



THE WHAT, WHEN AND WHY OF TORAH READINGS IN MISHKAN HANEFESH Rabbi Edwin Goldberg

A key element of Jewish worship is the public reading of Torah. *Mishkan HaNefesh* contains an abundance of choices for the Days of Awe. Some are historic choices found in previous Reform *machzorim*. The editors of *Mishkan HaNefesh* have also chosen new Torah passages that we hope will become beloved additions to the High Holy Day Torah canon, as well as great sermon fodder for decades to come.

Here are the offerings, with brief summaries.

Rosh HaShanah Morning Torah Readings

Genesis 21:1-21 (*Birth of Isaac, Expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael*)

This traditional reading is restored in *Mishkan HaNefesh*. In this reading, God remembers Sarah (Rosh HaShanah is also called the Day of Remembrance) and Hagar learns to open her eyes to the reality before her.

Genesis 22: 1-19 (*Binding of Isaac*)

The paradigmatic narrative of a horrific test.

Genesis 1:1-2:3 (*Creation of the World*)

A Reform practice, based on the notion that Rosh HaShanah is the birthday of the world.

Genesis 18: 17-33 (*Abraham Challenges God*)

A *Mishkan HaNefesh* innovation, wherein Abraham argues with God concerning the fate of innocent people to be punished along with the guilty.

Yom Kippur Torah Readings (To Be Used for the Morning or Afternoon)

Deuteronomy 29-30 (*Atem Nitzavim – You Stand This Day*)

A Reform practice, which extols the centrality of personal responsibility and the power of choice.

Genesis 3:22-4:18 (*The First Human Family and Its Struggles*)

A new choice for *Mishkan HaNefesh*, centered on the choice laid out to Cain and the possibility of repentance.

Genesis 50:14-16 (*Forgiveness and Continuity*)

Another new option, reflecting the ancient connection between Joseph and the Days of Awe, and the primal need for family reconciliation.

Leviticus 16 and 19 (Chapters of Origin)

A blend of the traditional reading (Leviticus 16) and the Reform practice of reading the Holiness Code (Leviticus 19), widely considered to be the central declaration of the Torah.

Note: Mishkan HaNefesh offers the Haftarah choices found in Gates of Repentance, including four choices for Rosh HaShanah Morning.