

Mishkan HaNefesh: Ten Things That You Need To Know

The creation of a new prayer book for the Days of Awe presents a challenge as well as an opportunity. The opportunity is great worship and transformed worshipers. The challenge is how to use the book in all its complexity without it being too complicated. To help the first-time user, here are some important things to know:

- 1 The book continues *Mishkan T'filah's* "integrated theology" approach. This means that the majority of the book features the "two-page" spread, wherein the right side reflects a more traditional rendering and the left side a more creative theological approach. Some sections of the service (or in the case of *Yizkor*, the entire service) are linear and have no two-page spreads.
- 2 The right-side translations are "faithful" but not literal, recognizing there is no way to render a word literally from Hebrew into English. The best one can do is a translation that reflects the Hebrew and the nuance of English. For more on our approach to translation, see "Translating Faith" on page 85.
- 3 The machzor was not created to be used "as is." In other words, like *Mishkan T'filah*, the worship leader(s) should prepare a particular set of choices concerning the two-page spread, as well as other features described below. It should also be understood that no prayer book can ever be more than a sacred implement in the facilitation of a worship experience, even as no textbook guarantees a wonderful lesson.
- 4 In addition to the left-side readings, which are marked by a gray background (or "wash"), there are pages with a blue background, set off with a black border. These in general are meant to be read silently.
- 5 To some extent, *Mishkan HaNefesh* retains the practice assumed in *Mishkan T'filah* that reaching the Hebrew blessing

at the bottom of a page serves as a sign to turn to the next page, hence allowing for fewer page announcements from the bimah. However, unlike *Mishkan T'filah*, many more pages are linear.

- 6 *Mishkan HaNefesh* offers suggested alternative Torah readings for Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, explained in a separate essay.
- 7 The Yom Kippur daytime services need not be prayed in the order found in the machzor; indeed, many congregations may choose to employ only certain elements in any given year. They may choose as well to supplement a service with a teaching or panel discussion.
- 8 Significant *Mishkan HaNefesh* innovations include:
 - The shofar service for Rosh HaShanah morning is divided into three sections, each one in a different part of the service. This helps the worshiper focus more time and energy on each theme of the shofar service.
 - Suggested alternative Torah readings.
 - The Yom Kippur volume contains a newly conceived *Avodah* service, based on fifteen steps of ascent and holiness.
 - The Yom Kippur volume offers a *Minchah* service with a special theme of Jewish ethical/spiritual values (*midot*).
 - The *Yizkor* service reflects a theme of seven lights of mourning and remembrance.
 - The *Eileh Ezk'rah* service offers a completely new and innovative approach by remembering those men and women whose lives and deaths were examples of moral choices made in service of repairing the world: *tikkun olam*.
 - The *N'ilah* service reflects a general theme of God's outstretched hand.
- 9 Individual worshipers are encouraged to explore the book on their own and at their own pace—even if that means they do not keep up with the congregation because they have been drawn to a particular commentary or reading.
- 10 Responsive readings are not indicated with italics. Instead, the worship leader is invited to suggest certain readings to be read responsively, if so wished.