

September 30, 2025

Daily Reflections



Center for
Spiritual
Development

TURNING BACK

By Julie Mussché

A Quote

“The most unnoticed of all miracles is the miracle of repentance. It is not the same thing as rebirth, it is transformation, creation.”

ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL, MORAL GRANDEUR AND SPIRITUAL AUDACITY, 69

Reflection

Tomorrow night begins *Yom Kippur* which extends through Thursday evening. *Yom Kippur* is intended to be transformative, where reflection and taking account leads to action. It is a time of fasting and self-denial, a day to be attentive to self, each other and to God, and to offer heartfelt repentance. Awareness of our mortality, the “great leveler” punctuates the immediacy of the moment and helps to deepen appreciation for the gift of life and relationships.

Teshuva, in Hebrew “turning,” requires unmitigated self-examination with an

unfiltered assessment of self. Heschel notes, “We are all failures. At least one day a year we should recognize it.” (147) It is assumed that any amends or reconciliation with people a person may have harmed in some way takes place before the day of *Yom Kippur*.

The liturgy includes time for personal as well as communal confession, *Vidui*. The communal confession is chanted as a litany of sins that the congregation takes responsibility for. “Of these wrongs we are guilty:” the prayer begins. There is an amazing physicality to the prayer, with the congregation swaying to the rhythm of the music while each person strikes their breast repenting for each sin. Theft, betrayal, cruelty, corruption, the list is extensive and recognizes that anyone anytime could be guilty of such wrongdoing.

What an amazing recognition! At the heart of this confession is a declaration of compassion toward each other as well as self. Throughout the *Yom Kippur* service we ask for and anticipate God’s mercy and compassion in recognition of our brokenness. Perhaps turning back to God compels us to also render mercy and compassion to each other, not just one time a year, but as a way of life.



The Letter Chai, A Symbol for Life
Photo by Julie Mussché

For Pondering

- What does repentance mean to you?
- Think back to a time where you were forgiven. What was the joy and sweetness of that moment?

For Prayer

*You know the secrets of the universe and the secrets of the human heart.
You know and understand us, for You examine our inner lives.
Nothing is concealed from You, nothing hidden from Your sight.*

*Eternal One, our God and God of our ancestors,
we pray that this be Your will: forgive all our wrongs,
pardon us for every act of injustice, help us atone for all our moral failures.*

MISHKHAN HANEFESH, MACHZOR FOR THE DAYS OF AWE, YOM KIPPUR, 84

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