

General Guide to the Teshuvah Process

“All the month of Elul before eating and sleeping, let every person sit and look into his/her soul, and search his/her deeds, that that person may make confession.”

[Maharil]

- A. Evaluate your actions/interactions over the past year. Spend time each morning or at some point during the day considering your actions. You might want to explore either alone or with a friend/spiritual buddy.
- B. Judaism teaches that we transgress, or “sin,” we “miss the mark”—as in an arrow that is shot, but misses the bull’s eye of the target. As you consider your actions/interactions of the past year, identify those in which you missed the mark. Were others hurt as a result of your actions/interactions? Did you hurt yourself or fall short of what was expected/asked of you? Did you fail to fulfill any of the sacred obligations [mitzvot] of Judaism, that you have taken on as part of your own Jewish practice? Did these violate your own sense of covenantal responsibility to G-d/Judaism/The Jewish People/Humanity-The Universe? Assess what would be necessary, as you go forward, to act in a way that is in greater alignment with your “higher self.”
- C. After you have considered your actions, acknowledge to another person those actions for which you need to do *teshuvah*.
- D. Ask G-d/the Source of All for the wisdom and the guidance to allow you to undertake the process of *teshuvah*.
- E. Consider those individuals whom you may have hurt or harmed, so that you may, during the High Holy Days, ask their forgiveness. Consider whether you have hurt or harmed yourself. Consider if you have hurt or harmed the world in which we live.
- F. To help you in the *teshuvah* process, it is customary to read Psalm 27 every morning during Elul. Some options for using the Psalm: 1) Read through the psalm (below), and see if a word or phrase catches your attention. Allow yourself to meditate/reflect quietly on that line or phrase or word for some time. See what arises in you. Offer a prayer from your heart in response. 2) Read through the entire psalm, focusing on a different line each day. See what arises. 3) Choose one line or phrase from the psalm; journal or draw your reflections
- G. It is also customary to hear the shofar blown every morning during the month of Elul, as a way of “waking up” and paying attention to what you’ve been denying. You can hear the shofar by clicking on this link: <http://www.jewishmag.com/71mag/shofar/shofar.mp3>. If you are unable to hear a shofar blown, create a physical act that you do every morning to help you “wake up” spiritually and emotionally (i.e. Ring a bell, hit a drum, etc.)