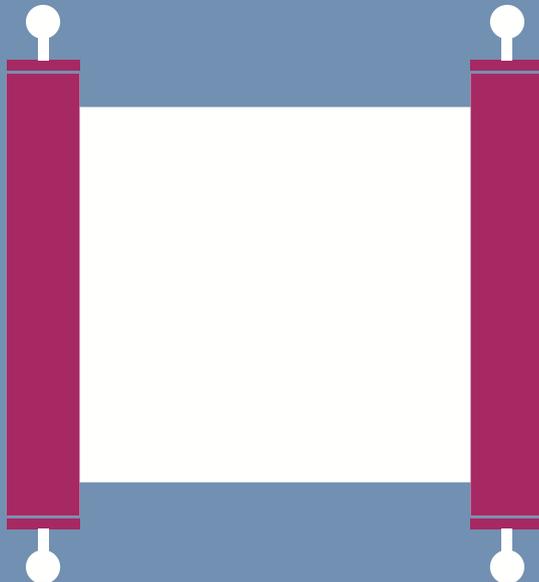
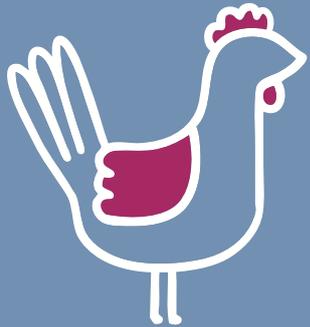


**RABBINIC
INSIGHTS ON
THE 5779
HIGH HOLIDAY
SEASON**

with Rabbi Landau



ELUL (AUG. 11-SEPT. 10)

The last month in the Jewish year, *Elul*, is marked by a heightened sensitivity towards the performance of mitzvot. The reason being, there is only a short amount of time left before *Rosh Hashana*, when G-d reviews our conduct of the past year.

Therefore, Jews make every effort possible to improve their relationships with each other and with G-d. Every weekday morning at the conclusion of services, the shofar is sounded as a reminder of the seriousness of the approaching *Yomim Noraim* - Days of Awe. Traditionally, during this time, people have their *tefillin* and *mezuzot* checked, give *tzedaka* to help people with holiday expenses, and upgrade their mitzvah observance.

SELICHOT (SEPT. 1-18)

As we approach *Rosh Hashanah*, it is customary to prepare by seriously evaluating our behavior over the past twelve months. This is accomplished through special introspection services called *Selichot*, from the word *selicha* (meaning "apology"). This year's services begin on Saturday night, September 1st with an inspirational post Shabbat gathering at 9:30pm. In addition, *Selichot* will be recited daily before morning minyan through *Yom Kippur*. Please consult the [Holiday Schedule](#) for appropriate times.

EREV ROSH HASHANA (SEPT. 9)

Hatarat Nedarim: One of humankind's unique capabilities is speech. Consequently, we should be careful not to abuse this divine gift. Unfortunately, the human condition is such that we do not always live up to the high standards set by the Torah.

Therefore, after morning services, an unusual ceremony is held to repeal any unintended vows made during the past year. The goal is to take a few moments to review the content of our speech over the past year to make sure we did not verbally commit ourselves to something we shouldn't have.

Mikva: On this day and on *Erev Yom Kippur* it is customary for men to go to the *mikva* in an attempt to enhance their spirituality. The San Francisco *Mikva* will be open both days and times will be posted in the News and Schmooze.

ROSH HASHANA (SEPT. 10-11)

This is a 48-hour evaluation by G-d to determine our family's health, wealth, and luck for the coming year.

The period is meant to be spent partly in reflective prayer in shul and partly in appreciative quality time with family and friends, allowing us the opportunity, literally, to count our blessings. As a natural outgrowth of the seriousness of the day, sleeping is inappropriate.

SHOFAR (SEPT. 10-11)

The primary Biblical commandment pertaining to *Rosh Hashana* is the blowing of the *Shofar*. It is actually the essence of the day's worship. The sound of the *Shofar* is meant to resemble a cry that has no specific content, thereby enabling us the opportunity to express our own unique prayer. When the *Shofar* is sounded, each of us should to talk to G-d, make peace with our Divine Parent in Heaven, and voice feelings from deep inside.

TASHLICH (SEPT. 10)

On the afternoon of the first day of *Rosh Hashana*, we gather at a location from which a natural body of water can be seen to symbolically cast away our misdeeds.

This tradition is steeped in mystical importance and helps us to visualize the notion of ridding ourselves of the impediments that diminish our relationship with G-d. Some have the custom to throw bread (a metaphor for materialism) into the water.

TEN DAYS OF REPENTANCE (SEPT.10-19)

It is customary during this time to reach out to people that we have become estranged from and try to reconnect and forgive past transgressions. Judaism teaches that the more we are forgiving of others, the more G-d is forgiving of us. Therefore, the result of reconnecting to people with whom we've fallen out of sorts with is doubly beneficial.

FAST OF GEDALIA (SEPT. 12)

Gedalia was the last vestige of official Jewish leadership in the land of Israel after the destruction of the First Temple. Upon his assassination by fellow Jews, the first Commonwealth came to its end. By reflecting on history as a means to improve the future, a dawn-to-dusk fast was instituted on this date. Through fasting, we deemphasize the significance of material needs and demonstrate our capability to control our behavior, a key focus at this time of year.

SHABBAT SHUVAH (SEPT. 15)

The *Shabbat* between *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur* is called *Shabbat Shuva* due to its Haftarah, which begins with the words “*Shuva Yisroel*,” - *Return O Israel*. More than any other *Shabbat* during the year, the Jewish people have traditionally been meticulous in its observance. Thereby, expressing a renewed and strengthened relationship with G-d.

EREV YOM KIPPUR (SEPT. 18)

Kaparot is a curious ancient custom transferring the transgressions that one has accumulated over the year to a chicken, which is then given as *tzedaka* to the poor. Nowadays, many people use money in place of the chicken. The procedure can be found on page 772 in the Artscroll *siddur*.

Early *Mincha*: For fear of someone passing away right before *Yom Kippur* and losing the multiple opportunities to do *teshuva*, we add the confessional prayer at this service.

Seudat Mitzvah: Prior to the commencement of the fast, it is not only wise to eat a good meal, but it's actually a *mitzvah*. Therefore, it is customary to come dressed up to a table set with one's *Shabbat* china and enjoy a festive meal.

YOM KIPPUR (SEPT. 19)

After having been evaluated by G-d on *Rosh Hashana*, we have a 25-hour appeal process where, assuming we were found wanting, we beg G-d to forgive our transgressions and give us another chance. By refraining from eating, drinking, washing, wearing leather shoes, and marital intimacies, we emphasize our ability to control our desires for even the most basic human needs. This thereby proves us worthy of a good year ahead. If you have a problem observing any of the restrictions, please contact the Rabbi.

YIZKOR (SEPT. 9)

It is an ancient Jewish tradition to honor the memory of a parent (and other family members) on their *yahrzeit*, *Yom Kippur*, and the last days of *Pesach*, *Shavuot*, and *Shemini Atzeret*. Judaism teaches that, though one's body may cease to function, the essence of a person lives on forever

in a different realm. In this new world, they are still aware of and affected by what transpires in the world they left behind. *Yizkor* is a time to reflect on how grateful we are for all that our parents (and other family members) did for us. By doing so, we not only remind ourselves how important they were to us, but we also convey this sentiment to them. Additionally, by praying for their welfare and making a commitment to do some act of *chesed* or *tzedaka* on their behalf, it gives them great pride.

SUKKOT (SEPT. 24-30)

Sukkot is a seven-day holiday geared toward appreciating G-d's presence in nature. By moving out of our comfortable indoor environments and exposing ourselves to the elements, we embrace the idea of nature as G-d's great creation. Additionally, we remind ourselves of the fact that the everyday comforts of our homes are by no means a given in our lives. During *Sukkot*, G-d evaluates and makes judgments concerning the world's water supply. Therefore, on each day of *Sukkot* we use a *lulav* (palm branch), *etrog* (citron), myrtle and willow branches bound together in our morning service to recognize the reliance of our natural resources on the will of G-d. Seemingly, the reason G-d chose these four items is because of their great dependence on water. Each and every Jew is expected to perform this *mitzvah* throughout the holiday.

Do not forget to order your own *lulav* and *etrog* from the shul ASAP.

CHOL HA-MOED (SEPT. 26-30)

Sukkot is divided into two distinct periods: *Yom Tov* and *Chol ha-Moed* (C"H). *Yom Tov* is similar to *Shabbat*, although cooking and carrying in public are permitted. C"H is unique, as indicated by its name, which means “secular that is sacred.” On C"H, we are only permitted to do activities that enhance our holiday experience. Every action has to be justified vis-a-vis its relevance to enriching our lives during the holiday. C"H is meant to be an environment where we practice living our daily lives on a higher plain. This experience is meant to teach us how to raise the spiritual level of our everyday lives. Typically C"H is used for family time.

HOSHANA RABA (SEPT. 30)

The last day of *Sukkot* is known as *Hoshana Raba*, which means the “*day of great salvation*.” In addition to *Sukkot*’s distinct purposes, it also functions as a continuation of the process begun on *Yom Kippur*. If *Yom Kippur* is regarded as a person’s initial appeal to prove his worthiness, through abstinence and deprivation, then *Sukkot* represents a further appeal, through which he can prove himself through action and involvement. At the conclusion of *Sukkot*, we have another, final chance to demonstrate our desire to live in synch with G-d’s plan and to be worthy of a good year.

SHEMINI ATZERET/ SIMCHAT TORAH (OCT. 1-2)

Following *Sukkot* is *Shemini Atzeret*, a separate *Yom Tov* dedicated to connecting with G-d without any unique rituals or mitzvot aside from the basic *Yom Tov* requirements. After the intense High Holidays and busy *Sukkot* festival, G-d gave us a day to sort of sit back and reflect. In order to enhance this “mitzvaless” *Yom Tov*, rabbinic leaders instituted the custom of celebrating the completion of the yearly Torah reading cycle on *Shemini Atzeret*. Eventually, it became known as *Simchat Torah*. The idea was, to have a man-made ritual that would be an appropriate culmination of the Jewish holiday season and be an expression of love and devotion to Torah filled lives. In Israel, *Shemini Atzeret* and *Simchat Torah* are on the same day. In the diaspora, where we observe two days of *Shemini Atzeret*, the second day has become known as *Simchat Torah*.

RANGE/OVEN USE ON YOM TOV

Yom Tov celebrations could never be complete without the piping hot delicacies that have become traditional through the generations. However, one must know how to prepare *Yom Tov* meals without fear of transgression. Please contact the Rabbi or check out the [Star-K website](#) to learn more.