

יום כפור בביתנו

YOM KIPPUR BEVETÉNU

in our home

A SPIRITUAL HUMANISTIC JEWISH GUIDE
TO YOM KIPPUR AT HOME

KOL NIDRE · YOM KIPPUR · A WORKBOOK
COMPANION TO MAḤZOR BEKOLÉNU



What this book is

This is a Yom Kippur for a sofa, an armchair, a bed, a garden, a walk. It is not a shortened synagogue service and it is not a substitute for one. It is a different thing, for a day that most people spend somewhere other than a synagogue.

It is built for two kinds of reader at once: a person on their own, and a household. Every practice is marked **ALONE**, **WITH OTHERS** or **EITHER**, so you can see at a glance what is being asked of you. Nothing here needs a leader, a minyan, a scroll or a building.

THE WORD *WE*, SAID BY ONE PERSON

Almost every line in this book is in the plural. *Let us forgive. Let us return. We have missed the mark.* If you are alone, that can sound like a costume — as though you were pretending to be a congregation.

You are not. The community this liturgy speaks to is not the set of people standing within earshot. It is everyone saying these words on this evening, in rooms you will never see, and everyone who said them before there was anyone alive to remember it, and everyone who will. That community is real whether or not any of it is in your house.

When you say *we* on your own, you are not impersonating a crowd. You are joining one that is already speaking.



II **The shape of the day**

In a synagogue the day has a shape imposed on it from outside: the service begins, it continues, it ends, and the hours are full. At home there is no such shape, and this is where a home Yom Kippur usually fails — not at Kol Nidre, which is easy, but at half past eleven the next morning, when you are hungry and bored and beginning to wonder what you thought you were doing.

So this book is not arranged by services. It is arranged by **the light and the body**, which are what actually govern a day spent at home. Rest is in it. The walk is in it. The long empty middle is in it, on purpose, with something to do in it.

LATE AFTERNOON

Teshuvá with the people you can still reach. The letter.
White clothes. The last meal.

SUNSET

The memorial candle, and the lights. Kol Nidre. The fast begins.

EVENING

The Shema, a short confession — and then sleep, early.

MORNING

Waking into the fast. The blessing over the body. Seliḥot, the first time. A walk.

MIDDAY

Rest, without apology. Silence. Seliḥot, the second time.

AFTERNOON The Book of Jonah, read whole, and talked about. The heart of the day.

DUSK Outdoors if you can. Selihot, the third time. Ne'ilah, as the light goes.

NIGHTFALL Three stars. Havdalah. The fast ends. Eat.

Take what you can use. A Yom Kippur with four of these in it is a Yom Kippur.

A RULE FOR THE DAY, IF THERE ARE OTHERS WITH YOU

If you are doing this with other people, read this aloud before you begin, and mean it. Sit however you normally sit — sofas, armchairs, the floor, wherever the room is comfortable. Nothing today needs anyone to sit up straight.

- This day is for your own accounting. It is not a hearing, and nobody here is on trial.
- Nobody has to answer anything. *Not this year* is a complete sentence, and it ends the matter.
- Say what you did. Do not say what somebody else did. If an apology is owed to someone here, offer it — do not request one.
- Children answer what they want to answer. A child who wants to go and play has understood the day well enough.

Yom Kippur can be used as a licence to make people sit still and listen to a grievance. It is worth saying out loud, once, that we are not doing that.



— חשבון הנפש · Heshbón HaNéfesh

If you kept the thirty days of Elul, this is where they land. If you did not, this page still tells you what the workbook pages in this volume are doing.

Heshbón hanéfesh is an accounting of the soul — or, put less grandly, an honest audit of the life you are actually making and what it is doing to other people. It is a practice of the month before, done a little each day, and it is the reason Yom Kippur is survivable: by the time the fast begins the work has mostly been done, and today is where it is gathered up.

Rabbi Frank Tamburello's *Heshbon HaNefesh*, a thirty-day Spiritual Humanistic journal for Elul, sets that accounting out day by day — looking back, then the people you share a life with, then what you say you value, then the turning itself, then the year that has not happened yet. This volume is built to be its completion, in the same idiom and the same typeface.

FOUR MOVEMENTS, AFTER RABBI TAMBURELLO

The journal gives each day the same four-part shape, and the write-in pages here keep it:

Pause — take a breath and become present. **Reflect** — answer honestly.

Act — choose one small action, where action is called for. **Remember** — tie what you have written to a value you actually hold.

Each workbook page in this book therefore carries a value named in Hebrew at its foot, and one line on how to go about the writing.

Neither is decoration: the value is what stops the page becoming a diary, and the practice note is what stops it becoming a prosecution.

IF YOU HAVE THE JOURNAL WITH YOU **EITHER**

Read back your last few days before Kol Nidre — the accounting you made at the end of Elul, and the one insight you said you most wanted to remember. Have it beside you today. The point of thirty days of writing is that you are not starting from nothing tonight.

The journal closes with an adapted Psalm 27, said daily through Elul. If you have it, say it once more this afternoon.

IF YOU DID NOT KEEP ELUL **EITHER**

Then today is the accounting, compressed into a day, and the pages in this book will carry you through it. You have lost the slow version, which is better, but you have not lost the thing itself.

Note it for next year on the last page, and begin on the first of Elul.



III **If you are not fasting**

Plenty of people should not fast, and some simply do not want to. Pregnancy, illness, medication, age, a history of disordered eating, work that cannot be done light-headed — these are not failures of seriousness. Judaism has always held that a person who needs to eat should eat, and this book holds it too.

But the point of the fast was never hunger. It was to make the day *unlike* every other day in the body, so that the mind cannot treat it as ordinary. Food is the usual way of doing that. It is not the only one.

MARKING THE DAY IN THE BODY

The tradition names other things to go without: leather on the feet, oils and scent on the skin, washing for pleasure, sex. They are not arbitrary. Each is a small daily comfort, and going without it keeps reminding the body, all day, that today is not like yesterday.

Kept in that spirit rather than as a rule, any of them will do the work. So will the ones the tradition never thought of, because it did not have them.

CHOOSE ONE, AND KEEP IT THE WHOLE DAY (EITHER)

- **The phone.** Off, in a drawer, until three stars. For most people this is now harder than fasting, which tells you something.
- **Shoes.** Plain canvas or socks. Nothing made of an animal.
- **Scent.** No perfume, no scented lotion, no aftershave. The day has its own smell.
- **Comfort.** Sit on the floor for part of it. Sleep without a pillow. Take the day slightly harder than you need to.
- **Buying.** Nothing bought, nothing ordered, nothing added to a basket, for the whole twenty-five hours.

If you are eating today, eat simply and alone, and go straight back to the day.

What I am carrying into this day

Written before anything begins. Whatever is actually on your mind — not what ought to be.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

PRACTICE Do not tidy it. The point of the first page is that it is untidy.

אֱמֶת *Emét* — truth



IV The afternoon before

Begin two or three hours before sunset. This is the part of Yom Kippur that most people skip and it is the part that does the most.

THE PEOPLE YOU CAN STILL REACH **EITHER**

The tradition is blunt about this: the day does not settle what lies between you and another person. Only the other person can do that, and only if you go to them. So go, while there is still time — a message, a call, five minutes at a door.

Three people is plenty. One is enough. Say the thing plainly, without an explanation that turns into a defence, and without requiring them to absolve you. *I did this. I am sorry for it. I am not asking you to say it is all right.*

Some of the people you owe this to will not take the call, and some are dead. That is real, and the day will come back to it at dusk tomorrow.

A LETTER TO OPEN NEXT YEAR **EITHER**

Write a letter to yourself, to be opened on Yom Kippur next year. Not resolutions — a letter. What this year has actually been like. What you are frightened of. What you would like to be able to say in a year's time. Who you are trying to become, in plain words, without polishing it.

Seal it and put it somewhere you will find it. Open last year's first, if there is one.

With children: let them draw it instead of writing it. Seal theirs the same way, with the same ceremony.

WHITE (EITHER)

Wear white, or the plainest thing you own. It is the colour of the shroud and the colour of the wedding, which is the whole argument of the day in one garment. It also does something simpler: it stops the day looking like a day off.

Take off jewellery and watches. Put on the shoes you have chosen.

THE LAST MEAL (EITHER)

Eat properly and finish in good time — a real meal, sitting down, with water. Not a feast. Traditionally it is plain food, lightly salted, and nothing that will leave you thirsty.

Say what you are grateful for before you start, each of you in turn. Then clear everything away and leave the kitchen as you would like to find it tomorrow night, because you will not want to deal with it then.

BEFORE THE FAST BEGINS (WITH OTHERS)

Settle somewhere comfortable together. Each person, in turn, to each other person:

— *Is there anything between us that I should put right before tonight?*

And then, whatever the answer: *I forgive you for anything you may have done to me this year, knowingly or not.*

Said out loud, to somebody you live with, this is harder than anything else in the book. It is also the only part of it that changes a household.

The people I can still reach

Whom I need to go to, and what for. Tick it when it is done.

WHO	WHAT FOR	DONE

PRACTICE Three is plenty. One is enough. Going is the whole of it.

אִמֶּץ *Ómets* — courage

A letter to open next year • 1

Not resolutions. What this year has actually been like.

[illegible]

PRACTICE Write it to somebody you like. You are that somebody.

אֱמֶת *Emét* — truth



v As the light goes

Fifteen minutes before sunset. The fast begins when the lights are lit.

THE MEMORIAL CANDLE **EITHER**

Light a memorial candle first — one that will burn for twenty-four hours — for the people you have lost. Light it before the festival lights, and put it somewhere you will pass all day.

זֵכֶר · ZECHER

We turn toward those we have lost. Not to mourn only — though mourning is honest and necessary — but to testify.

The dead live on in those who carry their values forward. The love they gave continues to act in the world through us. The courage they showed lives in the moments we choose courage. The care they offered returns whenever we offer care.

They are not gone. They are here — in what we know, in what we value, in who we are trying to become.

We now speak aloud, or hold in silence, the names of those we have lost.

NAMES · SILENCE

יְהֵא נָא זִכְרוֹן טוֹב וְחֶסֶד וְרַחֲמִים וְאַהֲבָה מְכֹל הָעוֹלָם לְכַבּוֹד אֲהוּבֵינוּ
שְׂאִינָם עוֹד. הָבָה נִנְצֵר בְּלִבֵּנוּ אֶת שְׁמוֹתֵיהֶם הַטּוֹבִים וְנוֹקִירָם בְּמַעֲשֵׂים
טוֹבִים. זִכְרוֹנָם לְבָרְכָה. אָמֵן.

*Yehé na zichrón tov vehésed verahamím ve'ahavá mikól ha'olám lichvód
ahuvénu she'énam od. Havá nintsór belibénu et shemotéhem hatovím
venokiráam bema'asím tovím. Zichronám livrachá. Amén.*

May there be good remembrance, compassion, kindness and love from
all the world, in honour of our beloved ones who are no longer with us.
Let us preserve their good names in our hearts and honour them with
good deeds. May their memory be a blessing. Amén.

THREE THINGS · AT THE CANDLE WITH OTHERS

Go round the room. Each person says **three things they loved** about
the person who has died — not three achievements, and not a summary
of a life. Three things they loved.

Small is better than large. The way she answered the phone. How he
was in a queue. The thing she always said that nobody else said.

If more than one person is being remembered, do them one at a time,
and let there be a pause between.

ALONE Say your three out loud anyway. The room should hear them.

WHY THREE, AND WHY ALOUD

A memory held silently stays the shape it already was. A memory said out loud to somebody else changes — you find out what you actually think while you are saying it, and the other person now carries a piece of it too.

This is not a metaphor about the dead living on. It is the mechanism. What a person was goes on existing in the specific things other people can still say about them, and every time those things are said, they are kept.

LIGHTING THE LIGHTS **EITHER**

Two candles, or as many as there are people. Light them, cover your eyes for a moment, and say:

בְּרוּכָה הַמְסוֹרֶת שְׁנוֹתֶנֶת לָנוּ שִׂמְחָה וְשִׁשּׁוֹן בְּהַדְלָקַת נֵר שֶׁל יוֹם

הַכִּפּוּרִים

*Beruchá hamasóret shenoténet lánu simhá vesasón behadlakát ner shel
Yom HaKippurím*

Blessed is the tradition which gives us joy and happiness in the lighting of the Yom Kippur lights.

נְבָרֵךְ אֶת הַכֹּחַ בְּתוֹכֵנוּ, שֶׁהֵחִינּוּ וְקִיְּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה:

*Nevaréch et hakóach betochénu, shehecheyánu vekiyemánu vehigi'ánu
lazemán hazé.*

Let us bless the strength within us that has kept us alive, sustained us,
and brought us to this time.

From here we do not eat or drink until three stars are out tomorrow night.

The names I carry with me

Said aloud at the memorial candle, and for any others.

[illegible]

PRACTICE Say each name out loud as you write it.

זִכָּרוֹן *Zikarón* — memory

WRITE IN PENCIL SO THAT THE PAGE CAN BE USED AGAIN NEXT YEAR

Three things I loved · 1

Not achievements. Three things you loved. Small is better than large.

[illegible]

PRACTICE *The way she answered the phone. How he was in a queue.*

חסד *Hésed* — lovingkindness

Three things I loved · 2

PRACTICE *There is no comfort to offer here, and none is being manufactured.*

נְחָמָה *Neḥamá* — comfort



VI Kol Nidre

Stand, if you can. Traditionally this is said three times — quietly, then louder, then loud. At home, say it three times anyway; it is the repetition that does it.

על דעת הקהל, אנו מתירין להתפלל עם העברנים:

Al dá'at hakahal, ánu matirín lehitpalél im ha'avaryaním.

By authority of the earthly congregation, we give permission to pray with transgressors.

**כל נדר, ואסר, וחרמי, וקונמי, וקנוסי, דנדרנא ודאשתבענא ודאחרמנא
ודאסרנא למען אהבה וצדקה מיום כפורים זה עד יום כפורים הבא עלינו
לטובה — בלהון יהון שרירין ובלהון יהון קימין.**

*Kol nidré, ve'esaré, vaharamé, vekonamé, vekinusé, dindarná
ude'ishtaba'ná ude'aharimná ude'asarná lemá'an ahavá utsedaká
miyóm kippurím ze ad yom kippurím habá alénu letová — kulehón
yehón sherirín uchulehón yehón kayamín.*

All vows, oaths and promises that we make for the sake of love and justice — from this Yom Kippur to the next — may they remain binding, may they be sustained.

Our vows shall be vows, our commitments shall be commitments, our promises shall be promises — unless deeper understanding, love or justice asks us to revise them.

וּנְסִלַּח · VENISLÁḤ

וּנְסִלַּח לְכָל-עֲדַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלִגֵּר הַגֵּר בְּתוֹכָם, כִּי לְכָל-הָעָם

בִּשְׁגָגָה:

Venisláh lechól-adát bené Yisra'el velagér hagár betochám, ki lechól-ha'ám bishgagá.

And the whole community of Israel shall be forgiven, and the stranger living among them, because the whole people acted without knowing.

Numbers 15:26

שְׁמַע · SHEMA

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל · כָּלֵנוּ אֶחָד · וַיִּיעֻדְנוּ אֶחָד

הָבָה נַעֲבֹד יַחַד לְתַקֵּן אֶת הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה

Shemá Yisra'el · kulánu eḥád · veyi'udénu eḥád

Havá na'avód yáḥad letakén et ha'olám hazé

Listen, Yisrael: we are all One, and our destiny is One.

Come, let us work together to repair this world.

BEFORE YOU SLEEP · TEN MINUTES **EITHER**

Kol Nidre is about promises. Not the solemn ones — the ordinary ones.

- What did you promise this year that you did not do?
- Which of those still matters, and which has quietly stopped mattering?
- Is there a promise you made that you now think you were wrong to make?
- What would you be willing to promise tonight, knowing you will read this again in a year?

WITH OTHERS One question, one answer each, no discussion. Then stop.

GOING TO BED

Go to bed early. This is not a concession — a fast day is much easier, and much more serious, on a decent night's sleep, and the tradition's own reason for an early start in the morning assumes you slept.

Put the phone somewhere else. Leave the memorial candle burning where it is safe to leave it.

Promises I made this year

The ordinary ones. Which I kept, which I did not, and which I was wrong to make at all.

PRACTICE *A promise you were wrong to make is not a failure. Say why.*

אֲחֵרָיוֹת *Aḥrayiūt* — responsibility

What I am willing to promise tonight

Knowing you will read this again in a year.

[illegible]

PRACTICE *Promise less than you want to. Then keep it.*

כַּוָּנָה *Kavaná* — intention



VII Morning

Do not rush to start. Wake, and lie still for a minute before you get up.

You will notice the fast in the first ten seconds. Let that be the first thing the day says to you rather than something to push past: today your body is in the foreground, and it is going to stay there.

אֶשֶׁר יָצַר • THE BODY **EITHER**

בְּרוּכָה הַחֲכָמָה שֶׁבָּהּ נּוֹצַרְנוּ, וּבָנוּ נִקְבִּים נִקְבִּים, חֲלוּלִים חֲלוּלִים:
גָּלוּי וַיְדוּעַ לָנוּ שָׁאֵם יִפְתַּח אֶחָד מֵהֶם אוֹ יִסְתֵּם אֶחָד מֵהֶם, אִי אֶפְשָׁר
לְהִתְקַיֵּם וּלְעֲמֹד:
בְּרוּךְ הַגּוֹף הַמִּפְלִיא לַעֲשׂוֹת:

Beruchá haḥochmá shebáh notsárnu, uvánu nekavím nekavím, ḥalulím ḥalulím.

Galúy veyadúa lánu she'ím yipatéah eḥád méhem o yisatém eḥád méhem, i efsbár lehitkayém vela'amód.

Barúch haḡúf hamaḡflí la'asót.

Blessed is the wisdom in which we were formed, and in us openings upon openings, hollows upon hollows. It is revealed and known to us that if one of them were opened, or one of them closed, it would be impossible to persist and to stand. Blessed is the body, which does wonders.

ON A FAST DAY

This is the least embarrassed text in Judaism: a blessing over the fact that the openings and closings of an animal work at all, and an admission that if one of them failed we could not stand up.

It is usually said quickly and thought about never. Today, having eaten nothing, you are in the one condition in which it is not abstract.

אָמוּנֵי הַסְּלִיחוֹת · EMUNÉ HASELIHÓT · THE FIRST TIME

Said three times today: now, at midday, and at dusk before the gates close. Say it standing.

אָמוּנֵי הַסְּלִיחוֹת · בּוֹטְחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל · גּוֹלֵי עֲמוּקוֹת · דּוֹבְרֵי צְדָקוֹת

Emuné haselihót · botḥé yesharót · golé amukót · dovré tsedakót

חֲטָאנוּ חֲבֵרִים · רַחֲמוּ עָלֵינוּ

Ḥatánu ḥaverím · raḥamú alénu

Freely forgiving, trusting in uprightness, uncovering the deep things,
speaking righteousness —

We have sinned, friends. Have mercy upon us.

WHO IS BEING ASKED

Haverim — friends, companions, the people alongside you. Not a judge. The confession is made to the people who were actually affected by it, and the mercy asked for is theirs to give.

This morning, say it as an opening. You are telling the room what today is for.

THE WALK **EITHER**

Go outside, mid-morning, before the fast gets heavy. Twenty minutes to an hour. Slowly — this is not exercise, and on a fast day it should not be.

Take nothing to listen to. The point is that there is nothing in your ears for the first time in a long time.

Walk the same route you always walk, if you have one. Noticing how different a known street is when you are hungry, quiet and dressed in white is most of the exercise.

WHILE YOU WALK **EITHER**

Hold one question for the whole walk. Do not try to answer it. Let it sit there and see what it attracts.

— *What am I doing that I already know I will regret?*

WITH OTHERS Walk in pairs rather than as a group, and swap pairs halfway. Two people talk; four people chat.

What am I doing that I already know I will regret?

Carried for the length of the walk. Written when you get back.

PRACTICE *You knew the answer before you left the house. Write that one.*

אֱמֶת *Emét* — truth

What the walk was like

A street you know well, walked hungry and quiet. What was different.

PRACTICE *Notice what was good before you notice what was wrong.*

הַכֶּרֶת הַטוֹב *Hakarát batóv* — recognising what is good



VIII **The long middle**

Roughly eleven until three. The hardest stretch, and the reason most home fasts collapse.

Nothing is scheduled here in a synagogue either — the service simply grinds on. At home you have something better available, and you should use it deliberately rather than fall into it guiltily.

REST **EITHER**

Lie down. Sleep if you sleep. This is not giving up on the day and it is not a loophole; it is the single most sensible thing a fasting body can do with the middle of the afternoon, and being unconscious for an hour of Yom Kippur has an old and respectable history.

Set an alarm so that you do not lose the afternoon entirely, and get up when it goes.

SILENCE · TWENTY MINUTES **EITHER**

Sit somewhere you can see out of a window. No book, no music, no phone, no task. Twenty minutes by a clock you are not watching.

Nothing is asked of you here. You are not meditating toward anything, and there is no outcome. If your mind goes round and round the same thing for twenty minutes, that was the twenty minutes.

WITH OTHERS Do it in the same room, separately, and do not talk about it afterwards unless somebody wants to.

אֱמוּנַי הַסְּלִיחוֹת · EMUNÉ HASELIHÓT · THE SECOND TIME

The middle of the day, and the middle of the fast. Say it sitting.

אֱמוּנַי הַסְּלִיחוֹת · בּוֹטְחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל · גּוֹלֵי עֲמוּקוֹת · דּוֹבְרֵי צְדָקוֹת

Emuné haselihót · botḥé yesharót · golé amukót · dovré tsedakót

חֲטָאנוּ חֲבֵרִים · רַחֲמוּ עָלֵינוּ

Ḥatānu ḥaverím · raḥamú alénu

Freely forgiving, trusting in uprightness, uncovering the deep things,
speaking righteousness —

We have sinned, friends. Have mercy upon us.

THE SAME WORDS, AT NOON

This morning it was a declaration. Now you have been hungry for sixteen hours and the same sentence sounds different — less like something you are announcing and more like something you are admitting.

That change is the reason for saying it three times. The words hold still; you do not.

After the silence

Nothing was asked of you. If something surfaced anyway, it goes here.

PRACTICE *If nothing came, write that. An empty page here is an honest one.*

עֲנָוָה *Anavá* — humility



IX **Jonah**

Read at the afternoon service everywhere in the Jewish world, and at home it can be the centre of the day. Forty-eight verses — about fifteen minutes aloud. Read the whole thing before discussing any of it.

It is short, it is funny, and it is the strangest thing in the prophetic books. The prophet runs away. The sailors are better people than he is. The city repents instantly and completely, which no city has ever done. The animals wear sackcloth. And the book ends in the middle of an argument, with a question nobody answers.

It is read today not because Nineveh was forgiven, but because the person the story is hardest on is the prophet.

READING IT **EITHER**

WITH OTHERS Read it aloud, taking a chapter each, or give the parts out: a narrator, Jonah, the captain, the sailors, the king, the Holy One. Children make excellent sailors.

ALONE Read it aloud anyway. It was written to be heard and it goes flat on the page.

- 1 The word of the Holy One came to Jonah son of Amittai:
- 2 Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it — their wickedness has come up in front of me.
- 3 And Jonah got up to run away to Tarshish, away from the Holy One. He went down to Jaffa and found a ship going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the Holy One.
- 4 And the Holy One threw a great wind at the sea, and there was a great storm on the sea, and the ship reckoned herself about to break up.
- 5 The sailors were frightened, and they shouted, each man to his own god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it. And Jonah had gone down into the hold of the vessel, lain down, and fallen fast asleep.
- 6 The captain came to him and said: What are you doing asleep? Get up, call on your god. Perhaps that god will spare us a thought, and we will not be lost.
- 7 And they said to one another: Come on, let us cast lots, so that we know whose fault this trouble is. And they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah.
- 8 They said to him: Tell us — you, whose fault this trouble is — what is your work, and where do you come from? What is your country, and which people are you from?
- 9 He said to them: I am a Hebrew, and it is the Holy One, the God of the heavens, that I fear — who made the sea and the dry land.

- ¹⁰ And the men were very frightened, and they said to him: What is this that you have done? For the men knew that he was running from the Holy One, because he had told them.
- ¹¹ They said to him: What shall we do to you, so the sea will quieten for us? For the sea was going on getting rougher.
- ¹² He said to them: Pick me up and throw me into the sea, and the sea will quieten for you. I know it is my fault that this great storm is on you.
- ¹³ And the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, and they could not, because the sea was going on getting rougher against them.
- ¹⁴ So they called out to the Holy One and said: Please — do not let us be lost for this man's life, and do not put innocent blood on us. You are the Holy One; you have done what you wanted.
- ¹⁵ And they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped raging.
- ¹⁶ And the men feared the Holy One greatly, and they made an offering to the Holy One and made vows.

CHAPTER 2

- 1 And the Holy One appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.
- 2 And Jonah prayed to the Holy One his God from the belly of the fish.
- 3 He said: I called out of my distress to the Holy One, and was answered. From the belly of the grave I cried for help, and you heard my voice.
- 4 You threw me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the current went round me. All your breakers and your waves passed over me.
- 5 And I said: I am driven out from in front of your eyes. Will I ever look again toward your holy place?
- 6 Water closed over me up to the throat. The deep went round me. Weed was wrapped about my head.
- 7 I went down to the roots of the mountains. The earth's bars were shut behind me for ever. And you brought my life up out of the pit, Holy One my God.
- 8 When my life was fainting away inside me, I remembered the Holy One, and my prayer came to you, to your holy place.
- 9 Those who keep watch on empty nothings give up the kindness owed to them.
- 10 And I, with a voice of thanks, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will fulfil. Rescue belongs to the Holy One.
- 11 And the Holy One spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out onto the dry land.

CHAPTER 3

- 1 And the word of the Holy One came to Jonah a second time:
- 2 Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out to it the call that I tell you.
- 3 And Jonah got up and went to Nineveh, as the Holy One had said. And Nineveh was an enormous city, three days' walk across.
- 4 And Jonah began to go into the city, one day's walk, and he called out and said: Forty more days, and Nineveh is overturned.
- 5 And the people of Nineveh trusted God. They called a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the smallest of them.
- 6 And the word reached the king of Nineveh. He got up from his throne, took off his robe, covered himself in sackcloth and sat in the ashes.
- 7 And he had it cried through Nineveh, by decree of the king and his great men: Let no human being or animal, herd or flock, taste anything at all. Let them not graze, and let them not drink water.
- 8 Let human being and animal cover themselves in sackcloth and call out to God with strength. Let each turn back from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.
- 9 Who knows — God may turn back and think again, and turn away from burning anger, and we will not be lost.
- 10 And God saw what they did, that they turned back from their evil way. And God thought again about the harm that had been spoken of doing to them, and did not do it.

CHAPTER 4

- 1 And it was very wrong in Jonah's eyes, and he was furious.
- 2 And he prayed to the Holy One and said: Please, Holy One — was this not what I said while I was still on my own soil? That is why I went ahead and ran to Tarshish. Because I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and great in kindness, and thinking again about harm.
- 3 And now, Holy One, take my life away from me, because my death is better than my life.
- 4 And the Holy One said: Is it right, this burning in you?
- 5 And Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made himself a shelter there, and sat under it in the shade, until he should see what would happen in the city.
- 6 And the Holy One God appointed a castor plant, and it came up over Jonah to be shade over his head, to save him from his misery. And Jonah was very glad about the plant.
- 7 And God appointed a worm as dawn came up the next day, and it struck the plant, and it dried up.
- 8 And when the sun rose God appointed a silent east wind, and the sun struck Jonah's head, and he was faint, and he asked to die, and said: My death is better than my life.
- 9 And God said to Jonah: Is it right, this burning in you over the plant? He said: It is right, burning enough to die.
- 10 And the Holy One said: You cared about the plant, that you did not work for and did not grow, that came up in a night and was gone in a night.

■ And I — should I not care about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand human beings who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and a great many animals?



x What Jonah is about

Read this after the story, not before. Twenty minutes, or as long as the argument lasts.

Jonah tells us why he ran, and he does not tell us until the fourth chapter, when it is too late to do anything about it:

I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and great in kindness, and thinking again about harm.

Jonah 4:2

That is not a complaint about a person. It is a list of **qualities** — and it is very nearly word for word the thirteen attributes that this whole day is built on. Jonah ran away because he could not stand the attributes. He did not want compassion to be how the world works, because compassion was going to be extended to people he had decided were beyond it.

Read that way, Jonah is not an odd story about a man and a fish. It is a story about somebody who finds mercy intolerable when it is aimed at the wrong people, and everybody has met that person, and on a good day everybody has been them.

THE PREDICATE, NOT THE SUBJECT

Rabbi Harold Schulweis put the move like this: instead of saying *God is merciful*, say *mercy is godly*. Instead of a being who happens to possess good qualities, the qualities themselves — compassion, justice, patience, the willingness to think again — are what we are pointing at when we use the word.

Nothing is lost by the swap except a character. What is gained is that the qualities now have to live somewhere, and the only place they can live is in what people actually do.

Jonah 4:2 is the clearest predicate sentence in the Tanach. Jonah names four qualities and then spends a chapter being unable to bear them.

WHO ACTUALLY SAVES NINEVEH

Watch the mechanism in chapter three, because the book is careful about it. Jonah walks a day into the city and says nine words. Nobody argues. The people believe, and fast. The king gets down off his throne and sits in the ashes — the only king in scripture who does that without being made to. And the decree he issues says, precisely, *let each turn back from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands*.

Then, and only then: *God saw what they did, that they turned back*.

Nineveh is not rescued. Nineveh turns. What follows the turning is described, but it does not cause it. If you are looking for where the divine is in this chapter, it is in the turning — in a whole city deciding at once to take the violence out of its own hands.

KAPLAN, AND THE PLANT

Mordecai Kaplan described God as the power that makes for salvation, and salvation as something that happens in this life or not at all: a human life becoming worth living, here, among other people.

The last scene is a lesson in exactly that, and it is done by arithmetic. Jonah loves a plant. He did not make it, did not water it, did not wait for it — it came up overnight and died overnight, and he grieves it so hard he wants to die. The book's final sentence asks whether the same care might not be owed to a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left.

That is the whole of ethics as an enlargement problem. The capacity to care is not in question: Jonah has it, and spends it on a shrub. The question is only ever how far out it reaches.

THE BOOK STOPS BEFORE THE ANSWER

Jonah never replies. The last word in the book is *animals*, and then it simply stops.

This is not a missing ending. An ethical question that comes with its answer attached is not a question, and you cannot be moved by one. By refusing to write Jonah's reply, the book leaves the only seat at the argument to whoever is reading it — which, this afternoon, is you.

TALK ABOUT IT · TWENTY MINUTES (EITHER)

Choose two or three. Do not try to get through them all.

- Who is **your** Nineveh — the person or group whose forgiveness you would resent? Be honest; everybody has one, and the ones who say they do not are usually the surest.
- Jonah is not punished, contradicted, or proved wrong. He is asked a question. Why do you think the book does it that way?
- The sailors pray to their own gods, try to row back rather than throw a man overboard, and apologise before they do it. They are the most decent people in the book and none of them is an Israelite. What is the story doing with that?
- Nineveh turns in a single day, which is not how anybody changes. Is the story lying, or is it saying something about what change is?
- If mercy is godly rather than God's, then somebody has to do it. Who has been merciful to you this year, and did you tell them?
- **The last question of the book is addressed to you.** Answer it out loud: *should I not care about that great city?*

(WITH OTHERS) Let a child ask the first question if they have one. They usually ask about the fish, and the answer — that the book spends three verses on the fish and two chapters on the sulking — is the best way in anyone has found.

My Nineveh

The person, or the people, whose forgiveness I would resent. Everybody has one.

PRACTICE *The ones who say they have no Nineveh are the surest of all.*

סְלִיחָה *Seliḥá* — forgiveness

Should I not care about that great city?

The last question in the book is addressed to the reader. This is where you answer it.

PRACTICE Answer it as yourself, not as the person you would like to be.

צֶדֶק *Tsédek* — justice

On Jonah · notes and arguments

What was said between you, and what you did not get to say.

PRACTICE Write down the objection you disagreed with most. Fairly.

כָּבוֹד *Kavód* — dignity



XI Late afternoon

The light is starting to go. An hour or so before sunset.

TAKING STOCK EITHER

Write, or think, in three columns. Not resolutions — an inventory.

What I did this year that I am glad of. Start here, and do not rush it. A day of confession with no account of what went right produces despair, which is useless, rather than change, which is the point.

What I owe. To whom, and what specifically. Some of these you dealt with yesterday afternoon. Some you could not.

What I cannot repair. The people who will not speak to you. The ones who died first. The harm you did that has gone out into the world and kept going.

THE THIRD COLUMN

Everything in this book so far has said that repair is in our hands. That is true, and it is not the same as saying we can repair everything.

Some of what you owe cannot now be paid, because the person it was owed to is unreachable or dead. Some of the harm done to you will never be answered, and no apology is coming. A day that only ever says *turn, and mend it* will eventually be dishonest, because there are things that no amount of turning mends.

Write the third column anyway. Naming what cannot be fixed is not despair. It is the difference between a serious account and a flattering one.

What I did this year that I am glad of

Start here. Do not rush it, and do not be modest.

PRACTICE *Credit yourself without turning it into a speech.*

הַכָּרַת הַטוֹב *Hakarát hatóv* — recognising what is good

שִׂמְחָה *Simḥá* — gladness

What I owe

To whom, and what specifically. Some of this you dealt with yesterday.

TO WHOM	WHAT IS OWED	WHEN

PRACTICE Name the act, not the feeling about the act.

אֲחֵרִיּוּת *Alḥayút* — responsibility

תקון *Tikún* — repair

What I cannot repair

*The unreachable, the dead, the harm that has gone out and kept going.
Naming it is not despair.*

PRACTICE *This page is not here to be solved. Leave it as it is.*

עֲנָוָה *Anavá* — humility

The accounting

Finish each sentence. Short is better than complete.

This year I learned...

I am proud that...

I need to repair...

I need to forgive myself for...

I need to stop...

I need to begin...

I want to keep...

PRACTICE

Then underline the one line you most want to remember.

שלמות *Shelemút* — wholeness

IN THE FORM OF HESHBON HANEFESH, RABBI FRANK TAMBURELLO



xii **Ne'ilah**

The closing of the gates. Begin about forty minutes before sunset, and go outside if you possibly can — a garden, a doorstep, a window that opens. This is the one part of the day that should be done while the light is actually going, rather than at a time on a card.

Ne'ilah is named for the shutting of the Temple gates at the end of the day. Nobody has shut those gates for two thousand years. What closes now is the day itself, and it closes whether or not we are finished — which is the point, and which is why this is the part of Yom Kippur that people remember.

Stand for as much of it as you can manage. The tradition stands throughout; on an empty stomach, at dusk, that is itself part of the prayer.

אָמוּנֵי הַסְּלִיחוֹת · EMUNÉ HASELIHÓT · THE THIRD TIME

The last time. Standing, facing out, as loudly as you are willing.

אָמוּנֵי הַסְּלִיחוֹת · בּוֹטְחֵי יִשְׁרוֹת · גּוֹלֵי עֲמוּקוֹת · דּוֹבְרֵי צְדָקוֹת

Emuné haselihót · botḥé yesharót · golé amukót · dovré tsedakót

חֲטֵאֵנוּ חֲבֵרִים · רַחֲמוּ עָלֵינוּ

Ḥatānu ḥaverím · raḥamú alénu

Freely forgiving, trusting in uprightness, uncovering the deep things,
speaking righteousness —

We have sinned, friends. Have mercy upon us.

THE THIRD SAYING

This morning it was a declaration; at midday an admission. Now there is no time left to improve the sentence, and it has to go as it is.

That is the whole argument of the last hour. Not that you have finished, but that the day ends anyway, and what you have is what goes in.

יום נורא עליה · YOM NORÁ ALILÁ

Sung to whatever tune you know, or none. The refrain is the thing.

יום נורא עליה, יום נורא עליה,

נמציא לנו מחילה, בשעת הנעילה:

*Yom norá alilá, yom norá alilá,
namtsí lánu mehilá, bish'át hane'ilá.*

Day of awesome deeds, day of awesome deeds — let us find pardon for one another, in the hour of the closing.

after El nora alilah, Moses ibn Ezra

BEFORE THE GATES CLOSE · FIVE MINUTES **EITHER**

All day the book has said that we write one another into it. Now we seal it.

- What did you write into somebody else's book this year — and do they know you did?
- What would you want somebody to have written into yours?
- A sealed book takes nothing more. What is going in, in the next five minutes?

Then say it out loud, or write it down. Five minutes, and then it closes.

THE LAST WORDS (EITHER)

The Shema once. The second line three times. The last line seven times, each louder than the one before — and the last of them as loudly as you are able.

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל · כָּלֵנוּ אֶחָד · וַיִּיעֻדְנוּ אֶחָד

Shemá Yisra'él · kulánu eḥád · veyi'udénu eḥád

Listen, Yisrael: we are all One, and our destiny is One.

בָּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד קְהִלָּתֵנוּ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד

Barúch shem kevód kehilaténú le'olám va'éd

Blessed is the name and honour of our community, for ever and ever.
(*three times*)

הָבָה נַעֲבֹד יַחַד לְתַקֵּן אֶת הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה

Havá na'avód yáḥad letakén et ha'olám hazé

Come, let us work together to repair this world. (*seven times*)

הַתְּקִיעָה הַגְּדוֹלָה · TEKIAH GEDOLAH (EITHER)

If you have a shofar, blow it — now, at the end, one long note held as long as your breath lasts. If you have never done it and it comes out as a wheeze, blow it anyway; a wheeze at the end of a twenty-five hour fast is an honest sound and nobody is marking it.

If you have no shofar, sing the note, or hum it, or bang something, or let somebody in the house who can whistle do it. What matters is that the day ends with a noise made by a person running out of air, which stops when they do.

Then be quiet for a moment before anybody moves.

What goes in before the book closes

Five minutes. Then it is sealed.

PRACTICE *Whatever is written by the end of the five minutes is what goes in.*

תשובה *Teshuvá* — turning

NE'ILAH



xiii **Breaking the fast**

When three stars are out. If the sky is covered, use the time your local listing gives for the end of the fast, and do not agonise over ten minutes.

Havdalah first, then eat. It takes four minutes and it is the difference between finishing the day and merely stopping.

At the end of Yom Kippur no new flame is struck: light the Havdalah candle from a light that has been burning since before the fast began — the memorial candle will do, and there is something right about that. Spices are not usually passed round tonight; the fragrance in the ordinary Havdalah revives a soul that is losing its Shabbat, and Yom Kippur is not that kind of departure.

LIFTING THE CUP

בָּרוּךְ הָאוֹר בְּחַיִּים • בָּרוּךְ הָאוֹר בְּעוֹלָם • וּבְרוּךְ פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן

Barúch ha'ór baḥayím, barúch ha'ór ba'olám, uvarúch perí hagéfen.

Blessed is the light in life, blessed is the light in the world, and blessed is the fruit of the vine.

Put the cup down. Hold your hands up to the candle and look at the light on them.

בְּרוּךְ הָאוֹר בְּחַיִּים • בְּרוּךְ הָאוֹר בְּעוֹלָם • וּבְרוּכִים מְאוּרֵי הָאֵשׁ

Barúch ha'ór baḥayím, barúch ha'ór ba'olám, uvruchím me'oré ha'esh.

Blessed is the light in life, blessed is the light in the world, and blessed are the lights of fire.

LIFTING THE CUP AGAIN

בְּרוּכָה הַבְּדֻלָּה בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחוּל

Beruchá havdalá ben kodesh leḥol.

Blessed is the distinction between the sacred and the everyday.

Drink, and put the candle out in what is left in the cup.

THE FIRST FOOD **EITHER**

Eat something sweet first and something salty second, and drink water before either. Start slowly — the temptation after twenty-five hours is to eat as though the food is escaping, and it is not.

Set it out properly even if you are alone — a plate, a glass, sitting down. You did that last night; it would be a strange thing to stop now.

Whoever is there, turn to them and say it before anybody eats:

גִּמְרַר חֲתִימָה טוֹבָה

Gemár ḥatimá tová

A good completion, and a good sealing.

ALONE Send it to somebody tonight. It is a blessing that cannot be completed by the person saying it, because it requires a reply.

Next year, and this year, and now.

The first thing I will do tomorrow

One thing, small enough to actually happen, that proves you meant today.

PRACTICE *Then do it. That is the first act of the new year.*

הַתְּחַדְּשׁוּת *Hithadshút* — renewal

Keeping it • the year ahead

What you undertook today, and when you will look at it again.

WHEN	WHAT I SAID I WOULD DO	DONE

PRACTICE Put three dates in a diary before you close the book.

סבֿלנוּת *Savlanuṯ* — patience

COME BACK TO THIS PAGE IN ELUL

What I want this day to be next year

What worked, what you skipped, what you would add. Read this first, next Erev Yom Kippur.

PRACTICE *Be specific enough that a year from now it is still useful.*

הַתְּחַדְּשׁוּת *Hithadshút* — renewal



— Sources

THE LITURGY

Kol Nidre and *al dá'at hakahál*, the candle blessings, the Shema, *Emuné haSelihót*, the Zecher, *Yom Norá Alilá* and the Havdalah are taken unchanged from *Mahzor beKolénu*, so that a person reading at home says the same words as a room. Their own sources are set out there.

JONAH

All forty-eight verses are translated from the Hebrew for this volume. No published translation has been used or adapted. The divine name is rendered *the Holy One*.

THE READING OF JONAH

Predicate theology follows Rabbi Harold Schulweis; the account of salvation as the fulfilment of human life in this world, and of religion as the self-consciousness of a civilisation, follows Mordecai Kaplan.

HESHBON HANEFESH

The four movements the workbook pages are built on — *pause, reflect, act, remember* — the practice of naming a value in Hebrew at the foot of a day's writing, the one-line humanistic practice note, and the closing accounting made in completed sentences, are all the method of *Heshbon HaNefesh: a contemporary Jewish journey of reflection, repair and renewal*, prepared by **Rabbi Frank Tamburello** for the Westchester Community for Humanistic Judaism, Elul 5786 / 2026, and are used here with acknowledgement. The understanding of *heshbón hanéfesh* as an honest accounting of the life we are creating, and of the effects our choices have on ourselves, on other people and on the world, is his.

No text from that journal is reproduced here. Its thirty days, their questions and their wording remain its own; the prompts, stems and values on these pages were written for this volume. Readers who want the slow version should use the journal through Elul and bring it with them to this day.

PRACTICES

Marking the day by giving up a comfort other than food, the sealed letter opened a year later, the twenty-four hour memorial candle and breaking the fast after nightfall are widely kept and belong to no one. The wording here is original to this volume.

ORIGINAL TO THIS VOLUME

The shape of the day, the rule for the day, the alternative observances, the walk, the silence, the three columns, the reading of Jonah and every rubric, reflection and discussion prompt.

Martin Hasan Di Maggio · www.spinozahavurah.org

Companion to Mahzor beKolénu. Freely copyable for use in any home.

Notes

PRACTICE *These pages are yours. Use them for whatever the day turns up.*

נְדִיבוּת *Nedivút* — generosity

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Notes