

Congregation Or VeShalom

Rosh Hashanah
& Yom Kippur
2008 ~ 5769



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Congregation Or VeShalom

Or VeShalom, meaning "Light and Peace" in Hebrew, traces its genesis to the Edict of Expulsion promulgated by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella on March 31, 1492 — the same year as the discovery of America by Columbus. The Spanish monarchy, spurred on by the Catholic Church, decreed that all Jews must leave Spain within six months or convert to Catholicism, under pain of death.

These exiles fled to the Ottoman Empire where they remained for over four centuries in cloistered communities, keeping alive their Spanish language and culture in the hope of someday returning to their ancient homeland of Spain.

The beginning of this century found these exiles anxious to unshackle themselves from Moslem rule and they migrated to America by the tens of thousands. Some of them made their way to Atlanta and founded Or VeShalom in 1914. At that time there was a membership of just 57 families. These Sephardic Jews emigrated with their families from the Isle of Rhodes and from Turkey. Today, we have an extremely diverse membership that traces its roots from the Middle East, North Africa, Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, North and South America, and even Atlanta!

The congregation's first permanent Kehilah was at Central and Woodward Avenues where it remained from 1920 to 1948. As a result of continued growth, in 1948 a larger building was acquired on North Highland Avenue. The current building on North Druid Hills Road, which has an award-winning design, was dedicated in 1971 and rededicated in August 1998, with the addition of the Rotunda and Victor D. Maslia Wing.

Services are primarily Sephardic, yet its members reflect a varied and harmonious background of Sephardim and Ashkenazim.

ROSH HASHANAH

The origin of Rosh Hashanah (1 and 2 Tishrei), the Jewish New Year, is Biblical (Leviticus 23:23-25) with this excerpt:

***“...a sacred occasion,
commemorated with loud blasts.”***

These are the blasts of the Shofar, the ram's horn. The Bible refers to the holiday as **Yom Teruah** (the day of the sounding of the Shofar) and **Yom Zikaron Teruah** (the day of remembering the sound of the Shofar).

In Talmudic times Rosh Hashanah became a celebration of the anniversary of the world's creation and a day of self-examination, repentance and judgment. The day was called **Yom Hazikaron** (day of remembrance) and **Yom Hadin** (judgment day). The prevalent name we know today, **Rosh Hashanah** (head of the year) was first used in the Mishna.



The Meaning of Shofar

Rabbi Abbahu said, "Why do we blow a ram's horn? The Holy One Blessed Be He, said, Sound before me a ram's horn so that I may remember on your behalf the binding of Isaac, the son of Abraham, and account it to you as if you had bound yourselves before Me."

The Shofar is essentially a double symbol. On the one hand it reflects triumph and redemption; yet, it also represents fear, trembling, sighing and wailing. **Tekiah** is the unbroken note representing the positive and hopeful. **Shevarim** is a note broken into three parts (a sighing, groaning sound). **Teruah** is a wailing sound, which is broken into many parts. According to the melding of two different opinions in the Talmud, the sequence of blasts is as follows:

Tekiah, Shevarim, Tekiah
Tekiah, Teruah, Tekiah
Tekiah, Shevarim, Teruah, Tekiah

When the Shofar is blown, traditionally, 101 blasts are produced – 30 just before the Musaf service, 60 during Musaf, and another eleven just after Musaf. Two blessings are said over the blowing of the Shofar. One blessing is over the Mitzvah (Torah obligation), which concludes, "...Who has commanded us to hear the sound of the Shofar." The Mitzvah is to HEAR the Shofar. The second blessing is the Shechechyanu, in which we thank G-d for giving us life and allowing us to reach this moment to hear the sound of the Shofar.

Sa'adia Gaon gives the following reasons for sounding the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah:

1. Acknowledges G-d as Our King.
2. Stirs our conscience.
3. Reminds us of G-d's revelation at Mt. Sinai.
4. Reminds us of the Prophets' warnings.
5. Reminds us of the destruction of the Temple.
6. Reminds us of the ram offered by Abraham in place of his son Isaac.
7. Reminds us to be humble before G-d.
8. Reminds us of the Day of Final Judgment.
9. Foretells G-d's reign of righteousness throughout the world.

Rosh Hashanah Prayers

The main themes of the prayer services are 1) acceptance of G-d's Kingship, 2) repentance by man and 3) judgment by G-d, Our King.

Two Torah scrolls are taken from the ark on Rosh Hashanah. On the first day we read Bereshit (Genesis), Chapter XXI. This Torah portion tells us of the birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah. According to the Talmud, Sarah gave birth on Rosh Hashanah.

The Haftarah for the first day is I Samuel, Chapters 1 – 2:10. The reading tells the story of Hannah, her prayer for a child, the subsequent birth of her son Samuel and her prayer of thanksgiving. According to tradition, Hannah's son was conceived on Rosh Hashanah.

On the second day we read Bereshit (Genesis), Chapter XXII. This Torah portion describes the Akeidah, where Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac. The sounding of the Shofar is connected with Abraham's sacrifice of a ram, instead of his son.

Special Foods of Rosh Hashanah

Although Rosh Hashanah is a day of soul-searching and repentance, it is a happy day. We believe that G-d is merciful and will forgive our bad deeds from the previous year. We are excited to begin a new year filled with good deeds. The joy of the New Year is reflected in the holiday's food customs, at least one of which is attributed to the Prophet Nechemiah:

**“This day is holy to G-d, your G-d;
do not mourn and do not weep...
for the joy of G-d is your strength.”**
(Nechemiah 8:9-10)

Honey

We eat sweet foods on Rosh Hashanah, as a symbol of our wish for a “sweet year.” In biblical times honey, not sugar, was the sweetener. Honey also represented good living and “wealth.” The land of Israel is often called the land of milk and honey in the Bible.

On the first night of Rosh Hashanah we dip challah into honey, instead of into salt before we say the blessing over bread. Then we dip an apple slice into honey, and we say a blessing asking G-d for a sweet year.

Fish

Rosh Hashanah literally translates as “head of the year.” Just as our heads (brains) direct us, Rosh Hashanah directs the new year. On this day we stock up on spiritual sustenance for the year to come.

In addition it is our hope to be at the head (as leader) of the other nations of the world through our righteous acts. Fish is eaten because it is a symbol of fertility and abundance.

New Fruit

On the second night of Rosh Hashanah we eat a new fruit (one not yet eaten this season). When we eat this new fruit, we say the Shechechyanu blessing in thanksgiving. We are reminded to appreciate the fruits of the earth. A pomegranate is often chosen as new fruit.

In the Bible the Land of Israel is praised for its pomegranates. It is also said that this fruit contains 613 seeds, corresponding to the 613 mitzvot in the Bible. We hope and pray that our good deeds in the ensuing year will be as plentiful as the seeds of the pomegranate.



More Food Traditions

FOOD	SIGNIFICANCE
Round Challah	Round shape symbolizes a "perfect" year to come; raisins and honey are added for a "sweet" year.
Head of lamb; sweet chicken or meat	Lamb's head – same as fish; Sweet chicken or meat – same as raisins and honey.
Spinach	"Green" year with plenty of fruits, vegetables and nuts.
Rice	Abundance from the field.
Honey Cake	The Prophet Nechemiah introduced the Persian custom of eating sweet foods to celebrate the New Year.

Tashlich

We perform *Tashlich* (casting off) when we approach a flowing body of water, say the appropriate prayer and symbolically throw our sins into the water. Our sins are usually represented by bread crumbs.

Tashlich is observed on the first afternoon of Rosh Hashanah. If Tashlich is not done on Rosh Hashanah, it may be said anytime during the Ten Days of Repentance (“Days of Awe” between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur). Although Tashlich is not mentioned in the Bible, it is a long-standing custom.

Fast of Gedalia

On the third day of Tishrei, we observe a minor fast day known as *Tzom Gedaliah* (the Fast of Gedaliah). This fast day commemorates the assassination of Gedaliah, the last Jewish governor of Judea, following the destruction of the First Temple (below) in 586 BCE.

Gedaliah's death marked the end of Jewish rule in *Eretz Yisrael* and the beginning of the Babylonian exile of the Jewish People. This fast is one of four fast days throughout the year commemorating the destruction of the Holy Temple.



YOM KIPPUR

The Rosh Hashanah prayer entitled, “*U’Netaneh Tokef*,” which was made famous by Rabbi Amnon of Mainz in the 11th century and chanted in some congregations, poetically connects Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur:

“On Rosh Hashanah will be inscribed and on Yom Kippur will be sealed how many will pass from the earth and how many will be created; who will live and who will die; who will die at his predestined time and who before his time; who will rest and who will wander; who will live in harmony and who will be stressed; who will enjoy tranquility and who will suffer; who will be poor and who will be enriched; who will be dishonored and who will be dignified... But REPENTANCE, PRAYER and CHARITY remove the evil decree!”

Yizkor for Everyone

In the prayers of *Yizkor* (May He Remember) we ask Hashem to “remember” the souls of our loved ones who have passed to the World to Come. These souls include those of our husbands and wives, parents and grandparents, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles and, G-d forbid, our children and grandchildren.

On the Individual Level

Yet, as far as “remembering” is concerned, we trust that Hashem never forgets, as we say on Rosh Hashanah in the *Zichronot* (Remembrances) prayer. That is, “You (Hashem) remember everything that has ever occurred.” So *Yizkor* is really a special opportunity for each of us to intensely bring to mind, to re-create, if only for a few brief moments, strong personal connections with loved ones who once lived in this world.

Yizkor is also an opportunity to secure additional merit for beloved souls by performing an act of Tzedakah. This is in accordance with the verse, *U'Tzedakah Tatzil MiMavet* (Charity Protects from Death). Furthermore, it is in the sense that the act of kindness in assisting the poor accrues not only to one's own merit, but also enhances the spiritual standing of those who have passed to the World to Come. The relationship between Tzedakah and raising the spiritual standing of departed souls is especially significant on Yom Kippur. It is a time when the living and the dead are visited by the Judge of All Worlds; when the living seek atonement for themselves, as well as for the departed.

On the National Level

We also say Yizkor for two general groups of departed from the Jewish Nation – 1) martyrs of the Shoa, including anti-Nazi resistance fighters, and 2) fallen Israel Defense Force soldiers, predecessor paramilitary freedom fighters and U.S. military personnel lost in battle.

For Living Parents

Before we say Kaddish we pay tribute to living parents with an uplifting prayer which helps us “remember” all that our living parents have done for us since birth. This is the prayer which makes Yizkor relevant for all, young and old; which makes Yizkor a service for everyone.

The Prayers of Yom Kippur

Kal Nidre

On the eve of Yom Kippur, while there is still daylight, Jews congregate all across the globe wearing white. Men don their talitot, and Kal Nidre (Kol Nidre for Ashkenazim) is chanted with a profound sense of emotional anticipation and a centuries-old inspirational melody.

Dating back to at least the 9th century, Kal Nidre, at first glance, seems to have nothing at all to do with Yom Kippur. Indeed, it appears to release a Jew from keeping his oaths and vows. Many of our commentators take the position that Kal Nidre in actuality emphasizes the importance of keeping one's word and honoring our commitments. How appropriate is this interpretation, as we begin a day when will be affirming, over and over again, how we plan to do teshuvah and change our ways.



"Yom Kippur"
Maurycy Gottlieb, 1878

Shema

While chanting the Shema prayer on Yom Kippur, the second line, as follows:

***“Blessed is the Name of His Glorious Kingdom
for ever and ever.”***

is read aloud. Moshe originally heard this verse from the angels, when he was on Mt. Sinai receiving the Torah from G-d.

Though normally read quietly, on Yom Kippur the second line of Shema is read aloud. Normally we dare not utter angelic phrases loudly; however, on Yom Kippur, as we strive to reach the spiritual level of the angels, we say the verse out loud.

Avinu Malkenu

Almost 2,000 years ago a terribly serious drought plagued Eretz Yisrael. Public fast days were proclaimed, and special prayers were offered. The great Torah scholar, Rabbi Eliezer, was selected to lead prayers, including the reading of a 24-blessing Amidah, written for the purpose of averting drought. Yet, rain did not fall!

Rabbi Akiva stepped forward and chanted a special prayer in which each verse begins with the words, ***“Avinu Malkenu”*** (Our Father, Our King). The rain began. (Source: *The Gemarrah in Taanit*).

Today, Avinu Malkenu is in our liturgy for fast days and during the ten days of repentance between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

Viduy

Confession is an essential part of *Teshuvah* (repentance). True repentance cannot be just a fleeting thought, like other ordinary thoughts which pass in and out of a person's mind. By confessing one's sins out loud in public, that confession becomes much more meaningful. Rationalizing one's sinful acts becomes much more difficult.

The two types of confessions, *Al cheit* and *Ashamnu*, list all types of sins alphabetically. The *Al cheit* prayer lists many categories of sins and specific transgressions, which are commonly committed. Sins are described in the plural, not only to save individuals from embarrassment, but also to enable the congregation as a whole to attain Teshuvah. A person cannot confess only for oneself. Instead, we beg forgiveness for all Jews who sin. Rabbi Isaac Luria, the 16th century Kabbalist, wrote that confession is written in the plural, "**We** have sinned," because all Israel is considered as if it were one body. Every person is a limb of the body.

The common categories of sins include but are not limited to the following familiar types of transgressions:

- Misuse of speech
- Thinking wrongful thoughts
- Adopting negative attitudes
- Violating Shabbat
- Violating Kashrut

Of course, one should not limit confessions to only those sin categories printed in the Machzor. A person should mention in Viduy any specific sins which have led one astray from G-d. It is customary to gently beat one's chest during Viduy, as if to say that the heart may have led one down the wrong path in the past, but hopefully not again.

Neila

A Jew prays three times a day on weekdays. On Shabbat and on Holidays, Musaf, the fourth additional service, is added to commemorate the additional sacrifices which were offered on those days in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. Only on Yom Kippur is there a fifth service. This is Neila.

Neila is read after Mincha as the sun is setting. The word, "Neila," means closing (or locking). Neila has a double significance – the closing of the gates of the Temple at the end of the day, and the closing of the gates of prayer, as the day of Yom Kippur ends.

The Neila service contains stirring pleas to G-d to accept our prayers before Yom Kippur ends. The heavenly judgment inscribed on Rosh Hashanah is sealed at Neila. The hazzan chants the service in a special awe-inspiring melody, which brings the congregation to even higher levels of devotion.

Following Neila and Arvit, the Shofar is sounded. The service concludes with exclamations of *Shema Yisrael* and *HaShem Hu Ha'elokim*.



Alphonse Lévy, 19th century

Rosh Hashanah

Monday, September 29

6:30 pm Evening Services
7:06 pm Candle Lighting

Tuesday, September 30

8:00 am Morning Services
10:00 am Jr. Congregation
6:15 pm Mincha/Tashlich/
Arvit

Wednesday, October 1

8:00 am Morning Services
10:00 am Jr. Congregation
10:30 am* Shofar
7:00 pm Mincha

Yom Kippur

Wednesday, October 8

6:30 pm Mincha
6:54 pm Candle Lighting
6:55 pm Kal Nidre Service

Thursday, October 9

8:00 am Morning Services
10:00 am Jr. Congregation
12:00 pm* Yizkor

Discussion with Rabbi Kassorla
during the break

"Mystical Musings"

Yom Kippur as Seen Through the Kabbalah

6:30 pm Neila
(Concluding Service)
7:15 pm Family Tallit Ceremony
7:50 pm Final Shofar Blast
(End of Fast)

* approximate time



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