


Jewish Literacy #5 The High Holy Days

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Rosh HaShanah

- The Bible simply says:
 - Lev. 23:24. In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall you have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of horns, a holy gathering. 25. You shall do no labor in it; but you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord.
 - Num. 29:1. And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have an holy gathering; you shall do no labor; it is a day of blowing the horn for you.
- It is the Talmud that makes this the beginning of the New Year.

Rosh HaShanah

- The year 5780
 - Year zero is the creation of the universe
 - Rosh Hashanah is the anniversary of the creation of humanity.
- RH begins the *Yamim Hanoramim*, the Days of Awe:
 - A sober period of introspection in which we seek forgiveness from our fellow people and from God.

Rosh HaShanah Terms

| | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Chet</i> [Sin] | חטא | |
| <i>Elul</i> [Month before RH] | אלול | <i>Unetaneh Tokef</i> |
| <i>Gemara Chatimah Tovah</i> [May you be well sealed] | גְּמַר חַתִּימָה טוֹבָה | וְגִתְנָה ת... |
| High Holy Days | | <i>Yamim Nora'im</i> [Days of Awe] |
| <i>Leshanah Tovah Tikatevu</i> [May you be written for a good year] | לְשָׁנָה טוֹבָה תִּכְתְּבוּ | יָמִים נוֹרְאִים |
| <i>Machzor</i> [HHD prayer book] | מַחְזֹר | <i>Yom Hadin</i> [Day of Judgement] |
| Rosh Hashanah | ראש השנה | יוֹם הַדִּין |
| <i>Sefer Hachayim</i> [Book of Life] | סֵפֶר הַחַיִּים | <i>Yom Tov</i> [Holy Day] |
| <i>Selichot</i> [Prayers for forgiveness] | סְלִיחוֹת | יוֹם טוֹב |
| <i>Shofar</i> | שׁוֹפָר | |
| <i>Tashlich</i> [Casting (away of sins)] | תְּשַׁלַּח | |
| <i>Teshuvah</i> [Repentance] | תְּשׁוּבָה | |

Rosh HaShanah Texts

1. Forgive your neighbor his wrongdoing, then your sins will be forgiven when you pray. Shall one man cherish anger against another and yet ask healing from God? Does he have no mercy on a man like himself and yet pray for his own sins?
(Ben Sira 28:2-4)

2. There are four New Years: On the first day of Nisan is the New Year for kings and festivals; on the first of Elul is the New Year for the tithe of cattle [R. Eleazar and R. Simeon say that this is on the first of Tishri]; on the first of Tishri is the New Year for reckoning of the years and for release and jubilee years for planting and [the tithing of] vegetables; on the first of Shevat is the New Year for trees, according to the school of Shammai, but the school of Hillel says it is on the fifteenth of that month.

A four seasons judgment is passed on the world: at Passover in respect of produce, at Shavuot in respect of fruit; at New Year all creatures pass before God like children at Maron, as it says "He who fashions the hearts of them all, who discerns all their doings" (Psalms 33:15); and on Sukot judgment is passed in respect of rain.
(Rosh Hashanah 1:1-2)

Rosh HaShanah Texts

3. Judah says: "Man is judged on New Year, and his doom is sealed on the Day of Atonement." R. Jose says: "Man is judged every day, as it says, 'You inspect him every morning' " (Job 7:18). R. Nathan says: "Man is judged every moment, as it says, 'You examine him every minute' " (Job 7:18).
(Rosh Hashanah 16a)

Rosh HaShanah Texts

4. There are many reasons for the sounding of the *shofar*. Among them are these: Rosh Hashanah marks the beginning of Creation, and we, on Rosh Hashanah, accept the Creator as our Sovereign, as it is said: "With trumpets and the blasts of the *shofar* acclaim the Sovereign Lord" (Psalms 98:6). Second, since Rosh Hashanah is the first of the Ten Days of Repentance, the *shofar* is sounded to herald their beginning, as though to say: "Let all who desire to repent, turn now." Third, the *shofar* reminds us of our stand at Sinai, as it is said: "The blast of the *shofar* grew louder and louder" (Exodus 19:19), in order that we may take upon ourselves what our ancestors took upon themselves when they said: "We will do and we will hear" (Exodus 24:7). Fourth, it reminds us of the Binding of Isaac, who offered himself to heaven and was replaced by the ram caught by its horns in a thicket. So ought we to be ready at all times to offer our lives for the sanctification of God's name. Finally, it reminds us of redemption, that we may long passionately for it, as it is said: "It shall come to pass on that day that a great *shofar* will be sounded; and all the lost shall return" (Isaiah 27:13).
(Sa'adia Ga'on)

RH Texts: Unetaneh Tokef

Let us proclaim the sacred power of this day,
it is awesome and full of dread.
For on this day Your dominion is exalted,
Your throne established in steadfast love,
there in truth You reign.
In truth You are
Judge and Arbiter, Counsel and Witness.
You write and You seal, You record and recount.
You remember deeds long forgotten.
You open the book of our days,
and what is written there proclaims itself,
for it bears the signature
of every human being.

*The great shofar is sounded,
the still, small voice is heard;
the angels,
gripped by fear and trembling,
declare in awe:
This is the Day of Judgment!
For even the hosts of heaven are judged.*

*as... who dwell on earth
stand arrayed before You.*

As the shepherd seeks out his flock
and makes the sheep pass under his staff,
so do You muster and number and consider
every soul,
setting the bounds of every creature's life,
and decreeing its destiny.

On Rosh Hashanah it is written,
on Yom Kippur it is sealed:
How many shall pass on, how many shall come to be;
who shall live and who shall die,
who shall see ripe age and who shall not;
who shall perish by fire and who by water,
who by sword and who by beast;
who by hunger and who by thirst;
who by earthquake and who by plague;
who by strangling and who by stoning;
who shall be secure and who shall be driven;
who shall be tranquil and who shall be troubled;
who shall be poor and who shall be rich,
who shall be humbled and who exalted.

*But REPENTANCE, PRAYER, and CHARITY
temper judgment's severe decree.*

Yom Kippur

- Day of Atonement [At-One-Ment ?]
- The Bible on Yom Kippur
 - Lev. 23: 27. Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement; it shall be a holy gathering to you; and you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire to the Lord.
 - 28. And you shall do no work in that same day; for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the Lord your God.
 - No mention of fasting, etc.

Yom Kippur

TERMS TO KNOW

| | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <i>Kol Nidrei</i> | [Key Prayer: lit. "All Vows"] | כָּל נִדְרֵי |
| <i>Neilah</i> | [Closing service on YK] | נְעִילָה |
| <i>Shabbat Shuvah</i> | [Sabbath between RH & YK] | שַׁבַּת שׁוּבָה |
| <i>Yahrzeit</i> | [Anniversary of one's passing] | יְאָרְצֵיט |
| <i>Yizkor</i> | [Lit. "Remembrance": Service of remembering] | יְזִכּוֹר |
| Yom Kippur | [Day of Atonement] | יוֹם כִּפּוּר |

Yom Kippur Texts

2. On the Day of Atonement, eating, drinking, washing, anointing, putting on sandals, and marital intercourse are forbidden. Kings or brides may wash their faces, and a woman after child-birth may put on sandals.
[Yoma 8:1]

3. Children are not required to fast on Yom Kippur, but they [parents] should train them one or two years before they are of age that they may become versed in the commandments.
 If a pregnant woman smelled food (and craved it), they may give her food until she recovers herself. One that is sick may be given food at the word of skilled persons; if no skilled persons are there, one may be given food at their own wish until they say, "Enough!"
[Yoma 8:4-5]

4. What do you call "profaning God's name"? Rav said: In my case, since I am reputed to live strictly under the discipline of Torah, it would be failing to pay the butcher promptly.
[Yoma 86a]

Yom Kippur Texts

5. At first, sin is like a spider's web; in the end, it becomes thick as a ship's cable. At first, it is a visitor; in the end, it becomes the master of the house.
[Genesis Rabbah 22.6]

6. For transgressions against God, the Day of Atonement atones; but for transgressions of one human being against another, the Day of Atonement does not atone until they have made peace with each other.
[Yoma 8.9]

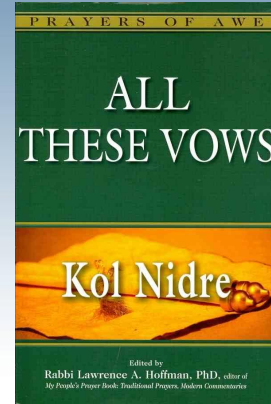
7. Days are like scrolls: Write on them only what you want remembered.
[Bachya ibn Pakuda]

8. The Holy One said to Israel: Remake yourselves by repentance during the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and on Yom Kippur, I will hold you guiltless, regarding you as a new made creature.
[Pesikta Rabbati 40.5]

Yom Kippur: Kol Nidre

- Very Interesting – it's in Aramaic, not Hebrew
- Very Problematic
- Not a prayer at all
 - It's a legal procedure stating that "any vows I make from this year to the next are hereby void"
 - Technically takes place before the start of Yom Kippur.
- The rabbis have been struggling with this for 1200 years but have been unable to get rid of it because the people love it (especially the melody).

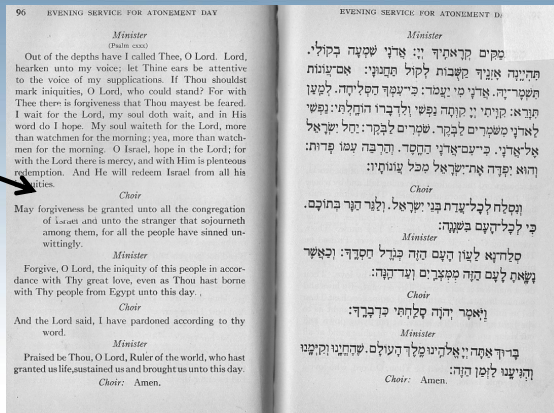
Yom Kippur: Kol Nidre



- 260 Pages
- 38 Essays
- Published by Jewish Lights

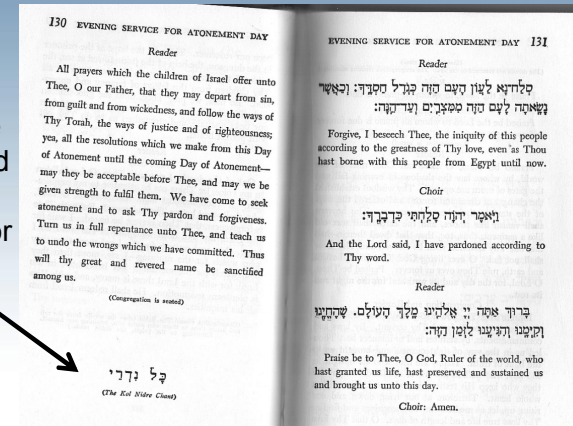
Kol Nidre: UPB 1922

Kol Nidre
Simply
Skipped!



Kol Nidre: UPB 1945

Kol Nidre
mentioned
without
Aramaic or
English
text!



Kol Nidre: Translations

Literal Translation

From *Gates of Repentance*
1978

(All vows, bonds, devotions, promises, obligations, penalties and oaths, wherewith we have vowed, sworn, devoted, and bound ourselves, from this Day of Atonement to the next Day of Atonement – may it come to us for good – all these we repent us of them. They shall be absolved, released, annulled, made void and of no effect; they shall not be binding nor shall they have any power. Our vows shall not be vows; our bonds shall not be bonds; and our oaths shall not be oaths.)

Let all our vows and oaths, all the promises we make and the obligations we incur to You, O God, between this Yom Kippur and the next, be null and void should we, after honest effort, find ourselves unable to fulfill them. Then may we be absolved of them.

Kol Nidre: Translations

From "the New Mahzor"
(Conservative)
2001

Kol Nidre

All vows, oaths, and promises
Which we made to God and were not able to fulfill—
From last Yom Kippur to this Yom Kippur—
May all such vows between ourselves and God be annulled.
May they be void and of no effect.
May we be absolved of them and released from them.
May these vows not be considered vows,
These oaths not be considered oaths,
And these promises not be considered promises.

Kol Nidre: Translations

From *Mishkan Hanefesh*
2015

All vows —
resolves and commitments, vows of abstinence and terms of obligation,
sworn promises and oaths of dedication —
that we promise and swear to God, and take upon ourselves
from this Day of Atonement until next Day of Atonement, may it find us well:
we regret them and for all of them we repent.
Let all of them be discarded and forgiven, abolished and undone;
they are not valid and they are not binding.
Our vows shall not be vows; our resolves shall not be resolves;
and our oaths — they shall not be oaths.

THAT WE PROMISE AND SWEAR TO GOD, AND TAKE UPON OURSELVES. The medieval authority Rabbeinu Tam (Rashi's grandson, ca. 1100–1171) declared that *Kol Nidrei* applies only to personal vows made on one's own initiative — that is, obligations a person undertakes in relation to God. This principle is derived from the phrase *v'laasarna al nafshatana* (which we take upon ourselves). This annulment of vows has nothing to do with our obligations to other human beings.

The High Holy Days: Bottom Lines

- Your actions and deeds count: you are accountable.
 - Live as if Someone's counting.
- You are mortal
 - Life is precious because it's finite
 - Rabbi Eliezer said: "Repent one day before your death." (Talmud)
 - Repair your relationships (with God and with others) today.