

CJL SHABBAT WELLNESS INITIATIVE

Source Sheet, readings and activities

Tekiah Shevarim Teruah Tekiah

In the words of Maimonides, the blasts of the shofar are meant to wake us up from our slumber; to return us to a state of awareness that we have choices and are the authors of the stories of our lives. We can bring this process of awakening into focus through understanding the three kinds of shofar-blasts.

Tekiah - The long, uninterrupted shofar blast
Shvarim - Three shorter blasts
Teruah - Nine fragmented blasts

The difference between the shevarim and the teruah is discussed in the Talmud Rosh Hashanah 33b:

It is written: "It is a day of sounding [terua] the shofar to you" (Numbers 29:1), and we translate this verse in Aramaic as: It is a day of yevava to you. And to define a yevava, the Gemara quotes a verse that is written about the mother of Sisera: "Through the window she looked forth and wailed [vateyabev], the mother of Sisera" (Judges 5:28). One Sage holds that this means moanings, broken sighs, as in the blasts called shevarim. And one Sage holds that it means whimpers, as in the short blasts called teruot.

בבלי ראש השנה 14
 אמר אב"י בהא ודאי פליגי דכתיב (במדבר כט, א) יום תרועה
 יהיה לכם ומתרגמין יום יבבא יהא לכוון וכתוב באימיה
 דסיסרא (שופטי ה, כח) בעד החלון נשקפה ותיבב אם סיסרא
 מר סבר גנוחי גנח ומר סבר ילולי יליל

These last two kinds of shofar-blasts represent different kinds of brokenness. How would you define the difference between moaning and whimpering? When have you felt one or the other?

The rabbis of the Talmud interpreted the different shofar-blasts as useful metaphors in how we understand ourselves, and also how we grow as people through the process of teshuva. Is this a new concept to you? How do you think the shofar operates as a metaphor?

Here is one way to understand the metaphors, based upon the thinking of R' Isaiah Halevi Horowitz.

Tekiah - The shofar service begins with the full blast of tekiah, which implies wholeness and sure footing. We are confident in who we are and what we do.

Shevarim - The three-part sound of shevarim demonstrates the fault lines that lie just below the surface of that wholeness, recognizable upon even a cursory examination. We admit - maybe we're not as confident as we present ourselves to be. Maybe we struggle more than we let on.

Teruah - Digging deeper, peering into the depths of our souls, we must come to terms with our brokenness. Really, we are shattered inside. We might come to terms with feeling less-than, or lonely, or powerless, or the like.

Individual Activities

To be done after reading the Tekiah Shevarim Teruah Tekiah source on the source sheet

The three kinds of shofar-blasts are a useful metaphor for understanding ourselves. This writing exercise will take us on a short journey of reflection on the year that is passing, with a special eye toward acknowledging ways in which we don't feel whole with ourselves.

**This exercise is very introspective and may evoke uncomfortable material.

Prompt 1: Tekiah As we begin, write that first blast of tekiah for yourself. Recall a moment of wholeness from this past year. What experience made you feel like your most full self? Sing the song of that moment!

Prompt 2: Shevarim Each of us carries around a load of desires and values and hopes. Sometimes they are in concert with one another, and in other moments there can be dissonance. What are the places where your personal priorities rub up against each other? Is there a moment from this last year where these tensions came to light? How can recognition of such places of friction, allow you to continue to grow in a way that feels steady and secure?

Prompt 3: Teruah Look back on your year and find a moment of feeling utterly shattered. Maybe there is a definitive experience that will come to mind or perhaps you will need to search for it. Was the sadness that you experienced your own? Was it vicarious? Describe the experience of feeling broken. Did becoming whole again even feel like a possibility?

Prompt 4: Tekiah Let this final blast be a tekiah gedolah; try to write as much as you can without coming up for air. What words, what feelings, what accomplishments will let you know in this coming year that you are living into your aspirations. How do you want to experience wholeness as the year unfolds?

Shabbat-friendly (technology and writing free) activities:

Journaling prompts can be written down or just thought about

Think of someone you are currently not fully getting along with. List five good things about that person - things they've done, things you can count on them for, things they represent. Now do the same for yourself.

Write a letter to you of a year ago, and tell them what they should know in order to succeed in this past year.

Write fan-mail to a Jewish hero of yours - biblical, rabbinic, literary, modern, or imaginary. Tell them how they've affected your life and what they've inspired you to do. If they're alive, consider sending it.

Write a letter to a Jewish public figure whose impact or legacy you are struggling with. Ask all the questions you have to ask, make your case, ask them for clarification, yell at them, etc.

Definition of Spiritual Wellness (Princeton U Matter):

Spiritual wellness refers to having values or beliefs that provide a sense of meaning and purpose to your life, and considering whether your actions align with your values. You can also take time to connect with something bigger than yourself.

Shame

Elul can be a dangerous time - all this talk about teshuva-repentance, forgiveness, and self-work can spill over into feelings of shame. This exercise helps us become aware of how much we, and other people, experience shame. We won't be discussing the things we feel shame about, but we will talk about how we approach and respond to shame, with the hope to develop resilience as we experience that shame.

According to Brené Brown, "Shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed and therefore unworthy of acceptance and belonging...Shame creates feelings of fear, blame, and disconnection." We won't be discussing the things we feel shame about, but we will talk about how we talk about, and make room for, shame.

Time to process: Rabbi Hayley Goldstein published a very useful book, to be used during the counting of the Omer. She identified common concern about shame between Brené Brown, quoted above, and the Hassidic master, Rebbe Nachman of Breslov (1772 - 1810). Rebbe Nachman recommended dealing with shame through honest, personal prayer (in one's own language). Below are some quotes from Rebbe Nachman, with explanation from Rabbi Goldstein. Read them out loud. Discuss, as appropriate, (all Rebbe Nachman sources are from Likutei Eitzot 54):

Rebbe Nachman: One needs to accustom oneself to speak between oneself and one's Creator in great truth, until he awakens his heart in truth.

Rabbi Hayley Goldstein: In order to really do this work, we need to get real. We need to show ourselves completely to HASHEM, and/or to a human who can really hold us in our joy and in our pain. To get real with HASHEM, it's unlikely we'll be able to speak about our biggest traumas on the first "date" so to speak. We need to start slowly, speaking for as long as it takes until our heart is truly awakened in truth, and we can show our true selves to HASHEM.

Rebbe Nachman: A human being needs to evoke shame within themselves, a lot, in the presence of the blessed Divine.

Rabbi Hayley Goldstein: We all experience shame. It affects our lives whether we can see it or not. The only way out is through, and if we evoke our shame in front of the Divine Who loves us unconditionally, perhaps we can start to see through the shame cloud to the goodness with which we were created.

Rebbe Nachman: Until a person begins to speak with warmth/friendliness that is in their heart, true words that are in their heart...until they see their unimportance, and the largeness of the Creator, until they feel great [positive] shame before the Blessed One...

Rabbi Hayley Goldstein: In this speaking with warmth to, we are able to see the ways in which shame has made us feel unimportant. As we stand before our Creator in awe, we may be able to see just a glimpse of the miraculousness with which we were created. This perspective shifting could let us see the messages of shame more clearly.

Rebbe Nachman: [One should evoke shame] in order that they don't do something against the Divine's desire, may we be sheltered and protected from this, and all the more so that the person shouldn't go and do whatever sin and transgression, may we also be sheltered and protected from this.

Rabbi Hayley Goldstein: Shame makes us feel worthless. And, when we feel worthless, we do things that aren't in line with our true selves. We act in ways that we aren't proud of, treating ourselves or others poorly. When we transgress, i.e. go against what we believe, it is often shame that is the culprit, a sense of "I don't matter" or "I don't belong."

Rebbe Nachman: ...And when one merits Sacred Shame, one merits prayer, joy, and Holy Pride. [Through this work] a person is brought close to and included in the Tzadikim of Truth and they can receive from them faith in the direction of wholeness.

Rabbi Hayley Goldstein: If we have the courage to face, work through, and transform our shame, we will merit a depth of relationship with other people and the divine that is wholehearted—as we are able to show our whole heart to ourselves and others, no longer hiding. Through this work, we will ultimately merit deep joy that will come from deep inside, no longer skating on the surface of the shame that we are ignoring. When we face the messages within us that say we are worthless and cultivate a deep sense of worth as a human being, we will also merit a sense of pride in the simplicity and miraculousness that is being human.

Activities

The following can be done in a group or solo (related to the Shame source)

If you're doing this with a group: Read these quotes from Brené Brown, who has been a trendsetter in the public conversation about shame. After each quote, write down a number - 1 to 10 - rating how much you relate, 1 being the least, 10 being the most.

If you're doing this solo: Notice how these statements land on you, and whether they resonate

Brené Brown: Shame derives its power from being unspeakable. If we cultivate enough awareness about shame to name it and speak to it, we've basically cut it off at the knees. Shame hates having words wrapped around it. If we speak shame, it begins to wither.

Brené Brown: If you put shame in a petri dish and douse it with empathy, shame loses power and starts to fade. Empathy creates a hostile environment for shame, it can't survive. When it comes to shame resilience, empathy is at the center.

Brené Brown: Yes, I want to hide, but the way to fight shame and to honor who we are is by sharing our experience with someone who has earned the right to hear it—someone who loves us, not despite our vulnerabilities, but because of them

Brené Brown: Because shame floods us with strong emotions like fear and blame, we often can't recognize what's happening until after we've already reacted in a way that moves us away from our authenticity and, in some cases, exacerbates our shame.

If you're doing this with a group: Now everyone add up all the numbers on your page, and write it on this index card. All the index cards are folded and put in a bag or hat. Pass the hat around. Take one card out. If it's yours, put it back in and take another one out. Pass the hat on. Read what's on the card, to yourself.

Use one or more of these questions to open up conversation.

Process and discuss these questions

- How close was this number to your number?
- Are you surprised by this other person's number?
- Take the average of all the numbers - what is it?
- Do you think people are carrying around more shame than they usually admit?
- What do you make of that?
- What could, or should, be done about that?

Another option for after reading the shame source: Now we'll take some time to integrate and process what we've been discussing. You may go take a short walk, do some writing, or identify someone you'd like to discuss with.

Names of God

Eheyeh Asher Eheyeh – “I will be what I will be...”???

El Shaddai - “Name by which God known to [the patriarchs]” (Ex. 6:2); Lit. meaning debatable.

YHWH /Adonai – LORD (4-letter, “unpronounceable” name of God) - The One Who brings into being; The Ground of Existence

Adon Olam – Master of the Universe Atah – You

Av/Em – Father/Mother

Elohim – Lord Ein Sof – Infinity, The Infinite

Goel – Redeemer

Ha-Kadosh Barukh Hu – The Holy Blessed One

Ha-Shem – The Name

Ha-Makom – The Place

Ha-Rahman – The Merciful One (usual translation); more literally, “The Womb-ly One”

Melekh – King/Ruler

Mevarech - The Blessor

Oseh Shalom – Maker of Peace

Ohev Amo Yisrael – Lover of the People Israel

Ribbono Shel Olam – Master of the Universe

Rofeh – Healer

Ruah – Spirit, Energy Shalom - Peace; the Bringer of Peace

Shekhinah – Indwelling Presence

Tzur – Rock

Yotzer – Creator

Questions to ask/explore:

What does it mean that some of us are drawn to names that are more proximate /imminent/personal and others appreciate the more transcendent and even hierarchical names?

Might it not be true that we yearn for/ appreciate different names at different times (in our lives and/or on the Jewish calendar) depending on what we're praying for and what we're most needing from the Divine?

What if God is all of these, and more?

What would that mean for your relationship with the Divine? How does this discussion inform the conversations we have with students about God

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?t=4s&v=yFmPysl3tl0> -

Some comedy about the upcoming holidays

Action items

Text or call someone:

You haven't spoken to in a while

You owe an apology to

You didn't thank for something they did for you

Who might be lonely

Figure out how to return that object you borrowed, and then do it. Find a nice way to say thank-you, and also to compensate for borrowing it for much longer than they'd expected

Take 5 minutes to research a charity whose work you believe in and send them money. Consider an ongoing, monthly contribution

Spiritual Wellness Self-Assessment

Spiritual Wellness: having beliefs and values that provide a sense of purpose and help give meaning and purpose to your life, and acting in alignment with those beliefs	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually
1. I take time to think about what's important in life – who I am, what I value, where I fit in, and where I am going	1	2	3	4
2. I have found a balance between meeting my needs and those of others	1	2	3	4
3. I engage in acts of caring and goodwill without expecting something in return	1	2	3	4
4. I sympathize/empathize with those who are suffering and try to help them through difficult times	1	2	3	4
5. My values are true priorities in my life and are reflected in my actions	1	2	3	4
6. I feel connected to something larger than myself (e.g., supreme being, nature, connectedness of all living things, humanity, community)	1	2	3	4
7. I feel like my life has purpose and meaning	1	2	3	4

Scores of 20-28: *Outstanding! Your answers demonstrate that you're already taking positive steps in this dimension of wellness. You're improving your own well-being and also setting a good example for those around you. Although you achieved a high overall score in this domain, you may want to check for low scores on individual items to see if there are specific areas you might want to address. You might also choose to focus on another area where your scores weren't so high.*

Scores of 15-19: *Your behaviors in this area are good, but there is room for improvement. Take a look at the items on which you scored lower. What changes might you make to improve your score? Even a small change in behavior can help you achieve better health and well-being.*

Scores of 14 and below: *Your answers indicate some potential health and well-being risks. Review those areas where you scored lower and review resources provided in today's Wellness Resources handout to help you develop and set achievable goals.*

Food for Thought

Looking back, what was the most impacting event of this past year, in terms of your future?

What gave you the most joy?

What made you reconsider your assumptions?

Which of your friendships grew this year?

Which of them played less of a role than you might have thought?

What habit or practice did you begin this year that you want to continue?

What habit or practice would you like to wind down?

What book or movie had the greatest impact on you this year?

What purchase from this past year are you happiest about?

What purchase from this past year do you regret?

What opportunity did you not take, that you should have?

What was the most unexpected thing that happened this past year?

What stories in the news most caught your attention?

Toward whom did you act most selflessly this year?

How do you feel about your charitable giving from this past year?

Whose actions did you admire most from this past year?

Who unexpectedly came through for you this year?

What object should you get rid of? What should you buy?

Which Jewish practice impacted you the most this year?

What do I regret from this last year?

What was the personal highlight of my year?

Which parts of me, my essential self, have I lost or forgotten?

Which parts of me do I most want to accentuate this year?

What are the connections I need to refine or let go of?

What are the connections that I most value?