give *tzedakah* and be involved with *tzedek* – give charity and promote justice.

Our tradition teaches, “You do not have to complete the task but you are not absolved from it.”

Two masked volunteers give out supplies at a disaster relief aid station.



יָמִים נֹרָאִים YAMIM NORA'IM DAYS OF AWE

Prompts & Practices

Jewish liturgical practice is full of choreography. We bow, we raise up on our toes when we say “*Kadosh, kadosh, kadosh*,” we take three steps forward and back before beginning the *Amidah*. These small movements allow us to embody our intentions—reverence, being closer to holiness, moving out of ordinary space and closer to God. In this exercise, we will use simple walking to embody our intention to move toward righteous action.

- Find a quiet space and time to be outdoors (if the weather isn't cooperating, this can be done indoors too.)
- Think about one thing you want to do better in the coming year. Put it in the form of the sentence, “In the coming year, I will...”
- As you say this sentence carefully to yourself, take five slow, intentional steps forward. Allow the forward movement to carry you toward your intention for action.
- Repeat several times using the same statement or try different intentions for sets of five steps.

יום כפור YOM KIPPUR

”וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: אֲךָ בַּעֲשׂוֹר
לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי הַזֶּה יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים הוּא מִקְרָא־
קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם וְעָנִיתֶם אֶת־נַפְשֵׁיכֶם

GOD spoke to Moses, saying: Indeed, the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. It shall be a sacred occasion for you: you shall practice self-denial...

Lev 23:26-27

On Yom Kippur, those who are able traditionally practice self-denial by fasting. The intention is that, by denying our physical needs, we are better able to focus on the spiritual work of the day. This practice resonates for some of us; for others—those who cannot fast for health reasons or those who find that hunger disrupts their ability to focus on the spiritual work—fasting is not feasible.

Continue on the next page



Whether or not we are fasting, there is another important way we can practice the self-denial prescribed in Torah. We can deny ourselves our illusions. We can refuse to participate in the kind of self-deception that keeps us from seeing ourselves fully—both the parts we are proud of and the parts we need to change. We are being asked to take off our blinders, to return to the truest version of ourselves and ask what it is we need to do differently. Yom Kippur is our invitation to see clearly and to hold the whole.

The following poems each describe a kind of clarity of seeing, an openness to what is, even when what is contains contradiction. Read through these poems and then explore your own openness to contradiction by experimenting with the exercise that follows.



A person prays with a tallit (prayer shawl) wrapped around them and over their head, viewed from behind.

YOM KIPPUR DANCING

by Alan Walowitz

ritualwell.org/ritual/yom-kippur-dancing/

I insist on a seat on the aisle,
and don't care how far back,
long as I can get up and waltz away
whenever I want, lay my prayer shawl neatly on the chair
and head to the Men's,
or outside for air where I can check my phone—
that's the kind of Jew I am,
tired of the old stand up, sit down,
stand up again, and assess all you must atone
just from the pain you feel in your knees.

I find a seat by the skylight window
almost behind the stairs
up to where the choir used to wail
when this was a church
and the music came from on high,
like a visitation, and here where the builder
needed to bend the place
a bit to the east and create an aisle
that, hardly anyone can get through,
this, the rush hour of the liturgical year.

And into this space comes the dancer.
She's 10 or 11, not dressed for the holiday,
but neat enough—long t-shirt, yoga pants—
perfect for some serious praying, someone so young—



she hides her eyes for the Shema—
then folds her hands neatly into the *Veyahavta*
and moves them into fists over her chest—
loving God with all her heart;
some gentle pounding, then, for *Al Khet*.
Though she's surely got nothing much to atone,
she willingly takes on man's entire plight.
Then, cartwheels, as appropriate, to *Avinu Malkenu*,
using the wall as a barre to *plie*,
then leaping into scissors and landing in a split,
dramatic, but fully self-possessed,
and not in the least showing off.

Suddenly, I don't need so much to leave,
but watch from the corner of my eye,
as her mother keeps her eye out too,
she shouldn't get hurt or carried away.
But she carries herself how I hope an angel might,
silently driving right, then left,
and right to the heart of the ancient chants.
What are my hollow prayers, compared to this,
this whirling, twirling, joyous atonement alive?

originally appeared in The Moon Magazine

TURNING AND RETURNING

by Rabbi Shelly Barnathan

ritualwell.org/ritual/turning-and-returning/

Teshuvah... Turning and returning... To our breath, to our souls...

Elohai Neshamah Shenatah Bi, Tehorah Hi

My G-d, the *Neshamah*, the soul that you have given me is pure
You have placed it within me, given it to me at birth...

Within each one of us, there is a pure soul

A tender, soft place to which we can always return...

Today, on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement...

The Day of At-One-ment

We open to our *Neshamot* – to our pure, divine souls.

Finally becoming **at-one** with our truest selves....

As the gates of *Teshuvah* stand wide open to us on this
Yom Kippur

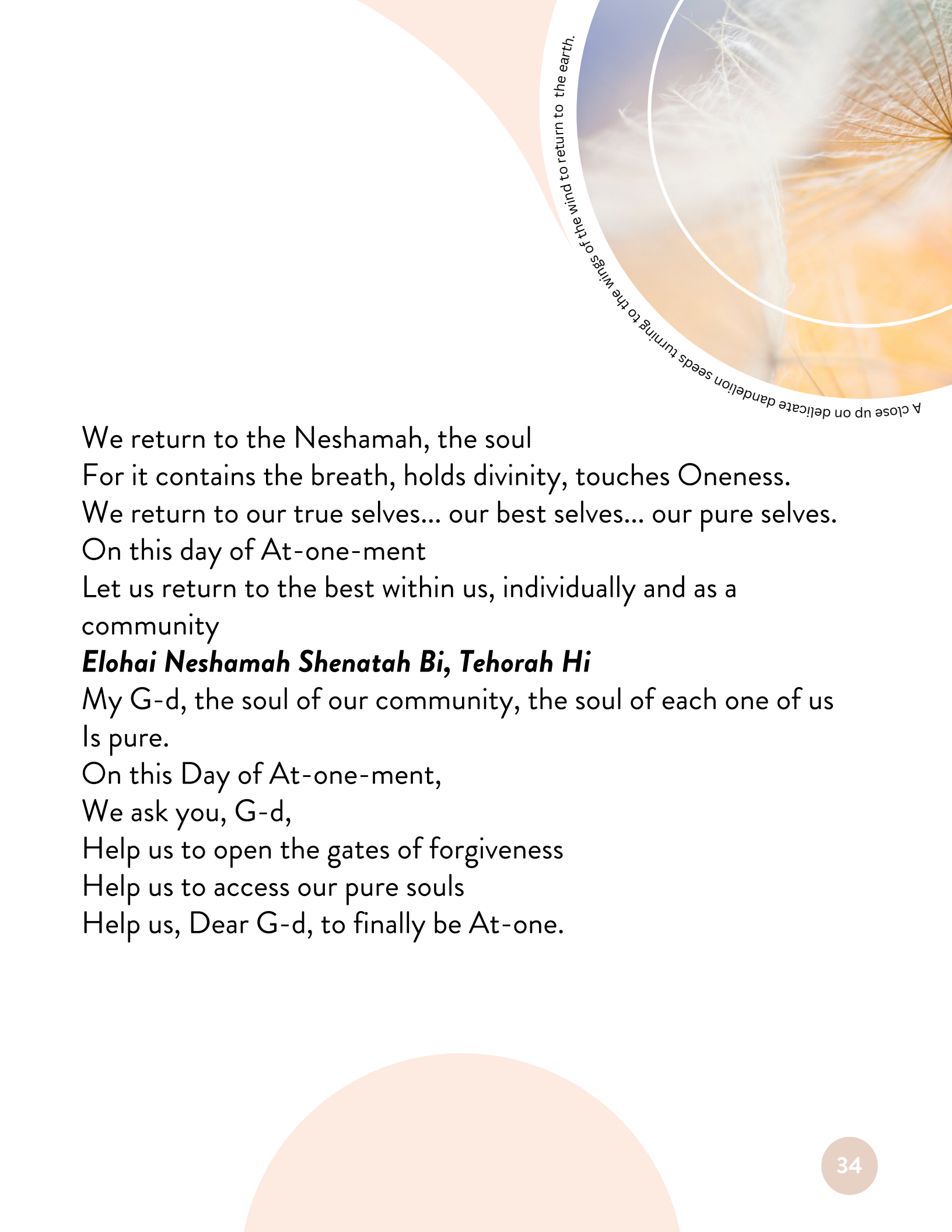
Let us fully open our souls to forgiveness – forgiving loved ones,
forgiving community

Forgiving ourselves...

The *Neshamah*, the breath of soul, allows us to access the Divine,
to reach the holy and sacred places within us...

We chant the prayer slowly and breathe its words:

Elohai Neshamah Shenatah Bi, Tehorah Hi



A close up on delicate dandelion seeds turning to the wings of the wind to return to the earth.

We return to the Neshamah, the soul
For it contains the breath, holds divinity, touches Oneness.
We return to our true selves... our best selves... our pure selves.
On this day of At-one-ment
Let us return to the best within us, individually and as a
community

Elohai Neshamah Shenatah Bi, Tehorah Hi

My G-d, the soul of our community, the soul of each one of us
Is pure.

On this Day of At-one-ment,
We ask you, G-d,
Help us to open the gates of forgiveness
Help us to access our pure souls
Help us, Dear G-d, to finally be At-one.

AFTER THE GATES CLOSE

by McKenzie Wren

ritualwell.org/ritual/after-the-gates-close/

The air is empty of shofar cries and the prayers that floated into the skies from a hundred hearts. The songs that lifted our hearts, soothed our souls and moved us to tears have stilled.

We stood, bowed, surrendered, and rose again
throats raw from confession, mouths dry from prayer
bodies hollowed by hunger.

And then—

With the setting of the sun came the shutting of the gates,
A quiet click you only hear if you're paying attention
Like a light breeze gently pushing a garden gate, the soft “snick”
of closure

Now comes the weariness of completeness:
the emptiness that follows fullness.

Not joy, not grief,
but a peculiar exhaustion,
the way the ocean feels
after the tide has carried everything out,
leaving wet sand that cannot yet imagine
another wave returning.

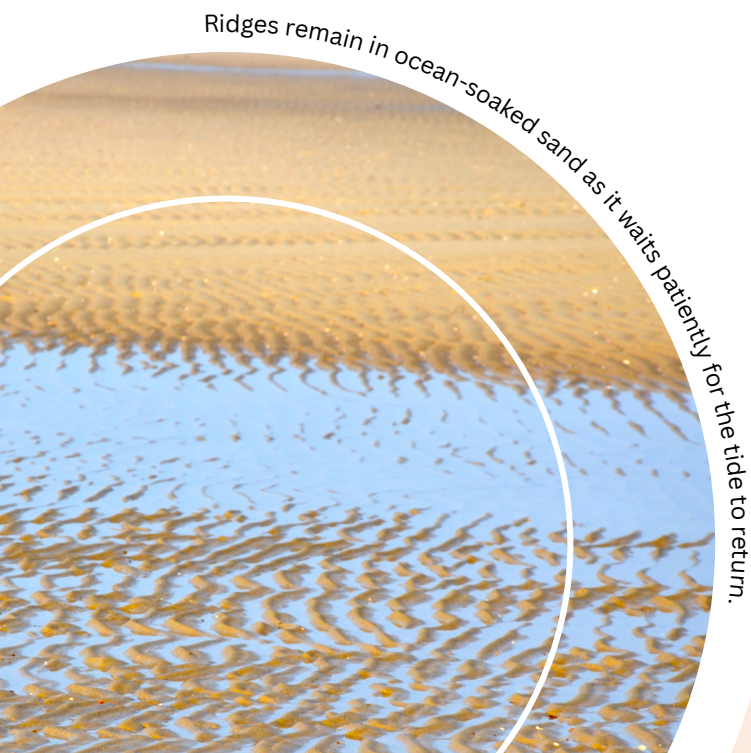
And yet the tide comes in, life resumes.
Emails and dishes, errands and deadlines.
No one on the street knows
you've just traveled an arc of ancient time,

Through praise, confession, surrender, grief and renewal
Held tenderly on ancient words, soothed by the community's
shared heart

No one sees that you've been wrung out,
that you are still listening, still hearing
the echoes of the day.

You walk forward anyway
Full, light, undone,

Complete
Carrying the sweet aftertaste
of holiness,
like honey on the tongue
after the fast has broken.



יום כּיפור

YOM KIPPUR

Prompts & Practices

This writing exercise asks you to explore using the word “and” as a way of staying open to many opposing truths at once. On a piece of paper, write “I am...” at the top. Now, allow yourself in stream-of-consciousness style to finish this thought by stringing together words separated by the word “and.” You should try to include many contrasting responses. An example might be, “I am...kind and jealous and silly and angry and bossy and happy and distraught and...” See how long you can keep writing. When you are done, repeat this exercise with the prompts, “The world is...” and/or “God is...”

After each round of writing, try the following: If you wear glasses, take them off and take them off and look at the words you’ve just written, blurred on the page. Then, put your glasses back on and experience what it is like to see your words clearly. If you don’t wear glasses, you can do this by squinting your eyes so that the words blur and then opening them so that you see clearly.

What is it like to read such contradictory ideas with visual clarity? Did the things you wrote surprise you? Is it difficult to stay open to so many things being true at once?

Closing *Ne'illah* נְעִילָה HOLDING THE WHOLE

As we come to the end of many weeks of intense spiritual work, we prepare ourselves for the festival of Sukkot, beginning just four days from Yom Kippur. Sukkot is known as *Z'man Simchateinu* or The Season of Our Joy. How is it that we move from the self-affliction of Yom Kippur into the merriment of Sukkot without even a week in between? How could the Jewish calendar require us to switch emotional settings so abruptly?

This is but another example of how Judaism teaches us to hold the whole; we do not need to distance the solemn from the joyful—the month of Tishre can contain it all, as can we.

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

- Resources for prayer, ritual and more
- 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!



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