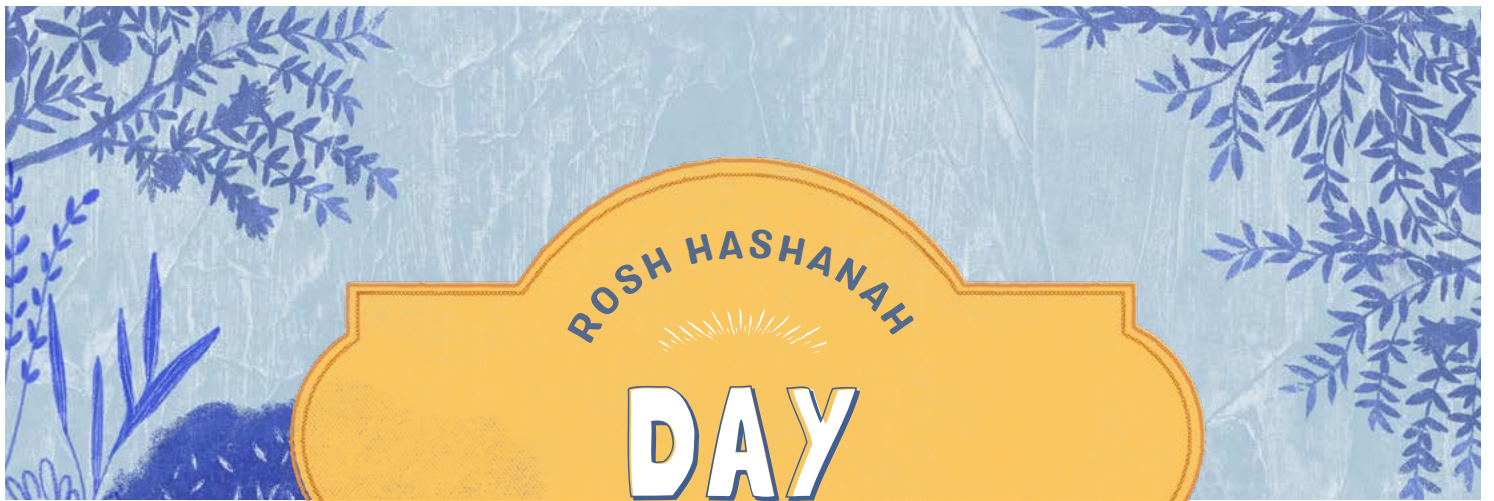


# High Holidays AT HOME







## WHAT'S ALL THE PRAYING ABOUT?

### UNPACKING 5 HIGH HOLIDAY PRAYERS

Jewish prayers are hundreds and even thousands of years old – chanted poems, usually addressed to God, that can inspire us to feel things and wish for things that are deep and important.

But for many people, praying isn't so simple. Who are we talking to, and is anybody listening? Why so many words, and so much Hebrew?

The key is to approach prayer with an open heart and mind. On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, prayers can act as special “messengers” that carry ideas both into our hearts and out to the universe. Prayers can help us think about how we want to improve ourselves and our world.

The Hebrew word for “pray” is **LEHITPALEL**, which means “to judge ourselves.” On the High Holidays that is exactly what we do when we pray.

The prayers on the following pages are shortened and translated to be family-friendly. You can read the prayers out loud and discuss them as a family.



You can hear them sung in the **digital version** of this guide and at [pjlibrary.org/listen](http://pjlibrary.org/listen). Finally, you can always follow an ancient Jewish tradition: Find your own words to express your hopes and feelings.



## FOR PARENTS

# TALKING WITH YOUR KIDS ABOUT GOD



BY RABBI AVI KILLIP

### PERSONAL STORY

My littlest brother is the youngest of four. (We are each one year apart.) Once, when he was very little and was asked about the ages in our family, he reported: "Hana is 5, Avi is 4, Aaron is 3, I am 2, and God is 1." He had absorbed the teaching from our nightly bedtime *Shema*, which said "...the Lord our God, the Lord is One." So my brother understood God as part of our family – as his 1-year-old younger sibling.

Even if we don't say a prayer every night or even talk about it at all, our children develop an understanding of God at a very young age. Without our ever raising the subject, they learn – from Jewish rituals and songs and from general society. And, profoundly, many children feel spirituality through their own experiences of the world, developing their own personal connections to the divine.

Teaching our children about God can feel scary and even impossible. How can we teach our children something we ourselves don't understand? Maybe most importantly: How can we stay open to the idea that our children's

experiences of God and spirituality might be different from ours?

I may feel no relationship with God and find myself parenting a deeply spiritual child.

There is no need to be intimidated by this. You don't have to have a robust spiritual life in order to cultivate and nourish one in your child.

So, instead of asking how we can talk to our kids about God, let's instead ask how we can encourage their curiosity and listen to their questions with open hearts.

If you do have your own connection, your own spiritual journey, you can invite your children in by modeling – let your children watch you pray, whether that prayer is a traditional Hebrew one or a few lines spoken from your heart before bed, while lighting candles on Shabbat, or in a particularly difficult moment.

Whether you are standing at a waterfall, gazing up at the stars, or holding your newborn nephew, when you feel something is holy or sacred, invite your children into those moments by telling them what you feel.

And when you have questions and doubts about God, you can share them too – invite your children into the questions.

You will have many chances to talk with your children about

God, so there's no pressure to get it all right or have all the answers. The questions they ask will evolve over time.

As parents, we sometimes find ourselves in these deep conversations at the most unexpected moments – whenever our child's mind or heart generates questions, while brushing teeth, maybe in the grocery store. There is no wrong place or time to engage.

But if you are looking for a way in, grab a PJ Library book off your shelf. Read together and start a conversation.

### PROMPTS FOR KIDS AND PARENTS

One thing I have always wondered about God is...

Have you ever witnessed something miraculous or truly amazing? Share the story of how you felt.

What would you say if you knew God was listening?

See where the conversation takes you. Remember, you can always answer a child's question with a question of your own.

# "WE ARE ALL CHILDREN"

**DURING ROSH HASHANAH**, the “birthday of the world,” we pause to admire how beautiful, big, and mysterious our world is. We also recognize the many things we cannot control that can make us feel small and powerless.

In that spirit, a special prayer – *Avinu Malkeinu* (ah-VEE-noo mahl-KAY-noo) – speaks to God in the voice of a child asking a parent for help. (Sometimes even grown-ups feel a bit like children.) People of all ages stand together and ask to be loved, forgiven for our mistakes, protected from danger, and inspired to do better.

A short version of this prayer was first spoken nearly 2,000 years ago by Rabbi Akiva in Jerusalem. Over the centuries, it was further developed by Jews in Iraq, France, Poland, Syria, and beyond.



## AVINU MALKEINU — OUR PARENT, OUR SUPPORT

*Avinu Malkeinu, hear our voice – sh'ma koleinu*

*Avinu Malkeinu, we have made mistakes – hatanu lefanecha*

*Avinu Malkeinu, forgive us and our family  
– hamol aleinu ve'al olaleinu vetapeinu*

*Avinu Malkeinu, let the new year be a good year  
– hadesh aleinu shanah tovah*

*Avinu Malkeinu, make an end to disease, violence,  
and hunger – kalei dever veherev vera'av mei'aleinu*

*Avinu Malkeinu, send healing to all sick people  
– shlach refua shleima leholei amecha*

*Avinu Malkeinu, put an end to unfairness  
– kalei kol tzar umastin mei'aleinu*

*Avinu Malkeinu, give strength to the Jewish people  
– hareim keren Yisrael amecha*

*Avinu Malkeinu, write us for a blessing in the Book of Life  
– kotveinu besefer hayim tovim*

*Avinu Malkeinu, help us all grow into our best selves  
– hatzmach lanu yeshua bekarov*

*Avinu Malkeinu, please answer us, though we may  
not deserve it, and treat us generously and kindly  
and help us to improve – Haneinu va'aneinu ki ein banu ma'asim.  
Asei imanu tzedakah vachessed vehoshi'einu.*





This next prayer – *Ki Anu Amecha* (kee AH-nu ah-MEH-cha) – is recited on Yom Kippur and uses different images to describe the relationship between humans and the divine, including the image of children reaching out to a parent.

## KI ANU AMECHA — BECAUSE WE ARE YOUR PEOPLE

*Ki anu amecha ve'ata Eloheinu* – Because we are your people, and you are our God

*Anu vanecha ve'ata avinu* – We are your children, and you are our parent

*Anu karmecha ve'ata notreinu* – We are your crops, and you are our farmer

*Anu tzonecha ve'ata ro'einu* – We are your flock, and you are our shepherd

*Anu k'shei oref ve'ata erech apayim* – We are stubborn, while you are patient

*Anu fe'ulatecha ve'ata yotzreinu* – We are a piece of artwork, and you are the artist

### FAMILY ACTIVITY

DRAW ONE OF THE IMAGES  
FROM THIS PRAYER – OR  
COME UP WITH YOUR OWN  
(WE ARE... YOU ARE...).



## "WE TAKE RESPONSIBILITY"

During the High Holidays, we talk openly about the things we have done in the past year and how to improve our actions in the future. A prayer called *Ashamnu* (ah-SHAHM-noo) gives a long list of mistakes we have made. It is recited in a group out loud, because everyone makes mistakes.

In the synagogue on Yom Kippur, the whole community says the prayer together, and at home the whole family can say it together. While speaking each line of the prayer, it is a tradition to tap your fist over your heart, as if to say: "Open up, heart, so in the new year we can be more kind and loving."

### ASHAMNU — WE TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

**We take responsibility (*ashamnu*) for times when...**

**We hid things from others – *bagadnu***

**We took something that wasn't ours – *gazalnu***

**We said something bad about others – *dibarnu dofi***

**We got someone else into trouble – *hirshanu***

**We told a lie – *tafalnu shaker***

**We made fun of someone – *latznu***

**We disobeyed our parents – *maradnu***

**We were not always kind to our friends – *tzararnu***

**We refused to admit that we were wrong – *kishinu oref***

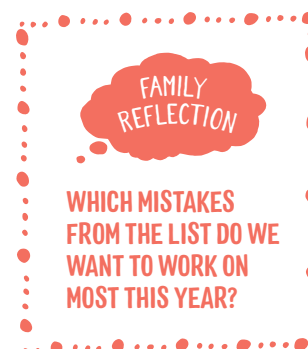
**We hit or hurt someone – *rashanu***

**We did something we knew we shouldn't – *shihatnu***

**We weren't thinking and just messed up – *ta'inu***

**As we start a new year, forgive us for our mistakes and give us a chance to be better.**

*Slach lanu. Mechal lanu. Kaper lanu. Clean our slate, wipe away the bad, help us learn and grow.*



WHICH MISTAKES FROM THE LIST DO WE WANT TO WORK ON MOST THIS YEAR?



**DON'T FORGET** According to Jewish tradition, it's fine to ask God for forgiveness – but that doesn't help fix mistakes you've made with another person. For that, you need to talk directly to that person and work things out.



## A POSITIVE ASHAMNU

As we take responsibility for mistakes we have made, we can also celebrate the positive things we do. In recent years, people have begun to recite a version of *Ashamnu* that helps us remember all the healthy behavior we want to continue in the new year.

*Ahavnu* – We loved

*Beirachnu* – We blessed

*Gadalnu* – We grew

*Diminu yofi* – We made beautiful things

*Hitakashnu* – We pushed on

*Vitarnu* – We compromised

*Zar'anu* – We planted

*Hipasnú* – We explored

*Tiharnu sheker* – We told the truth

*Yatzarnu* – We created

*Ka'avnu* – We felt others' pain

*Lamadnu* – We learned

*Mahalnu* – We gave someone a break

*Nisinu* – We kept trying

*Salachnu* – We forgave

*Azarnu* – We helped out

*Pirganu* – We showed appreciation

*Tzahaknu* – We laughed

*Kibalnu* – We accepted

*Radafnu tzedek* – We demanded fairness

*Samachnu* – We felt joy

*Tarnamnu* – We contributed

*Tamachnu* – We supported

*Tikanu* – We fixed



FAMILY  
REFLECTION

WHAT WOULD YOU  
ADD TO THIS LIST?



## "WE TUNE INTO THE POWER OF THIS DAY"

The prayer below – *Unetaneh Tokef* (oo-neh-TAH-neh TOE-kef) – is one of the most famous prayers of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. It describes a scene where God is looking at each human being during the High Holidays, considering what they did in the past year and what will happen to them in the new year.

What will be decided? We cannot know. The last year has shown how uncertain the future is for all human beings. When this prayer imagines a judge in a divine courtroom, it inspires us to do our own self-reflection. The shofar calls on us to tune into the moment and ask: What have we done – and what will we do?

The original source of the prayer is unclear, but it was likely written in Israel more than 1,400 years ago – and was more recently the inspiration for Leonard Cohen's well-known song "Who By Fire."



### UNETANEH TOKEF — WE TUNE INTO THE POWER OF THIS DAY

We tune into the sacred power of this day, a day that is both amazing and a little scary. The shofar makes a blast, and we hear a small, still voice. The angels are saying: "This is the day of taking stock, when The Holy One looks into the soul of every person."

On Rosh Hashanah the judgment is written down, and on the fast of Yom Kippur it is sealed:

Who will live and who will die

Who will live a long life and who will not

Who will be calm and who will be restless

Who will have plenty and who will be in need

Who will reach their goals and who will fall short

By tuning into the sacred power of this day, opening our hearts, and working for a better world, we hope to be judged with kindness.

#### FAMILY REFLECTION

HOW DO YOU TUNE INTO THE POWER OF THE HIGH HOLIDAYS?

HOW ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT THE YEAR THAT JUST FINISHED – AND THE YEAR AHEAD?





# "WE ARE CALLED TO PRAISE"

Composed in Babylonia about 1,800 years ago, the prayer *Aleinu* (ah-LAY-noo) is said every day of the year. But on the High Holidays, we do something special when reciting it. While saying a few special words, we bend our knees to the ground and stretch our upper body forward so our forehead touches the floor.

When we go into this stretched-out pose, we are putting our whole bodies into our hope for a good new year. We are giving everything we have. We are showing that we are but one small part of a huge and interconnected world.

Bending our knees and our backs is also a reminder that we need to be flexible. If we are too stiff and stubborn, we can never improve ourselves and change as the world around us changes. Indeed, *Aleinu* is a Jewish prayer for a changing world – that one day, fear and hatred will completely disappear.

As you prepare to say the prayer as a family, find a place where each person can stretch out during the middle of the prayer.

FAMILY  
REFLECTION

HOW DO YOU WANT TO  
STRETCH YOURSELF  
IN THE NEW YEAR?



## ALEINU – WE ARE CALLED TO PRAISE

With our unique story and special values  
we are called as the Jewish people  
to praise the Creator of all things.

*Bend down to the ground and stretch your body forward*

So we bend our knees, bow down to the ground,  
and say out loud how grateful we are.

*Stand back up*

And we hope, Source of Unity, that you will  
help us fix the world  
and make it whole.

