



YOM KIPPUR

Meditation Service



Presented by: Dr. Michael Stroock: KI President 2006 - 2008
Martina Obenski: KI President 2008 – 2010

Revised 7/2026.

A Note About Sources

The readings in this service include selections from *Mishkan HaNefesh: Machzor for the Days of Awe*, as well as original reflections and adaptations developed with the assistance of AI as a creative partner.

An Introductory Note



Welcome Friends,

This afternoon we gather not as an audience, but as a community of souls seeking reflection, renewal, and connection. Yom Kippur is often called the *Sabbath of Sabbaths*, the holiest day of the year. It is a time when the world seems to pause, inviting us to turn inward, to listen deeply, and to open our hearts.

In this lay-led service, there is no single voice of authority — instead, we share the sacred responsibility of creating this space together. Each of us brings our own story, our own questions, our own hopes for the year ahead. We come not to perform, but to be present.

Meditation on Yom Kippur is a way of honoring the stillness beneath the prayers, the silence between the words. It is a chance to notice what is stirring within us — gratitude, regret, longing, resolve — and to offer it honestly before the Eternal.

As we begin, I invite you to take a slow, deep breath. Feel your feet grounded on the earth, your body supported, your mind gently arriving in this moment. Let us set aside, for now, the noise of the outside world, and enter together into a sanctuary of awareness, compassion, and truth.

May this time of reflection help us to return — to ourselves, to one another, and to the Source of Life.



L'Chi Lach – David Syme, piano

To Meditate

Though life is troubled, we are here;
 Despite the sorrow, we are here.
 We know of pain and failure;
 Still, we are here.
 For the sun can shine on a winter day,
 And a warm embrace bring tomorrow's hope.
 We have come on this day to be forgiven and to forgive,
 To forgive ourselves, as we would forgive others.
 For this we celebrate Yom Kippur, to create atonements,
 Not to condemn, but to accept,
 Not to dwell on moods bitter and dark,
 But to bring peace to the deep places of the human soul.

Alvin J. Reines

Why Yom Kippur Matters

There is something remarkable about a day that asks nothing of us except honesty. For one day, we stop pretending that we are complete. We set aside our accomplishments, our titles, our distractions, and even our certainty. We come as we are—human beings who have loved imperfectly, spoken carelessly, missed opportunities for kindness, and carried burdens we were never meant to carry alone.

Yom Kippur reminds us that our tradition does not expect perfection. It expects awareness.

We are given this sacred pause not because we are condemned, but because we are capable of change. Judaism believes that no mistake, no failure, and no disappointment must define the rest of our story. If we have breath, we have the possibility of becoming better than we were yesterday.

This day asks difficult questions.

Where have I fallen short of the person I hoped to be?

Whom have I hurt—through words, through silence, through indifference?

What fears have kept me from living with courage?

What blessings have I overlooked?

And perhaps the hardest question of all: Can I forgive myself enough to begin again?

As the hours of this holy day unfold, may we allow our hearts to soften. May old resentments loosen their grip. May gratitude find its way into places where disappointment has settled. May we discover the courage to apologize, the humility to forgive, and the wisdom to know that every act of kindness changes both the giver and the receiver.

When the final blast of the shofar pierces the silence,

G'mar Chatimah Tovah.

Elohai N'eshama– Cantor Mark Childs

Elohai n'eshama shenatata bi t'horah hi.

Prayer puts into words my hopes. Prayer is a poetic reminder of where I want my soul to live.

Prayer reflects the yearnings of my deepest desires. It asks me to turn past myself for help and support.

Prayer is a metaphor of the thoughts I might not otherwise express. I pray to engage in conversation and communication with G-d, to connect with the world of the spirit.

Prayer elevates my thinking. By doing so, it raises my life to new levels. I do not pray for favors, gifts or grants. I pray for courage, strength, understanding and generosity of spirit.

Source Unknown

Peace

Grant us peace, Your most precious gift, O Eternal Source of peace, and
Give us the will to proclaim your message to all the people of the earth.

Bless our country that it may always be a stronghold of peace,
May contentment reign within its borders and health and happiness within its homes.

Strengthen the bonds of friendship among the inhabitants of all lands and
Inscribe us in the Book of Life, O God the Source of peace.



Oseh Shalom – David Syme, piano

Silent Prayer

What has happened in my life since last Yom Kippur that makes me thankful?
 Have I grown during the past year in my ability to experience and express gratitude?
 Am I consistent in expressing gratitude to loved ones and friends? Do I look for things to feel grateful for, or things to complain about?
 Do I feel appreciated by others? What have I done during the past year that has earned someone else's gratitude?
 What blessings have nourished me in recent years? What are some miracles that greet me every day?

Esa Einai – Beth Schafer

*Esa einai el heharim
 meiyin yavo ezri (x2)
 Ezri mei-im Adonai
 oseh shamayim va-arets (x2)*

The Gift of Awe

Awe does not arrive with thunder.
 It comes quietly—in the stillness before the shofar, in the breath between prayers, in the silence that invites us to listen.
 We spend so much of life doing, speaking, hurrying, that we forget how to simply be.
 On this holy day, we remember. that every life is sacred, that every soul bears the image of God, that every act of kindness has the power to heal.
 Awe is not fear.
 It is the humble realization that we are part of something far greater than ourselves.
 It softens our hearts, opens our eyes, and reminds us that holiness is found not only in this sanctuary, but in every moment, we choose compassion, gratitude, and love.
 May we leave this day with quieter hearts, gentler spirits, and a renewed sense of wonder, ready to recognize the Holy Presence that has been with us all along.



O Guide My Steps – Debra Winston

O Guide My Steps and help me find my way. I need Your shelter now –
Rock me in Your arms and guide my steps. And help me make this day a song
of praise to You – rock me in Your arms and guide my steps.

Ufros Aleinu Sukat sh'lomecha

The Essence of Atonement

The medieval poet Moses Ibn Ezra offers a beautiful image for the Ten Days of Repentance: our sins are like a veil, separating us from God, from one another, and from our truest selves. *Teshuvah*—return—is the lifting of that veil. It reminds us that we are never defined by our mistakes. Beneath them remains the person we were created to be, and change is always possible.

This journey continues with *Vidui*, the prayer of confession. We begin with the brief *Ashamnu*, then move more deeply into *Al Cheit*, naming the ways we have fallen short. As many worshipers gently strike their hearts, confession becomes more than words, it becomes a prayer of both body and soul.

From confession we turn to forgiveness, reciting the Torah's **Thirteen Attributes of God**: “Adonai, Adonai, God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, extending kindness to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and granting pardon.”

A Midrash tells that G-d, wrapped in a *tallit*, taught Moses these very words, saying, “Whenever Israel misses the mark, let them recite these attributes before Me, and I will forgive them.”

This portrait of an intimate relationship with Go-d conveys a spiritual promise for this is the moment when the veil is lifted and we no longer hide from our Maker – a moment when we renew our relationship with the One who makes us whole.



A Prayer for Healing

On this Day of Atonement,
 we turn inward and seek renewal.
 May the Holy One bring healing
 to our bodies, our spirits, and our hearts.
 For those who are suffering,
 may there be refuah shlema —
 a healing of body and soul.
 May we find the courage to forgive,
 the humility to ask forgiveness,
 and the wisdom to make amends.
 As the gates of the year begin to close,
 may we be sealed in the Book of Life—
 for health, for peace,
 for love, and for wholeness.
Ken yehi ratzon.
 May it be God's will.

Mi Shebeirach— Cantor Lisa Lipco Levine

Ashrei – David's Song of Praise

Adonai my sovereign G-d, I praise Your name.
 Boundless is your glory,
 compassionate, full of grace, deeply patient, gentle and just.
 Each generation sings to You, forever telling Your story.
 Goodness and mercy extends to all, Hands opened wide to nourish life.
 We celebrate Your faithful love; Joyful forever, we sing to You.

Elohim Y'chaeininu – Cantor Regina Y. Heit

Elohim Y'chaeininu, yehaenieu v'vharekhenu (x2). Ya-er panah it tanu selah (x2). Repeat x 2 Elohim Yehaenieu, yehaenieu v'vharekhenu (x2)

Inner Peace

Yom Kippur is the embodiment of all the days of the year, and it gives life to all the days. It humbles our hearts, making our desire only to cling to the name of G-d, whose name shall be blessed. Thus, all kinds of material and spiritual divisions and peace are made. Hence joy and gladness remains.

Likkute Etzot

The Meaning of Mitzvot

Some Mitzvot sustain us not only in this world, but also in the world to come. They are: honoring parents, acting with kindness and loyalty; eagerly pursuing Jewish learning at all times; welcoming guests; visiting the sick; rejoicing with couples under the chuppah; caring for the dead and mourners; delving deeply into prayer; making peace among human beings; and the study of Torah – this is the cornerstone.

Hashkiveinu – Craig Tubman

Hashkiveinu Adonai Eloheinu l'shalom v'amideinu malkeinu l'chayim (x 4).

U'sh'mor tzeiteinu u'voeinu L'chayim u'l'shalom me'ata v'ad olam.

Hashkiveinu Adonai Eloheinu l'shalom v'haamideinu malkeinu (x 4)

Lay us down, Lord our G-d, in peace, and raise us up again, our King, to new life. Spread over us Your tabernacle of peace and guide us with Your good counsel. Save us for Your name's sake. Shield us from every enemy, plague, sword, famine, and sorrow. Remove the adversary from before and behind us. Shelter us in the shadow of Your wings, for You, G-d, are our Guardian and Deliverer; You, G-d, are a gracious and compassionate King. Guard our going out and our coming in, and grant us life and peace, now and always.

Each of Us Makes a Difference

Each of us can make a difference when we put an end to indifference and when we let go of our self-desires.

Each of us can make a difference - when we awaken each day by showing each other the way.

Each of us can make a difference when we commit ourselves to having a heart that beats only with compassion and where caring for one another becomes our only passion.

Each of us can make a difference when giving kindness, patience and tenderness is the way we pray and when love and forgiveness becomes our song of the day.

Each of us can make a difference when everything we think, say, or do becomes a gift of love to G-d.

Each of us can make a difference when we commit ourselves to peace, to love, to happiness; when we commit our lives to G-d.

Tov L'hodot – Rabbi Ken Chasen

Chorus: *Tov l'hodot l'Adonai ul'zamer l'shim'cha Elyon
Tov l'hodot l'Adonai ul'zamer l'shim'cha Elyon*

On this, the day of days
my lips shall sing Your praise
for I know that You'll always be
here, surrounding me. **Chorus**

My spirit takes release
I close my eyes in peace
and from my soul, heard far above
springs a song of love. **Chorus**

I wish to understand
the wonders of Your hand
for all the blessings that are mine
Rise from Your design. **Chorus x 2**

Releasing the Weight of Guilt

There is a difference between guilt and repentance.

Repentance awakens us. It calls us to honesty, accountability, and change. It asks us to acknowledge where we have missed the mark and to seek forgiveness—from others, from ourselves, and from God.

Guilt, however, often lingers long after its purpose has been served. It clings to us, whispering that we are forever defined by our failures. It convinces us that we are unworthy of love, incapable of change, or destined to carry yesterday's mistakes into tomorrow.

But that is not the message of Yom Kippur.

This holy day teaches that we are more than the worst thing we have done. We are souls created in the image of God, capable of renewal. The gates of repentance are opened not to trap us in regret, but to lead us toward transformation.

Our tradition tells us that when we return with a sincere heart, when we make amends where we can, when we resolve to choose a better path, God's forgiveness is not reluctant—it is abundant. If God is willing to release us from the burden of our sins, perhaps the greatest challenge is learning to release ourselves.

As we stand together on this sacred day, may we leave behind what no longer serves our souls. May we carry forward the lessons of our past, but not the chains of our past. May we rise from this place lighter in spirit, steadier in purpose, and renewed in hope—ready to write the next chapter of our lives with compassion, courage, and faith. May we be forgiven. May we forgive and may we find the strength to forgive ourselves.

You Are the One – Debbie Friedman

You are the One, for this I pray; that I may have the strength, to be alone. To see the world, to stand among the trees and all the living things. That I may stand alone and offer prayers and talk to You. You are the One to whom I do belong. And I'll sing my song; I'll sing my song to You and give You all that's in my heart.

May all the foliage of the fields, all grasses, trees and plants, awaken at my coming this I pray and send their life into my world of prayer; so that my speech, my thoughts and my prayers may be made whole and feel the spirit of all growing things. And we know that everything is one because we know that everything is You.

You are the One, for this I pray I ask You G-d to hear my words that pour out from my heart I stand before You and like water lift my hands to You in prayer and grant me strength and grant me strength to stand alone. You are the One to whom I do belong. And I'll sing my song; I'll sing my song to You and give You all that's in my heart. You are the One for this I pray and I'll sing my song to You.

Renewal

We often speak of **Tikkun Olam**—repairing the world. It is the sacred work of feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, comforting those who suffer, and standing up for justice. Rooted in Jewish tradition and mysticism, every act of compassion helps tip the balance toward goodness, healing not only our communities but the world itself.

Yet repairing the world is only half the journey.

Jewish wisdom reminds us that lasting change begins within. Alongside **tikkun olam** is **tikkun midot**—the repair of our own character. It is the quiet, often hidden work of cultivating patience instead of anger, humility instead of pride, generosity instead of selfishness, and compassion instead of judgment.

One calls us outward; the other calls us inward.

If we focus only on changing the world, we may overlook the ways we ourselves need to change. If we focus only on ourselves, we risk turning away from the needs of others.

Judaism asks us to do both.

On Yom Kippur we are invited to examine not only what we have done, but who we are becoming. As we mend our hearts, our words, and our relationships, we become better equipped to mend our communities and our world.

The work of repairing the world begins with the work of repairing ourselves. And as we become more patient, more compassionate, more forgiving, and more just, we help create a world that reflects those very qualities.

May this Day of Atonement inspire us to embrace both callings: to transform ourselves with honesty and humility, and through that transformation, become partners with God in the ongoing work of healing the world.



Sh'ma Koleinu – Beth Schafer

With humility & graciousness we stand before You, the days have made us weary
& unsure and although we've made mistakes the truth is we adore You and ask
that You be with us evermore.

Chorus: Sh'ma koleinu, hear our voices. Adonai Eloheinu our one and only G-d. Have
compassion on us Your children and with compassion, hear our prayer.

If You look into our eyes You'll find a quest for learning. If You look into our hearts You'll find
true love. If You look into our souls You'll find a constant burning it's the fire that's been
kindled from above. **Chorus**

And if we stray don't push us away, help us to return to what is right. We know that it's late
but we're willing to wait for Your answer, for Your blessing, for Your light. **Chorus x 3**

The Urge to Give Thanks

As this sacred day draws us inward, we are reminded that gratitude is also a form of prayer.
On Yom Kippur we confess what we have done wrong, but we also pause to give thanks for
all that has been given right. We lift our hearts heavenward in gratitude for the gift of life, for
the people who have loved us, challenged us, and sustained us, for moments of joy that
have brightened our days, and for the strength that has carried us through times of sorrow.

Even in a world that is unfinished, blessings surround us. Gratitude opens our eyes to G-d's
presence, softens our hearts, and renews our spirits. May our thanks rise heavenward, and
may grateful hearts inspire us to live with greater kindness, generosity, and hope in the year
ahead.

Mi Shebeirach – David Syme, piano



Forgiveness

Forgiveness is the Great Mother of inner peace and calm.
 The wrongs of the world hold you prisoner when your heart cannot release the pain.
 To forgive is the ultimate act of self-love.
 Forgive yourself out of kindness and out of the recognition that despite all the anger and confusion, G-d is everywhere.

To forgive is not an act of kindness towards the person who has wronged you.
 Forgiveness is an act of kindness towards yourself.
 G-d, thank You for helping me see that each phase of my life is perfect.
 That I have arrived, that I've always been what I need to be – living perfect moments.
 With Your help, I relinquish my need to judge. Embrace my heart as it beats, even as it bleeds.
 Help me to grow with love, acceptance and curiosity.
 Thank You for lighting my way, for gently illuminating a path in the darkness.
 Let it now be and always be.

Karen Kedar, G-d Whispers

Forgive Yourself

Feel bad. It won't kill you. Use these feelings as a catalyst to make amends, so long as doing so does not inflict more pain. Do something positive that will help offset the damage you have caused. After you have done all that you can by way of making amends and have learned all you can from what you did, make a solemn vow not to repeat the act.

Assuming you have done all of this, let it go. How? The next time the memory arises, don't give yourself over to the drama. "Yes, I did that. I won't do it again". There is no point dwelling on it, and doing so simply feeds the narcissism. Better to do something constructive with your time and energy.

Forgiving Each Other

It is forbidden for a person to be cruel and refuse to be appeased. Rather, one should be easily pacified and difficult to anger. When someone who has wronged you asks for forgiveness, you should forgive with a whole heart and willing spirit. Let the offender come three times and ask sincerely for forgiveness. If the offended person continues to be

stubborn and refused to forgive, one is not required to beg for forgiveness any longer; the one who refuses to forgive is now the sinner.

The Meaning of Prayer

Prayer is for the soul what food is for the body.
 The strength we get from one meal lasts until the next.
 So too, the blessing of a prayer lasts until we pray again.
 The longer the pause between one prayer and the next, the more we are mired in worldly pursuits, in words that dim the purity of the soul, in speech that dulls its brightness.
 When we pray, we wash away all that clouds our vision
 and satisfy our spirit's hunger for a higher calling.
 Prayer gives the soul what food gives the body.

Heal Us Now – Leon Sher

Lyrics: *R'faeinu Adonai v'neirafehi, hoshi-einu v'nivasheah. El karov, l'chol korav, ach karov, li-reav, yishoh.*

We pray for healing of the body. We pray for healing of the soul. For strength of flesh and mind and spirit. We pray to once again be whole.

Chorus: *El na, r'fa na – oh please heal us now. R'fuat hanefesh, r'fuat haguf, r'fua sh'leimah. Heal us now*

Ho she-ah et ameche u va reich et nacha la t'cha u r'eim v'na s'eim ad ha o lom misheberach avotenu misheberach imotenu l' Adonai hoshiahna.

We pray for healing of our people. We pray for healing of the land and peace for every race and nation – every child, every woman, every man. **Chorus x 2**



Going Forward

I pose this challenge to my spirit:

To receive with open mind and heart what is offered to me.

May I learn to embrace as easily as I evaluate.

May I quiet the ever present instinct to judge and critique.

May I cultivate the gift of listening without framing a reply.

May I learn to accept help from those who care for me.

May I grow less insistent that life bend to my will and expectations.

May generosity of spirit find a home within me.

T'filat Haderech – Debbie Friedman

May we be blessed as we go on our way

May we be guided in peace

May we be blessed with health and joy

May this be our blessing, amen.

Amen, Amen may this be our blessing, amen. (x2)

May we be sheltered by the wings of peace

May we be kept in safety and in love

May grace and compassion find their way to every soul

May this be our blessing, amen

Amen, Amen may this be our blessing, amen. (x3)

L' Shanah Tovah
Have a sweet year!

