

FROM OUR CONGREGATIONS

NEW PROGRAMS AND OBSERVANCES
FOR S'LICHOT, ROSH HASHANAH AND
YOM KIPPUR 2004/5765

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UNION FOR
REFORM JUDAISM

האיחוד ליהדות רפורמית
SERVING REFORM CONGREGATIONS IN NORTH AMERICA

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■ S'LICHOT AND SEPTEMBER 11: SOME CONSIDERATIONS

This year, *S'lichot* falls on the evening of September 11. The coincidence of S'lichot, Rosh HaShanah or Yom Kippur, and September 11 is one that will recur in our calendar as the years go by. Each community will have a different response to the confluence of these two events depending on its own particular needs, interests, and connection to the attacks of September 11, 2001. Even though almost three years have passed since that day, it can be difficult for a community to decide how to respond to that event in the context of the Jewish calendar. Here are two ideas:

RABBI SAM SEICOL

"At the Cape Cod Synagogue, we are exploring the possibility of a two-faceted experience. First, we would hold a fairly traditional *S'lichot* worship service (the form followed by this congregation for the past several years). A community-invited interfaith study program would follow this on the themes of forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace. The basic material for study would be centered around a collection of prayers and readings on hope and peace that I have used for 9/11 memorial services. (See below.) Readings derive from several faith and culture groups across the millennia."

(Note: Here is a link to readings prepared by the URJ Department of Worship, Music, and Religious Living in the days immediately following September 11, 2001—<http://urj.org/sept11>)

PRAYERS OF PEACE & HOPE

*From different faiths across the generations
Remembering 9/11*

If there is to be peace in the world,
 There must be peace in the nations.
If there is to be peace in the nations,
 There must be peace in the cities.
If there is to be peace in the cities,
 There must be peace between neighbors.
If there is to be peace between neighbors,
 There must be peace in the home.
If there is to be peace in the home,
 There must be peace in the heart.
[6th century B.C.E. Taoism, Lao-Tse]

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace;
Where there is hatred,
Where there is injury,
Where there is doubt,
Where there is despair,
Where there is darkness,
And where there is sadness,
[13th century Christianity, St. Francis of Assisi]

let me sow love;
pardon;
faith;
hope;
light;
joy.

O Thou kind Lord! This gathering is turning to Thee. These hearts are radiant with Thy love. These minds and spirits are exhilarated by the message of Thy glad-tidings.

O God! Let this American democracy become glorious in spiritual degrees even as it has aspired to material degrees, and render this just government victorious. Confirm this revered nation to upraise the standard of the oneness of humanity, to promulgate the Most Great Peace, to become thereby most glorious and praiseworthy among all the nations of the world.

O God! This American nation is worthy of Thy favors and is deserving of Thy mercy. Make it precious and near to Thee through Thy bounty and bestowal.

[20th century Bahai, Abdu'l-Baha]

Creator, open our hearts to peace and healing between all people.

Creator, open our hearts to provide and protect for all children of the earth.

Creator, open our hearts to end exclusion, violence, and fear among all.

[20th century Native American (Micmac,) Alycia Longriver Davis]

Send Thy peace, O Lord, which is perfect and everlasting, that our souls may radiate peace.

Send Thy peace, O Lord, that we may think, act, and speak harmoniously.

Send Thy peace, O Lord, that we may be contented and thankful for Thy bountiful gifts.

Send Thy peace, O Lord, that amidst our worldly strife we may enjoy Thy bliss.

Send Thy peace, O Lord, that we may endure all, tolerate all in the thought of Thy grace and mercy.

Send Thy peace, O Lord, that our lives may become a divine vision, and in Thy light all darkness may vanish.

Send Thy peace, O Lord, our Father and Mother, that we, Thy children on earth, may all unite in one family.

[20th century Sufi, Hazrat Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan]

I believe in the sun even when it is not shining

I believe in love when feeling it not

And I believe in God even when he is silent.

[20th century Judaism, found on a cellar wall in Cologne, Germany where Jews hid during the Holocaust]

■ "FAITH AND DOUBT AT GROUND ZERO"

Rabbi Gerald Weider

Congregation Beth Elohim and Old First Reformed Church are joining together to commemorate September 11th and to usher in the Jewish High Holy Day season on *S'lichot* evening. The schedule for the evening is:

- 7:30 P.M. *Havdalah*
- 7:45 P.M. Movie: "Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero"
- 9:45 P.M. Discussion of the film led by Rabbi Weider and Pastor Meeter
- 10:30 P.M. Refreshments
- 11:00 P.M. *S'lichot*—penitential service beginning the High Holy Days

The flyer text reads in part:

"It has been three years since the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. For many, those images called into question our physical safety. But for many others, the more immediate question stemming from these terrorist attacks was about God, about evil, and about the potential darkness within religion itself.

S'lichot is a time when Jews around the world begin to focus their thoughts on personal responsibility, sin, evil, goodness and forgiveness. The film, "Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero" (produced by Frontline and shown on PBS) asks the viewer to confront some very basic questions of human existence and explore several fundamental spiritual questions.

What was it we saw and experienced on September 11th? Was it the face of evil? Was this the face of religion? Where was God? What does the human response to this tragedy suggest?

In gathering together on this evening, it is our hope to challenge your religious beliefs in light of the events of September 11th, and the start of the Jewish High Holy Day season."

■ **AL CHEYT (A HEBREW ACROSTIC)**

Rabbi Mark Hurvitz

HOW DO WE RATE? AND HOW I EVALUATE WHAT I'VE DONE—A *S'LICHOT* RANKING

The directions for these exercises are simple. In small groups, distribute the appropriate work sheet and pencils. For the first, *Al Cheyt*—How Do We Rate, participants are asked to note if they themselves, their family, friends, or community have been guilty of each *cheyt* (sin) on the list. For the second, How I Evaluate What I've Done, participants evaluate and rank the various things they might have done during the year.

AL CHEYT (A HEBREW ACROSTIC)—HOW DO WE RATE?

What have we done?	Me	My family	My friends	My community
We have erred against You by [אִמּוּץ הַלֵּב] hardening our hearts;				
We have erred against You by [בְּטוּי שִׁפְתִּים] speaking perversely.				
We have erred against You [גִּלּוּי וּבִסְתֵּר] publicly and privately;				
We have erred against You by [דְּבוּר פֶּה] corrupt speech				
We have erred against You by [הִרְהוּר הַלֵּב] evil thought				
We have erred against You by [וְדוּי פֶּה] insincere confession.				
We have erred against You [זְדוּן וּבְשִׁגְגָה] intentionally and unintentionally;				
We have erred against You by [הִרְהוּר הַלֵּב] desecrating your name.				
We have erred against You by [טִפְשׁוּת פֶּה] foolish talk;				

What have we done?	Me	My family	My friends	My community
We have erred against You [יוֹדְעִים וְבִלְאִי יוֹדְעִים] knowingly and unknowingly.				
We have erred against You by [כַּפַּת שָׁחַד] bribery;				
We have erred against You by [לְשׁוֹן הָרַע] slander.				
We have erred against You in [מֵאֵכָל וּבְמִשְׁתֶּה] eating and drinking;				
We have erred against You by [נָטִית גָּדוֹל] false pride.				
We have erred against You by [שְׂקוֹר עֵינַי] wanton glances;				
We have erred against You by [עֲזוֹת מִצַּח] effrontery.				
We have erred against You by [פְּלִלוֹת] perverting justice;				
We have erred against You by [צְרוּת עֵין] envy.				
We have erred against You by [קִשְׁיוֹת עֲרִף] being stubborn;				
We have erred against You by [רִכְלִיּוֹת] tale bearing.				
We have erred against You by [שִׁנְאָת חֲנָם] causeless hatred;				
We have erred against You by [תְּמָחוֹן לֵבָב] confusion of values.				
Totals:				

HOW I EVALUATE WHAT I'VE DONE—A *S'LICHOT* RANKING

Please rank each item: 5 is most relevant to me and 1 is least relevant.

(In alphabetical order)	5	4	3	2	1
At times I've excused myself without seeking to redress a grievance.					
I am sometimes able to recognize my error where and when it occurs and make amends for it there and then.					
I know that my life is mine to make, yet much seems beyond my control.					
I may be ignorant of the wrongs I've done.					
I persist in doing the same little error.					
I told the person I wronged what it was that I did.					
I've been insincere in my responses to others.					
I've done the wrong thing, by my own choosing.					
I've done things to others that I would not want done to myself.					
I've done wrong under duress.					
I've expressed sorrow for my actions, but only when I felt it might prevent worse consequences.					
I've let friendships deteriorate because I haven't tried to bridge the gap of hurt.					
I've not helped when I could.					
I've said "I will" but then didn't.					
I've said: "I won't" but then did.					
I've thought of doing the right thing, but not acted on my thoughts.					
I've thought: "Since I can't complete it, I won't bother to start."					
Sometimes, even though I sincerely try to change my ways, I fall back into old patterns of behavior.					
There's something I didn't do, and now I'm ashamed of it.					
When I express sorrow for the wrongs I've committed, it is because of my awe and love of God.					
When I share with others the fact that I've done wrong, I find that we all share the same experience and grow together.					
Totals:					

■ CONGREGATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR S'lichot AND BEYOND

Carol S. Cohn

THE SCALES OF JUSTICE

The Scales of Justice program involves making an oversized balance-type scale (reminiscent of the scales of justice depicted in many courtrooms) with clean Cool Whip bowls and hanging it from the ceiling. One bowl is labeled The Good I've/We've Done and the other is labeled The Not So Good I've/We've Done (or words to that effect). Slips of blank paper are made available. The participants are asked to write on separate slips of paper all the things they've done or said—or not done or not said—during the past year that they are proud of and about which they feel good, as well as those things that they are less proud of and for which they are sorry. Then the participants fold the slips of paper and place them in the appropriate bowl.

After all of the participants have written and added to the “scale” as many things as they chose to include, the group looks at the scale and discusses how it is weighted and the implications of the weighting before them. The discussion goes on to focus on our tradition's teaching that in deciding, “who shall live” through the coming year, God weighs the good we have done this year against the not so good. Participants share their ideas about improvements they might make as individuals, as families, and as a congregation and how to go about making those changes. They can also remember and share those things that they are proud of, again looking at each of the categories—self, family, congregation—and discussing the importance of continuing and perhaps even improving upon those things and how to do so. The program concludes with the reminder that the “gates of heaven” are always open to those who truly repent of their wrongs and that we are given the opportunity each year to begin again with a clean slate—an even balance.

MISSING THE MARK

The Missing the Mark program is a graphic reminder of how challenging it is to be “on target” with our behavior and our words when dealing with others. This activity utilizes a large bulls-eye target that is hung on the wall. Each participant is given two pre-cut paper arrows (with extras available for those who want them). On one arrow, the participant writes something that he or she has done or said during the course of the past year (or has not done or said) that he or she feels had been “on target”—just the right thing at the right time. On the other arrow, the participant writes something that he or she feels “missed the mark” and resulted in misunderstandings, hurt feelings, and so forth.

These arrows (with or without names on them) are then placed on the big bulls-eye according to how close to the bulls-eye each participant feels is appropriate for each one. We talk about the bulls-eye as possibly representing God: The closer we come to fulfilling our destiny of being role models for the way God wants people everywhere to behave and to treat one another, the closer to God we are able to be. We also talk about some “good targets” (behaviors, *mitzvot*, values) toward which Judaism teaches us we should “aim” during the coming year. At the end of the program, each person is given a small bulls-eye target to take home as a reminder of this activity.

JUDGING JONAH: A PROGRAM FOR YOM KIPPUR

Rabbi Edwin Goldberg

The concept of this program is that the prophet Jonah is put on trial during Yom Kippur, between the morning service and the afternoon service. The duration of the program is about one hour.

WHAT HAPPENS

1. The presiding judge (in our case, a former chief justice of the Florida Supreme Court) welcomes all who are in attendance. He introduces the subject of Jonah, briefly reminding the audience of the basic outline of the Book of Jonah. Since the story of Jonah is read each year, this is not difficult to accomplish.
2. The judge then introduces the two opposing counsel, the prosecuting attorney and the defense attorney. It is good to make the room as much like a courtroom as possible.
3. Next, the defendant—Jonah the prophet, dressed in full costume—is brought in. In our case, I (Rabbi Goldberg) played Jonah and was escorted by our security guard, an off-duty Coral Gables police officer. I wanted to be brought in handcuffed, but my attorney said that would have been “prejudicial.”
4. The prosecutor then makes her opening statement. She actually introduced an official indictment (see below).
5. The defense makes its opening statement.
6. Questions from both attorneys are allowed (cross-examination and rebuttal).
7. Questions from the audience are allowed.
8. Closing arguments are made.
9. The audience decides whether Jonah is innocent or guilty.

HOW IT HAPPENS

For this program to work, the following steps should be taken:

1. Choose the judge and attorneys with care. They should not only be good at what they do but good in front of people. Their knowledge of the story of Jonah is not crucial.
2. The rabbi or educator should study with the three participants, helping them see the complexities of the Jonah story. I gave each of them Uriel Simon’s commentary (JPSA) to study, but any commentary of the teacher’s choosing will suffice.
3. We had two lunch meetings, at which we, as a group, discussed possible arguments for the prosecution and for the defense.
4. As the defendant, I then met separately with my “attorney.”
5. Some of the issues raised during the small discussions—and then during the actual program—were:
 - a. Was Jonah guilty because he disobeyed God even though he thought he knew the Ninevites better than God did?
 - b. If Jonah thought that he was protecting the Israelites from the Ninevites (i.e., Iraqis) and their future aggressiveness, was his not a noble goal?
 - c. Jonah may not have been a pleasant person, but does this make him guilty?

CASE NO. 5764—TISHREI (10th)

THE JEWISH PEOPLE)
)
V.)
)
JONAH)
DEFENDANT)

INDICTMENT

The Jewish people charge:

COUNT 1

Failure to Appear

On an unknown date, at Joppa and within the special maritime and territorial jurisdiction of the Jewish people and elsewhere, the defendant

JONAH

having been directed by God to go to Nineveh, did knowingly and willfully fail to go to Nineveh as directed, instead proceeding to Joppa and boarding a vessel with the intent of fleeing to Tarshish.

COUNT 2

Unlawful Flight to Avoid Prophecy

On an unknown date, at Joppa and within the special maritime and territorial jurisdiction of the Jewish people and elsewhere, the defendant

JONAH

did move and travel in foreign commerce—that is, a ship going to Tarshish— with intent to avoid preaching against the city of Nineveh, as directed by God.

COUNT 3

Fish-Belly Religion

On an unknown date, from the interior of a fish's belly, the defendant

JONAH

did knowingly and earnestly praise God for deliverance and did promise payment and sacrifice to God, while nonetheless omitting to acknowledge, seek forgiveness for, and turn away from his own mistakes and sins.

COUNT 4**Seriously Misplaced Priorities**

On an unknown date, at Nineveh and elsewhere, the defendant

JONAH

did knowingly, with hypocrisy and self-interest, rail against the lack of protection and mercy in vegetable matter, while endeavoring to deny the same to the people, including incompetent people, and the beasts of Nineveh.

COUNT 5**Rejection and Deliberate Ignorance of *T'shuvah***

As more fully set forth in counts 1–4, which counts are realleged and incorporated by reference at all times and places material to this indictment, the defendant

JONAH

did knowingly reject and deliberately close his eyes to what he had every reason to believe, that is, that God's severe decrees may and shall be tempered, averted, and annulled by repentance and *t'shuvah* and that God prefers same to punishment.

A TRUE BILL

■ BOOK FOR CONSIDERATION

Stuart Matlins

A recent book, *I Am Jewish: Personal Reflections Inspired by the Last Words of Daniel Pearl*, edited by Judea and Ruth Pearl and published by Jewish Lights Publishing, contains essays by 147 famous and not-so-famous Jews. The contributors hail from twelve countries and are drawn from across the spectrum of Jewish thought and life. They include adults (including our own Rabbis Eric Yoffie, Naamah Kelman, and Uri Regev) as well as some young people who attend our Union for Reform Judaism summer camps.

Congregations may wish to use this book in one of the following ways:

- (1) By incorporating readings from it into their *S'lichot* and other High Holiday Day worship liturgy, and
- (2) By inviting members to write and share with fellow congregants their own statements of what they mean when they say the words "I Am Jewish."

THANK YOU

Your membership in a Union congregation
has made the Reform Movement the largest
and most vibrant branch of Judaism.



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