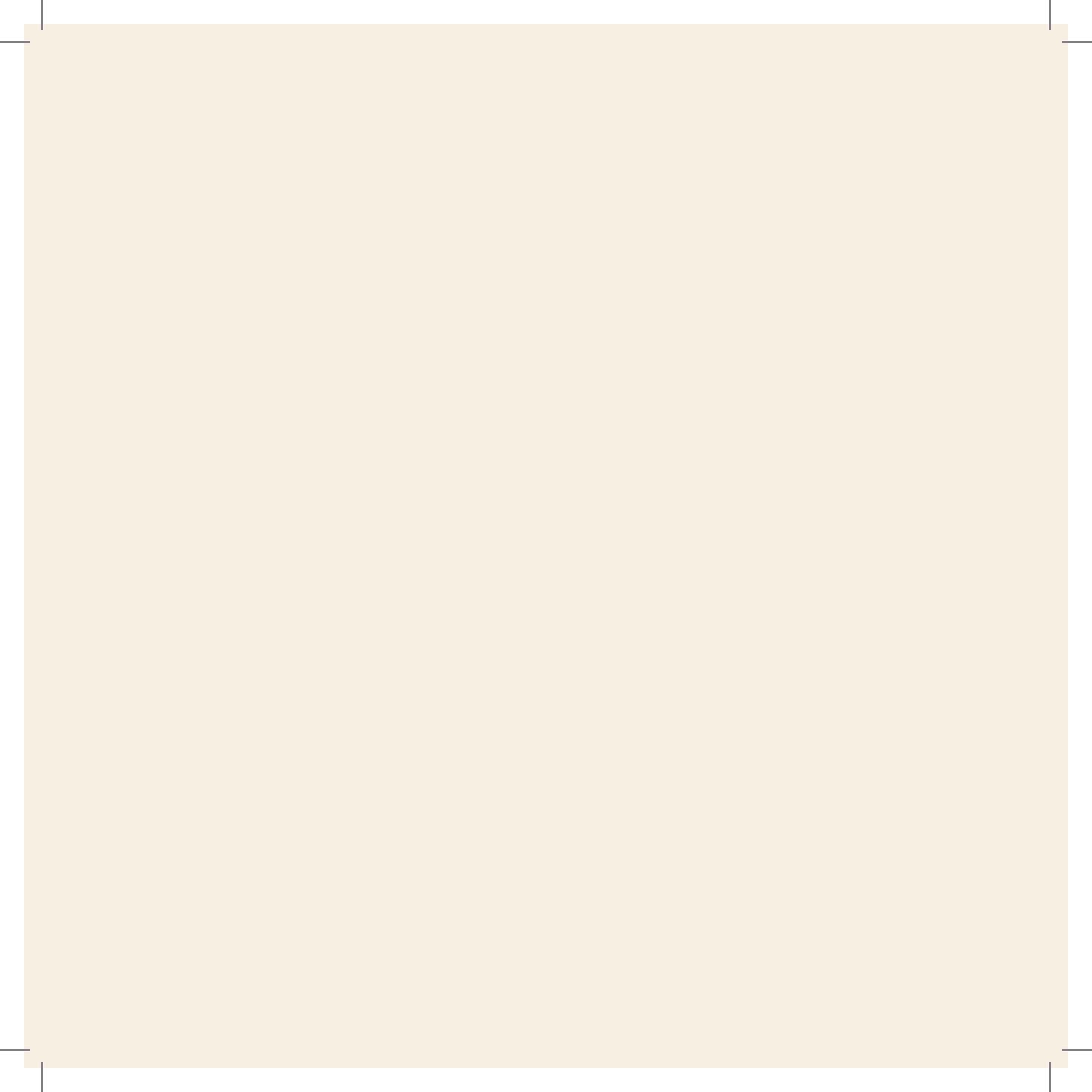


# PEEK BEHIND THE PRAYER

A selection of prayers with commentary and insights to help you appreciate the significance and relevance of these special words. Take a peek behind the prayer, and unveil a wealth of meaning and inspiration to help you appreciate the High Holidays. Your guide to experience the 'high' of the High Holidays, in a personal and pertinent way.

[mitzvahsociety.org](http://mitzvahsociety.org)





## INTRO TO PRAYER

A time to converse, and a time to connect. A time to deepen your relationship, a time to reach deep into yourself. A time to talk to G-d, a time to listen to the voice of your soul.

Request and reconnect, beseech and bond, discover and dialogue. Moments of gratitude, moments of need, moments of comfort. This is Prayer. Reach in, and reach G-d.

## **AVINU MALKEINU: THE DIVINE DICHOTOMY**

Our Father and Our King is a prayer that is recited many times over the High Holidays. It speaks of the rich and diverse relationship we have with G-d. G-d is our King, with the omnipotent power to give and govern our world. G-d is our Father, with an unconditional love towards us, his children, and awaits our engagement and involvement. Master of all things, ruler of all beings, yet tending and caring to our needs with a love and care that only a parent can feel.

Avinu Malkeinu turns our focus to the innate connection we have with the Almighty. The commitment and communication that create successful and lasting relationships frame the High Holidays. Find your language of love and engage with the Divine.



## TESHUVAH, TEFILLAH AND TZEDAKAH: HOLIDAY THEMES REVISITED

Perhaps three of the most used terms of the high holiday season, they are also the most usually mistranslated. Teshuva is commonly translated as repentance, tefillah as prayer, and tzedakah as charity. While not technically incorrect, their richer definitions provide a layer of depth and insight to the holidays.

Teshuvah, coming from the root of Tashuv, means return, and encapsulates the journey of our soul in this world. Our soul is rooted in the Divine, and although sin, neglect or negativity may tarnish or blur our connection, it can never be terminated. Thus, every action and thought that strengthen this connection, is an act of return.

Tefillah, meaning prayer, may connote requesting for needs or success. While that certainly falls under Tefillah, the word literally translates as 'bond' or 'connect'. Prayer is the cornerstone of our connection with G-d. It is the conversation that keeps us updated as it were, talking to G-d, while listening to our soul. It is the words of endearment and praise that maintain our dialogue with the Divine, placing our dynamic relationship in the front of our minds and hearts.

Tzedakah is not only charity, but justice (again the literal translation of the word). It is the act of giving back, recognizing the gift of success and wealth that we have, be it financial or of character. It is the way we repay for life's gifts, sharing what we have with others and justifying G-d's faith in our actions and behavior.



## SHEMA: THE UNITY OF G-D IN OUR WORLD

The most seminal Jewish prayer, the Shema declares our unwavering and unshakeable faith in G-d. It is recited daily, and highlighted in the prayer of the high holidays, particularly at the conclusion of Yom Kippur.

The Shema translates as 'Hear O Israel, the Lord is our G-d, the Lord is one'.

The first key is to listen. The noise and distractions around us may make it difficult to hear our thoughts – the voice of our soul. An open heart and mind allow us to see the world around us and the miracles it contains. The world is a garden, though we may have to toil to see its beauty.

The second key is to accept G-d's involvement in the world. He has a deep and personal interest in the world, and our place in it. This frames many Jewish beliefs of purpose and destiny, giving everything in this world a place and meaning.

The third key is to appreciate His Oneness. There is nothing that can detract from his presence, and by extension, the Divine image you were created in. You have immeasurable worth as a human, and the more we appreciate this, the more confident and receptive we can be to engaging with a relationship with G-d.



## MALCHIYOT, ZICHRONOT, SHOFAROT: THE BLUEPRINT OF THE SHOFAR

The Shofar is blown during the Musaf prayer at three intervals. They are marked by the three themes of the Rosh Hashanah prayer, Malchiyot – Kingship, Zichronot – Remembrance, and Shofrot – the Shofar blasts. Each Shofar blowing is introduced by a selection of ten verses, corresponding to the ten utterances with which the world was created.

Malchiyot – Kingship, celebrates G-d's sovereignty over our world and mankind. A king needs subjects. One can not rule over animals, nor can one be king over angels. There must be a recognition of the ruler, and a choice to accept their sovereignty. On Rosh Hashanah we celebrate the creation of Adam, and his acknowledgment of G-d's authority and presence in this world. On Rosh Hashanah we seek to come to the same recognition, in a personal and meaningful way. G-d is our king, and we are His subjects.

Zichronot – Remembrances, calls to mind our rich and prolific relationship with G-d throughout our history. We highlight the sacrifice and merits of our forefathers, and the commitment and mission they passed on to us. We beseech G-d to bear in mind our history of dedication, and the good deeds of our ancestors throughout the millennium.

Shofrot- the Shofar blasts, highlight the power of the Shofar and its message of hope. The Shofar is featured in many seminal events of our people, from the Binding of Isaac, to the Giving of the Torah, and ultimately, may it be speedily in our days – the heralding of Moshiach. The Shofar crowns G-d as our King, and is the tool with which we cement the previous two themes. In the words of the Talmud: "Say before Me verses whose themes are sovereignty, remembrances and shofar. Sovereignty, so that you should crown Me king over you; remembrances, so that I should remember you for good; and with what? With a shofar."





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