



Days of Awe: The Pathway to an Unprecedented High Holiday Season The Path Ahead

Dear Friends,

The past few months have been so challenging for all of us — emotionally, financially, personally, and spiritually — as we've grappled with life under a pandemic. Through it all, we've managed to remain together apart, supporting one another, praying and learning together, and remaining in touch in new ways that help fill at least some of the yearning we all feel to be with one another.

None of us has ever lived through a High Holiday season like the one we are about to experience. Our clergy, staff, and lay leadership have recognized for some time now that it will be impossible to gather together for these holidays in the way we would all prefer. This year is different and will feel different even as we hope to replicate some of the familiar feelings and emotions we all experience on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The moment has demanded that we reimagine what it means to enter this most sacred time together.

Over the course of the summer, we've been working to envision how we might capture as much of the majesty, power, intimacy, and meaning of these High Holidays as possible while still keeping everyone safe. While we are grieving the loss of our familiar Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur experiences, we are also looking forward with hope and optimism toward what we can do together in the midst of this pandemic.

If we have learned anything over the past few months, it is that the COVID-19 situation is still volatile and unpredictable. What is true today about local and national trends may not be the case as we get closer to the High Holidays. Please remember, what you'll read below is our best attempt to respond to the facts on the ground as we see them now. But without question, ALL OUR PLANS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE BASED ON THE CHANGING REALITIES OF THE WEEKS AHEAD. We hope and pray to be able to bring to fruition as many of the plans below as possible. But as you read ahead, please understand that many of these details are contingent on circumstances that are beyond our control and may change at any moment. If we need to adjust the plan, we will let the community know as soon as possible.

Finally, we appreciate that there is a great deal of information contained below, perhaps more than is practical to expect anyone to read and internalize. Even so, we share it all with you with the belief that information breeds confidence and the understanding that there is much to say and share about our High Holiday plans. Thank you for placing your trust in us and for continuing to be part of our community even in these difficult times.

Elul: Spiritual Preparation BEFORE the High Holidays

Elul, the Hebrew month leading up to the High Holidays (beginning this year the evening of August 20) is set aside as a "warm up" for the Days of Awe, so we don't arrive at the High Holy Days unprepared. We use this time for cheshbon hanefesh (an accounting of the soul). Begin asking yourself: What do I need to work on this year? Who do I need to ask for forgiveness? How can I return to my better self?

This year, it is even more important to use the weeks leading up to the High Holidays as time for reflection even though it may feel harder than ever to get into the right spiritual mind-set for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. This is also a time for community and relationship building, even in these times when we are forced to keep socially distant from one another. With these goals in mind, we will be offering a number of opportunities to connect with the meaning of this moment in Jewish time, with our clergy, and with each other.

Daily Online Reflections

These reflections will be posted daily on Facebook throughout the month of Elul, and sent via email every Friday along with our Thought Before Shabbat.

Holiness at Home — We're all spending more time at home now than we'd ever anticipated. How can we find a way to bring a sense of holiness into our everyday living space? What does "home" mean, anyway? Clergy, staff, and congregants explore these questions with written reflections throughout the month of Elul.

Elul Tunes — Explore one recording per day from Cantor Chomsky's extensive collection of classic Tifereth Israel High Holiday melodies, gathered over the course of his more than three decades of service.

Days of Awe: Spiritual Preparation for the High Holy Days Zoom Classes

Tuesdays, August 25 - September 8 @ 7pm

ZOOM Link

August 25 How Can I Pray If I Can't Pay Attention? Finding Kavanah (Focus)

In A Time of Zoom Services — Rabbi Braver

September 1 Shofar Sho Good: The "How" and "Why" of Shofar — Rabbi Skolnik

September 8 Tu(r)ning Our Musical Souls Toward the Yamim Nora'im — Cantor Chomsky

Sacred Sanctuary Moments with TI Clergy

The last time we were able to use our building together was almost five months ago. We miss seeing you, and we're sure you miss being together in our sanctuary! We are thrilled to offer you the opportunity to join a member of the clergy in the main sanctuary for a few moments in front of the Ark and a special New Year's blessing.

[Sign up](#) for a ten-minute slot here. Masks and social distancing will be required at all times. Only members living in the same household may sign up for a slot together.

Pre-High Holidays Drive-Through "Receiving Line" And Gift Bags

One of our clergy's favorite moments of the High Holidays is getting to stand at the rear of the sanctuary and shake everyone's hands as they leave the service. Since that will not be possible this year, we are making arrangements for a drive-through receiving line! Our clergy will be standing by to share a New Year's greeting, and to give you a High Holiday gift bag. Masks and social distancing will be required at all times.

Dates in late August/early September and locations are forthcoming.

Selichot

Saturday, September 12

The High Holiday liturgy is introduced the Saturday evening before Rosh Hashanah with Selichot services. We hope you'll join us for the following virtual events on Saturday evening:

10:00 pm — Cantor Chomsky will host a conversation about some of Tifereth Israel's musical adventures on Selichot – with special attention to the magnificent American Selichot Service by Gary William Friedman that was commissioned by Tifereth Israel. The ZOOM presentation will include interesting video and audio and conversation -- possibly including with the composer himself.

11:00 pm — Livestream Selichot Service, LIVE FROM TIFEREH ISRAEL, featuring Rabbis Hillel Skolnik and Alex Braver and Cantor Jack Chomsky TOGETHER AGAIN – safe – but in the same place. Our rabbis and cantor will live-stream a modified Selichot service from our sanctuary beginning at 11:00 pm.

Cemetery Memorial Service

Sunday, September 13

Old Cemetery — 1:00 pm

New Cemetery — 1:30 pm

This year we will be gathering the Sunday BEFORE Rosh Hashanah. To avoid gathering in groups, we will not be holding the group memorial service as we have in previous years. Instead, mourners will be invited to stand beside the graveside of their loved ones, and the rabbis will recite individual memorial prayers for each family. Masks and social distancing will be required at all times.

Elul: Spiritual Preparation BEFORE the High Holidays

Our Reopening Task Force is still evaluating our options for moving forward for this year's High Holidays. The reality is that, barring some major and miraculous change in our circumstances, the vast majority of our congregation will not be able to gather together in person for these holidays.

Throughout the major services of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we will be offering two simultaneous experiences:

The Main Service, which will be slightly abbreviated but still proceed liturgically much as it would in a usual year (more information about the main service below).

Three interactive break-out sessions conducted via Zoom:

1. During Shacharit - an interactive study session led by Rabbi Hillel
2. During the Torah Service - an interactive Family Service led by Rabbi Alex & Morgan Levin
3. During Musaf - an interactive, alternative musaf prayer experience led by Rabbi Alex

We encourage you to "tune in" for as much as you can, to feel free to "jump" from the main service to alternative options and back again, to get up and take frequent stretch breaks, and to be compassionate with yourselves if you don't feel up to participating in as much of the service as you would in a normal year.

These are the two options still under consideration for the Main Service:

Option 1: "Live Streaming from the Sanctuary"

Hear the familiar High Holiday melodies and sing along from home, as our service is live-streamed from the sanctuary. In-person participation in services would be limited to the clergy and the approximately one-to-two-dozen people necessary to conduct a service and its in-person honors. These individuals would all need to be under 65 and with no known underlying conditions, would be tested for COVID-19 in advance, and would be screened and temperature-checked upon entry into the building. Masks and social distancing would be required at all times, and upgrades to our ventilation system and HEPA filters would need to be undertaken.

In this case, services would be livestreamed, not on Zoom but through StreamSpot on our website. As mentioned above, our alternative experiences (Torah study, Family services, and Alternative Musaf) would be on Zoom.

Option 2: "Zoom Services with the Clergy at the Shul"

Zoom in to High Holiday services, singing and praying together while seeing the faces of family, friends, and community members on screen. Only clergy and their families would be in the synagogue, broadcasting via Zoom from the sanctuary, atrium, and chapel. To prevent unwanted intrusions in our service, most of the congregation would remain muted, with selected honorees manually unmuted by administrators on the Zoom account to participate in appropriate moments. Our alternative service experiences will be conducted on Zoom as well.

In both options what is clear is that the overwhelming majority of our congregation, and Jews around the world, will be participating in High Holiday services from home this year and so things will inevitably feel different. Many who have come up to the bimah for honors will likely not be able to do so, though we will do our best to honor and mention those who would have been with us in those moments. But ultimately, the decision between Options 1 and 2 will come down to what is deemed safe as the protection of the health of our congregants and staff is our top priority.

Mincha/Maariv services for the first and second night of Rosh Hashanah will be conducted via Zoom.

Other In-Person Outdoor Events on Rosh Hashanah in addition to our main services

Shofar Blowing Around Columbus

In partnership with other Columbus Jewish institutions, we are hoping to gather volunteers willing to sound the shofar from their front porches at a designated time on the second day of Rosh Hashanah (this year the first day of Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat and traditionally the shofar is not blown on Shabbat). In the coming weeks we will be circulating a sign-up sheet where you can add your name and address. Before Rosh Hashanah, a list of locations will be sent to the broader Jewish community, and people would be invited to stand (masked and at a distance) to hear the shofar in their own neighborhoods.

Tashlikh

Just as the shofar is not blown on Shabbat, Tashlikh is deferred one day when the first day of Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat. We plan to conduct a Tashlikh service at Franklin Park (rather than our usual location at Clifton Bridge to allow for easier social distancing) and Fenway Pond in New Albany. Masks and social distancing will be required and Mincha will follow Tashlikh.

In the next few weeks, we will send out a detailed schedule with exact service times and zoom/live stream links for each service and program on the days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. There will also be more information forthcoming including information about Machzorim - High Holiday prayerbooks.

The Holidays Continue: Lulav & Etrog Sales

It's not too early to start thinking about what's to come after Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, too! We're still planning our COVID-compliant Sukkot and Simchat Torah services and celebrations, and will be sending along more information as soon as possible. In addition, we are hoping to allow families to sign up for time slots to visit and bring their own meals to eat in our communal Sukkah.

In the meantime, this is a great year to consider building your own Sukkah. For advice, instructions, and/or links to DIY Sukkah Kits, please be in touch with our clergy. This is also a good year to consider purchasing your own lulav and etrog, since passing them from one person to another will not be possible. If you're interested in ordering your lulav and etrog, please email [Joy Contreras](mailto:Joy.Contreras).

Reopening Task Force

None of this could have been possible without the tireless efforts of our Reopening Task Force. We are eternally grateful for the contributions and expertise of Drs. Arnie Good, Jon Groner, Adam Weiser, and Howard Werman; Jennifer Slate Grischkan (Co-Chair of the Board of Ed); Aaron Rosenfeld; David Stein (Chair of our Religious Welfare Committee); President Ron Solove; Vice President Karl Rubin; Vice President Jan Lyddon; Rabbis Hillel Skolnik and Alex Braver; Interim Executive Director Laura Moskow Sigal; and Education Director Miriam Berk. As we prepare to turn the page from 5780 to 5781, let us hope that the new year is one of good health, healing and peace.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Hillel Skolnik
Rabbi Alex Braver
Cantor Jack Chomsky
Laura Moskow Sigal, Interim Executive Director
Ron Solove, President