



WELCOME 5779

IDEAS FOR THE HOLIDAYS THIS YEAR WHAT WE WILL DO AT SERVICES

A PREVIEW OF AN EXTRAORDINARY YEAR

As is typical of Americans in general, we Jews are not joiners like we used to be. Being a “member” no longer defines being Jewish. Choosing one’s own way to participate is how more and more Jews involve themselves. We welcome all.

If you have friends and/or family who want even a taste; we invite you to bring them.

Return again, return again, return to what you are return to who you are, return to the land of your soul. Every year, the High Holidays bring us home to some idea of an essential part of our being. Every year, we come together with the same longings and hopes. But for what? Does each of us have a “true self” we can uncover? Can we reach our ideal of a "best self?" Is there a “pure” Judaism we can connect to?

Every year requires new and different answers. *Who is a Jew? Who is welcome in the community? What are Jewish values? How different and diverse are the Jewish people?*

What does our tradition demand of us? What in our tradition do we revere? None of these questions remains static. And this year, there is no room for cover-up as Jews are in open conflict with each other politically, economically, socially and religiously.

How do we use the High Holidays to deal with the range of needs we all have now?

Every year, we draw from a Mahzor that draws on imagery that has evolved over millennia. We take great comfort in the familiar. We celebrate new variations that give us the illusion of change; but that too is comforting. Yet as we see people we may not have seen all year, we realize that each of us has not only changed on the outside, but our bodies and our experiences have brought us to new places and we have new challenges to face. Whether it be through loss or separation, shifts in our support systems or new people in our world, we are each in different stages of life. And we need to develop different tools and maintain comfort as we try to create new paradigms.

As a community, we will go through this "back and forth" process together.

Our leadership at services is a team that draws on the full range of the Jewish experience.



Few know that there are as many African American Jews in the United States as there are Israeli Jews who officially reside here. Rabbinical school graduate Tamar Manasseh will be with us to engage us with a

world of Jews who may help us value the tradition we have lost sight of. Through her Jewish perspective leading to efforts to limit the killings in Englewood, she brings alive a Jewish tradition of activism that was central in our ancestors coming to America. She inspires by living and teaching the vision that many of the descendants of Eastern European Jews have forgotten.

Rabbi Tsafi Lev, whose Sephardic parents just returned to live in Israel, works with the most educated and challenging young people in Los Angeles. He will focus on their iconoclastic



questions and help us make the entire High Holiday experience cognitively and emotionally gratifying.

David Landau, Howard Levy, Kalyan Pathak and Larry Gray will be joined by Judith Golden with musical prayer that provokes and soothes.

In this guide, we will outline how each service will move the process forward; we invite you to participate in as many of the services as possible.



SELICHOT

**7PM, SATURDAY NIGHT, SEPTEMBER 1
at INFINITY FOUNDATION, 1280 OLD
SKOKIE ROAD, HIGHLAND PARK**

JOEL BRAUNHOLD – American Jews and Israeli Jews moving in opposite directions.

Once shared religious tradition brought the diverse Jewish world together. When those splits became insurmountable, Israel became the glue that sustained the slogan, "We are One."

Now, the clear majority of American Jews hold views of democracy, pluralism and minority rights that are increasingly different from the views of the Israeli Jews. We wonder what happened to their Jewish values, and according to Donniel Hartman, they see us as dying and irrelevant even in terms of relating to America.

Joel Braunhold heads the Alliance for Middle East Peace which is the umbrella group that

stimulates and coordinates the non-governmental organization efforts to bring services and hope on the troubled ground. It's safe to believe that if you hear positive cooperative news, Joel has been involved in it.

He is, therefore, uniquely equipped to help us understand how and why American Jews and Israeli Jews are moving in opposite directions. Not only will that guide us in relating to Israel, but it will also help us understand who we are.

Selichot is not only this intellectual experience. It is a chance to open the neurobiological, psychological, and spiritual pathways that we will use over the holidays. Hearing the shofar and singing familiar songs literally does what the poets said — open us up for the work ahead.

ROSH HASHANAH

**EREV ROSH HASHANAH — 6:00PM
HIGHLAND PARK COMMUNITY HOUSE
1991 SHERIDAN ROAD
HIGHLAND PARK**

In the short service before dinner, we talk about what everyone is really thinking. "Why are we here?"

Are we coming together to celebrate our comfort, even the comfort of our complaining? Do we want to change? How do we respond to external pressures?

With an introduction to the words accumulated through the centuries and the unique Rosh Hashanah musical modes that transform an "ordinary evening service" — the Shema, the Amidah and the concluding prayers — we will have ninety minutes of prayer, music, and discussion to create an emotional content to our yearning for understanding.

By 7:30 pm, you will be on the way for a Rosh Hashanah dinner.

ROSH HASHANAH MORNING, DAY ONE — 9:00AM

Who are we as Jews, as family, as leaders? Who is included and who decides? And even more importantly, what is the basis for deciding? Because why we think we do something influences future outcomes and behaviors. Abraham had two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. We read that Abraham banished Ishmael and made the younger Isaac his heir. If he would have read the book of Deuteronomy, he would know he was instructed to choose Ishmael. So, why did he choose Isaac, the child of the unfavored wife? Was Hagar a wife prior to being called Keturah?

Was there some moral, cognitively driven basis or was it an emotional preference? Consider the options: There was an intellectually driven reason for choosing Isaac and Abraham understood it; Abraham didn't understand there was a reason for his choice and thought it was his personal favoritism; Abraham felt a favorite and attributed it to a moral or rational basis or a divine imperative; Abraham knew it was just that he liked Isaac more and felt comfortable with his favorite.

This discussion becomes a window into what leads us to act the way we do and to understand that we face consequences not only for what we do, but also for why we think we do it.

No contemporary issues reflect this more than what we think is Jewish and who decides for Israel and/or for us.

Our services will warm up with selections of the orienting blessings, the psalms of the Temple Levites and the special poems that define the extraordinary agenda of the day. Through them we can appreciate what we have, what we need, what we want and what we need to reject.



After the Torah reading, at about 11:00AM, we will sound the Shofar and engage with the themes of the day with the perspective of our Torah discussion.

In Malchuyot, we consider our place in the universe. How are we changing, gaining and losing, impacting others and facing our limitations? What defines who we want to be? Through Zichronot, we reflect on the process of our own reflections. How do our memories and the choices we make set the tone for our future? What and how do we recall the past? In both

personal and historic ways, how do we deepen our understanding of our past to enhance our future? And with Shofarot, we appreciate that this is not just a contemplative exercise. We act on how we think and feel. And that leaves consequences for us and our heirs to live with. In each of these modes, we will particularly consider the tool of disengagement. When is it necessary? What is the price we pay for it?

In many ways, the central thematic image of Rosh Hashanah is: “On Rosh Hashanah it is written and on Yom Kippur it is sealed: How many shall leave this world and how many shall be born, who shall live and who shall die?” Beyond the literal, how do the perspectives that we shape as individuals in community on the High Holidays set the tone for the year ahead?

With Kiddush over wine and motzi over challah, we will conclude at 1 PM

TASHLICH — 4:30PM



In our postmodern world, we have all become adept at pretending anything means what we want it to mean. At one level, it means different interpretations of the same facts. At another, it means looking at the same world and seeing different facts.

Tashlich is an important and poignant way to understand this. What does it mean to throw our sins away? What does it mean to rid ourselves of elements of who we are that we no longer want to claim?

In the morning, we may talk about separation as a concept. Through Tashlich, we act to get rid of something and then consider the consequence.

—How is it different to throw something away versus working with it?

—Can we really separate? Even when we think of getting rid of something, does it really stay within us?

—Does nature create a process of recycling that makes it impossible to escape ourselves?

In many ways, this can either be the “simplest most primitive experience” or the most soul wrenching moment of change and its limitations during the holidays. With the poignant words of *Avinu Malkeynu* and the niggurnim of davening, we will gather at handicapped accessible Rosewood Beach for the experience. Access road to the beach is on Sheridan Road a half mile north of Roger Williams Ave. Parking passes for non-residents are available.

ROSH HASHANAH MORNING, DAY TWO — 9:00AM

On the second day of Rosh Hashanah, we will explore the consequences of Abraham’s decision to banish Ishmael and make Isaac the chosen one. What was the purpose of this act? Simply the expression of personal choice or a thoughtful moral construct? And if it were a moral construct, what was that construct?

If you distinguish between people, particularly in your family and you believe you are doing it for a virtuous, moral or utilitarian purpose, what do you have to do to fulfill that purpose? Do you have to demonize the other to justify your position? In the Akedah, one perspective is that Abraham had to offer Isaac to God to justify the “virtue” of his choice of Isaac over Ishmael.

What happens in Israel today to justify the positions advocated in the Nation-State bill? How are American Jews viewing the decisions made in Israeli society and what does that mean to Israelis and us?

In the Torah reading, the issue is resolved with God protecting Abraham from the ultimate consequences of his behavior. Isn’t that the

hope for mercy that surfaces in Jewish thought during the High Holidays? Will the world's God step in and send a ram to protect us from the harm we can do from the choices we make?

Again, we will conclude at 1 PM.

THE DAYS IN BETWEEN

On Rosh Hashanah, we hope to achieve some success in considering what approaches we need to achieve to be more adaptive and inspired for the year ahead. What shifts do we have to make in our thinking and self-reflection

to uplift our family life, and participation in community and country to approach our higher aspirations?

During the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we try to figure that out. What thinking can we do differently? What methods are there to implement change? On a personal level, what will we do differently? On a communal level, what will we do to influence the world? How will we use our time and our money to support our redefined expectations of ourselves?

YOM KIPPUR

Yom Kippur is a day that seems to ask us the impossible: Focus on our faults (Al Cheyts) AND embrace the fantasy that we can get rid of them. It's two different approaches to life in twenty-five hours of battle and harmony.

Yom Kippur is the day when we all become the most accessible to our emotional need for religious comfort. And it is also the time when we are most introspectively critical of our own behavior. How do we get a world and a life that is better than what we deserve? How do we get acceptance despite our limitations – be they committing acts we ourselves know are inappropriate, operating with distorted reality or failing to live up to our own expectations? How do we mix our realities, no matter how frightening, with our unbridled hope? We have ideas about what we need to do and even some ideas about how to do it. We consider and let go of the “cheyts” which may be thought of not only as “sins” but as ways we have gone off course. They are the parts of our lives that don’t fit in with the coherent story we would like to have.

Together we will explore the hubris of our hope and the acceptance of our imperfect reality. In many ways, the hardest part of this process is letting go because it is as if a part of us dies and

often it is a part of us that we like and are comfortable with. And that is painful.

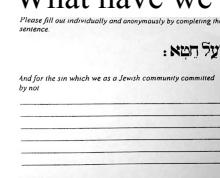
KOL NIDRE — 6:30PM

On Kol Nidre, we begin with the seemingly problematic words, “Our vows shall not be vows, our oaths shall not be oaths.” Rather than looking at them as an excuse for failing, they can inspire us limited humans to take a chance at doing better even as we say we are incapable of fully understanding the consequences of what we do. Can we live with the difference between our fantasies and dreams and our realities and limited abilities? Does a lack of perfection or even a gap between our aspirations and our performance make us hypocrites or even liars?

As we enter, we fill out Al Cheyt forms which reflect the work we’ve done since Rosh Hashanah. Where have we fallen short in what we as individuals have done or failed to do?

What have we as a Jewish community done wrong or failed to do? How do we own our failings without either denying them or succumbing to them?

Immediately after Kol Nidre, we recite the words, “May forgiveness be granted to the



whole congregation of Israel and to the stranger in their midst for in respect of all the people as if it was done unwittingly.” And we give God’s response, “I have forgiven according to your word.” Ultimate amnesty! Complete grace from God!

Yet that is when the second level of work begins. From our earliest days of wandering in the dessert, we didn’t look only to God to be kind to us. Amazing grace was never the main theme in Jewish life. It becomes our responsibility to transform ourselves. We have to select our path, define our course and plan our action for the year.

It is a time of support for “community” by community. You will receive your pledge card. On this, the “holiest” night of the year, we acknowledge that in Judaism, money is not the root of evil but a tool that can empower us to fulfill different purposes. How we use our resources is our choice. This is the time when we decide what we will make possible for Aitz Hayim to be in the year ahead.

During the service, we will recite the Shema, the Amidah of reflection and selections from the poetry written through the ages that attempts to capture the different moods that lead to reflection and change.

Through the two sets of confessions, the Ashamnu and the Al Cheyts, said silently and out loud, we are able to appreciate how ordinary, mundane and acceptable our failures and limitations have become.

Sometimes they are so much a part of us we don’t even notice them, and sometimes it is just frightening to give them up. Sometimes, we don’t consider what is new and different and sometimes we overly invest in rationalizing the status quo.



YOM KIPPUR DAY — 9:00AM

After the warm up in the morning service, we will have a second round of the confessional, which should push us to go beyond where we were and consider behaviors and consequences within ourselves and our community that we have not considered before.

The Torah reading speaks to our desire for our ritualistic acts to move the heavens to fulfill our vision of a perfect redeemed world. It speaks to our emotional longing for there to be cosmic meaning to our acts. It emphasizes shedding clothing with its symbolic significance. Aaron the High Priest sprinkles the blood to get expiation for himself, his family and the entire community. What does it mean to “scapegoat” a goat, not because it is different but because it is the same as the goat we sacrifice?

Immediately after the Torah reading, we leave this emotional world of divinely ordained perfection and are confronted by the reality of the harsh words of Isaiah. He challenges us to leave this imaginary world of symbolic redemption and feed the hungry, cloth the naked and welcome the stranger. Even as we need comfort we must take responsibility.

At the Yiskor service, through guided imagery, we have a chance to reconnect with our parents, spouses, grandparents, children, family members and friends who have been gathered to their ancestors. This active process becomes totally personal as some are brought to raw pain and others to joyous experiences. For some it is a chance to share news and for others it is a chance to get and give forgiveness. The animated film, *Coco*, demonstrates poignantly how the Mexican Day of the Dead mirrors the guided imagery and the theme of the much-quoted words of Jack Riener, “As long as we live, they live for they are now a part of us as we remember them.”

Two special elements complete the Yom Kippur Musaf service: The Avodah service is our

reenactment of the High Priest entering the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur. As we prostrate ourselves in front of the Ark, we literally acknowledge our limitations, uncertainties and fragilities. Through that lack of arrogance comes opportunities for a new different form of confidence, one that acknowledges our need to be protected by a compassionate world.

The Eyleh Ezkerah is a medieval poem that speaks of the horror of the Romans torturing the great rabbis of the Talmud. It both captures Jewish fear in the face of evil and cruel enemies and opens the door for the introspection that we may bear some responsibility as we are condemned for selling our brother Joseph into slavery. Coming immediately after the Avodah, it balances our hope of an ideal world with the complexity of our own experiences.

MINCHA — 4:45PM

Mincha services gives us the challenge of any evolving tradition—to evaluate the ways of the past in view of our current needs and understanding.

No Torah has been politicized more than the Mincha Torah reading, Leviticus 18: “Do not lie with a male as one lies with a woman.” On the literal level our tradition voices words we no longer accept.

We are forced to face the challenge of how do we appreciate the values expressed by our ancestors in their historical context and ours.

It forces us to live with the flaws in our development and deal with the tension between wanting to idealize the past and realize its limitations.

As Abba Eban said, “Our challenge is to be inspired by the past not to be enslaved by it.”

In the Haftarah, Jonah balances the serious challenge of the Torah reading with a story that both demonstrates that the world is bigger than any of us and that we don’t take ourselves too seriously. Maybe through that we can joyfully feel comfort.

In the end, Jonah responds to Divine Mercy. As he does so, Jonah instills in us a hope that, though we too are flawed and have no perfect answers, we will develop a sense of our most widespread obligations.

With that thought, we recite the fourth Amidah of Yom Kippur with the Ashamnu and Al Cheyt confessions.

NEILAH — 5:45PM

Neilah, which literally means closing, is the conclusion of this phase of our year. We have torn apart our hopes and concerns, our disappointments and our dreams.



In the final service of Yom Kippur, we make our commitments to put together our new balance, our new approach to the year. Ought our tone with our families, community and society emphasize different approaches than last year? Will we balance our priorities differently? Will we feel differently about what we will do and what we won’t be able to?

As individuals and as families we stand before the Ark and offer special personal prayers. Our mourning for the replaced is coming to an end. As the pace quickens, we savor our work as we anticipate savoring food. Our singing is strong and we have established and reestablished new bonds. As we head forward through 5779, we will have used our experience together to make a better and more beautiful year.

CHILDREN

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are the most adult of all holidays. They are abstract, sophisticated and introspective. They engage our most mature and thoughtful selves. Overall there are no child oriented activities to center around. That is what makes the High Holidays so important and significant for the next generation.

They see their parents and grandparents engaged Jewishly for their own benefit. At Aitz

Hayim, we encourage kids to freely walk in and out of services, ask questions, and to check in with us. And see adults intellectually and emotionally engaged in community and prayer. We engage our children through the kids' Aliyah, Shofar blowing and Tashlich, all are extremely inviting.

As always, we will have relaxed space for kids to get away and have their own High Holiday experience.

LOGISTICS

Aitz Hayim is an inclusive community. Regardless of background, all who want to participate fully in the joy and challenge of this New Year are invited to be with us. Please be sure we have the names of all family and friends attending so that we have a name tag ready upon arrival.

Please let us know who will be coming.

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services *except for Tashlich on the first day* will be at the Highland Park Community House, 1991 Sheridan Road, Highland Park. 847-835-3232 is an office and emergency phone number and can be used anytime during High Holidays for assistance and directions. Leave a message and you will receive a return call within minutes.

Tashlich at 4:30PM on day 1 of Rosh Hashanah will be at Rosewood Beach and is accessible by auto from the Sheridan Road entrance to Rosewood Park and Beach in Highland Park.

The doors are always open during services and we will have refreshments available nearby for both days of Rosh Hashanah. We will provide kippot, tallitot, and copies of Mahzor Hadash. Any and all who can blow Shofar are invited to bring them for both mornings of Rosh Hashanah and at the end of Yom Kippur.

Lulov and Etrog sets are \$50 each. Schach bundles are \$20 each. Quantities are limited. Orders must be placed with the Aitz Hayim office by September 3rd to reserve.



AITZ HAYIM
CENTER FOR JEWISH LIVING

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