

מָחָר – רֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה

THE WASHINGTON CONGREGATION  
FOR SECULAR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM

**MACHAR  
SERVICE FOR  
ROSH  
HA-SHANAH**

ראש השנה

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HA-SHANAH**

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THE WASHINGTON CONGREGATION  
FOR SECULAR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM**

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REVISED 2003

**Leader:** We have come together – family, friends and neighbors, to share with Jews throughout the world the celebration of Rosh ha-Shanah.

**Song:** “HEVENU SHALOM ALEIKHEM” - הַבְּאוּנוּ שָׁלוֹם אֵלֵיכֶם -  
(We Bring Greetings of Peace to You) -

May we greet each other with peace and good will.

**Leader:** In all other festivals, the spirit is one of exalted joy; Rosh ha-Shanah and Yom Kippur, however, are imbued with a seriousness born of the sense of responsibility that each of us bears for our own life and ethical choices. These days are also different in that they are not nature festivals, nor do they commemorate an historical event. They are observed only as a time for reflection, resolution and renewal. Rosh ha-Shanah is the Jewish New Year but, in contrast with the new years of other peoples, it is greeted with solemnity as well as revelry.

**Reader 1:** As we light these candles, let us create a peaceful interlude. This is a moment to set aside everyday events and to reflect on the past year.

**(LIGHT CANDLES.)**

**Song:** **THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE**

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine  
(3 times)

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

All over the world, I'm gonna let it shine (3 times)  
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine  
(3 times)

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

**Congregation:**

We remember the times that we came together during the year. The remembrance of countless candle lightings in years past forms a link with our Jewish heritage.

**Reader 2:** Since ancient times, Jews have gathered together on this day.

**Reader 3:** In ancient days, Jews gathered on this day to have God judge their actions as a nation.

**Reader 4:** Today, we reflect on our actions as members of a congregation, a nation, a world community.

**Song:** **BARUKH HA-OR** (Blessed Is the Light) – **בָּרוּךְ הָאוֹר**

**בָּרוּךְ הָאוֹר בְּעוֹלָם. בָּרוּךְ הָאוֹר בְּאָדָם. בָּרוּךְ הָאוֹר בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה.**

Barukh ha-or ba-olam. Barukh ha-or ba-adam. Barukh ha-or b'-Rosh ha-Shanah.  
Blessed is the light - in the world, in humanity, in Rosh ha-Shanah.

**Leader:** Since ancient times, Jews have expressed apprehensions about the new year, a feeling of impotence in the face of arbitrary death. Believing that their fate in this life and the next was the result of divine judgement, they chanted, as many continue to chant, the following liturgy:

B'-Rosh ha-Shanah yikkatevun,  
u-v'-Yom Tsom Kippur yehatemun.

**בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה יִכָּתֵב, וּבְיוֹם צוֹם כִּפּוּר יִהְיֶה מוֹחַל.**

On Rosh ha-Shanah it is written  
and on Yom Kippur it is sealed.

**Reader 1:** In traditional observance, on Rosh ha-Shanah it is written and on Yom Kippur it is sealed: "How many shall leave this world and how many shall be born into it, who shall live and who shall die, who shall live out the limit of his days and who shall not, who shall perish by fire and who by water, who by the sword and who by beast, who by hunger and who by thirst, who by earthquake and who by plague, who by strangling and who by stoning, who shall rest and who shall wander, who shall be at peace and who shall be tormented, who shall be poor and who shall be rich, who shall be humble and who shall be exalted."

**Reader 2:** Today's world also presents uncertainties. This year some will go hungry and some will be fed, some will suffer the horrors of war and violence and some will know peace, some will know tyranny and injustice and others will enjoy the blessings of freedom, some will be healthy and some will fall ill, some will endure loneliness and bereavement and others will know the comfort of family and friends, some will be indifferent to suffering and some will strive to lessen the suffering of others.

**Reader 3:** It is in the spirit of recognition of our shared vulnerability that we come here today to reaffirm another notion of the days of awe. This day marks the beginning of a season of renewal in which we reflect on our errors and failures, successes and achievements of the past year, so that we can move on with greater wisdom in the year ahead.

**Reader 4:** This day which links past and future summons us to this place to account for our deeds in this life.

**Reader 1:** We come with resolve in our hearts that compassion be reflected in our actions.

**Reader 2:** We seek forgiveness from ourselves and from others, to be at one with ourselves and with others.

**Congregation:**

We seek wholeness and truth as we enter a new year.

**Song:**        **L'-SHANAH TOVAH U-M'TUQAH! - לְשָׁנָה טוֹבָה וּמְתוּקָה!**  
(A Good and Sweet Year) -

**Leader:**     In Jewish tradition, this day has many names.

**Reader 3:**    **Yom ha-Zikkaron... "Day of Remembrance."**

In early Jewish folklore, the Hebrew god, on Rosh ha-Shanah, is depicted as remembering all the good and evil deeds of Jews. As Humanists, we, ourselves, strive to remember all our deeds and take responsibility for our actions.

**Reader 4: Yom ha-Din... "Day of Judgment."**

According to tradition, Rosh ha-Shanah is the day on which God judges all human beings by their deeds during the year just ended and inscribes their fate in the heavenly record book for the year to come. Today, it is a time to judge oneself, relying not on supernatural forces to determine human destiny, but on our own powers to make our lives what we will.

**Reader 1: Yom T'ruah... "The Day of Sounding the shophar."**

In the past, the sound of the shophar called the Jewish community together to repent sins, to forsake evil and to pursue goodness and mercy. We Humanists affirm that individual morality and social responsibility can bring us closer to universal peace and friendship.

**Reader 2: Rosh ha-Shanah... "The Head of the Year," – the beginning of beginnings, the time of the Creation according to the Talmud.**

**Congregation:**

We are beginning a new year that is one more step in a history thousands of years long. We strive to understand the values of our forebears. We build on what has gone before.

**Reader 3: The Talmud offers a model of moral behavior.**

"The one who proceeds with integrity,  
and takes action for justice,  
and speaks truth with their heart,

"הוֹלֵךְ תָּמִים  
וּפּוֹעֵל צֶדֶק  
וְדוֹבֵר אֱמֶת בְּלִבּוֹ,

**Reader 4: "the one without slander upon their tongue,  
the one who does no harm to others,  
and does not raise trouble for their neighbor....**

"לֹא רָגַל עַל לְשׁוֹנוֹ,  
לֹא עָשָׂה לְרֵעֵהוּ רָעָה,  
וְחִרְפָּה לֹא נָשָׂא עַל קְרוֹבוֹ....

**Congregation:**

"One who acts in these ways  
shall never be moved."  
Such a person is an enduring moral model.

"עוֹשֶׂה אֵלֶּה  
לֹא יִמוּט לְעוֹלָם."

(passages from the *Babylonian Talmud* - Makkot 24a)

**Leader:** The long history of the Jewish people is illuminated by prophets and sages who taught a commitment to ethical concerns. Their words span the millennia, stimulating our thoughts and enriching our convictions. We reflect on the words of the ancient prophet, Isaiah:

**Congregation:**

Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean.  
Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes.  
Cease to do evil; learn to do what is good.  
Seek justice; relieve the oppressed;  
Speak out for the orphan; advocate for the widow.  
*--Isaiah, 1:16-17*

**Leader:** Several thousand years ago, a prayer central to the meaning of Rosh ha-Shanah and Yom Kippur was written. It is called "U-N'taneh Toqeph."

"On Rosh ha-Shanah it is written, and on Yom Kippur it is sealed, how many shall leave the world and how many shall be born, who shall live and who shall die, who shall rest and who shall wander, who shall be humbled and who exalted,..."

**Reader 1:** Yet the rabbinic tradition asserts that three kinds of human action – T’phillah, T’shuvah, and Ts’dakah – can redress wrongdoings and change divine judgements.

**Reader 2:** T’phillah, commonly translated as “prayer,” is related to the word for honest self-judgement.

**Reader 3:** Ts’dakah, usually translated as "charity," is linked to the word Tsadik – a righteous person – one whose daily actions go far beyond charity and who is constantly seeking the path of justice and searching out ways to enrich the lives of others.

**Reader 4:** T’shuvah. Before we discuss T’shuvah we have to know the meaning of the word het, usually translated into English as sin. Het has its origins in archery, and the term was used to indicate missing the mark. Such is the Jewish concept of sin – missing one's goal, losing sight of the important things in life. Finally, then, T’shuvah, commonly translated as “repentance,” really means responding or returning – responding to our errors, returning to the right path to reach our moral goal. These images – honest self-judgement, justice to others, and self-correction – form the central theme of our service today.

**Leader:** In keeping with Jewish tradition on Rosh ha-Shanah and Yom Kippur, we ask ourselves if we have hit the mark, as individuals, as families, and as a community. Whether we look for answers through prayer as our theistic brethren do, or as members of a secular and humanistic Jewish congregation, the questions remain important and relevant. By coming together today, different people, different families, different generations, we embrace a tradition over 3000 years old and benefit from a conviction that the new year can be a creative moment. Together we help each other find the courage and time to turn.

**Congregation:**

On this Rosh ha-Shanah we recognize that each of us must strive to create a better world for all humanity. Each of us must strive to make our own lives a moral example for those around us and for those who will come after us. Each of us must strive to remain committed to the idea of a just social order and to the actions necessary to achieve social justice.



**Song:**

**MACHAR**

Tomorrow will bring a new dawn of peace.  
And if not tomorrow, then surely the following day.

**Leader:** The shophar sounds a beckoning call out of our past.

**The Call:** T'qiah, t'qiah, t'qiah                      תְּקִיעָה, תְּקִיעָה, תְּקִיעָה

**Reader 1:** The shophar calls and we come. In every corner of the world, throughout millennia past, the families of the people of Israel have gathered together for the New Year.

**Congregation:**  
Together on this Rosh ha-Shanah, together with friends and newcomers, we find comfort in our diverse community.

**The Call:** Sh'varim, sh'varim, sh'varim                      שְׁבָרִים, שְׁבָרִים, שְׁבָרִים

**Reader 2:** We partake today of the bounty of tradition, and we create anew from our personal experience and humanistic views.

**Congregation:**  
In ancient days our ancestors looked to God for the wisdom to guide them to a new and better year. Today we look for wisdom within ourselves; we call upon our knowledge, our own abilities, our own humanity.

**The Call:** T'ruah, t'ruah, t'ruah                      תְּרוּעָה, תְּרוּעָה, תְּרוּעָה

**Reader 3:** Lift up your voices like a shophar.

**Congregation:**  
We are aroused this day and with the shophar, we call out.

<b>The Call:</b>	
T'qiah, t'qiah, t'qiah	תְּקִיעָה, תְּקִיעָה, תְּקִיעָה
Sh'varim, sh'varim, sh'varim	שְׁבָרִים, שְׁבָרִים, שְׁבָרִים
T'ruah...	תְּרוּעָה, תְּרוּעָה, תְּרוּעָה
T'qiah g'dolah	תְּקִיעָה גְּדוֹלָה

**Reader 4:** The shophar is piercing and compelling.

**Congregation:**  
Awake our senses, O shophar. This is the time to renew commitments.  
This is a day to begin again.

**Song:**        **TIQ'U BA-SHOFAR** (Blow the Shophar)

Tiq' u ba-shophar,	תִּקְעוּ בַּשּׁוֹפָר,
hashmi' u emet,	הַשְׁמִיעוּ אֱמֶת,
hashmi' u binah.	הַשְׁמִיעוּ בִּינָה.

Tiq' u ba-shophar,	תִּקְעוּ בַּשּׁוֹפָר,
hashmi' u Torah,	הַשְׁמִיעוּ תּוֹרָה,
hashmi' u emet.	הַשְׁמִיעוּ אֱמֶת.

“Sound the shophar, proclaim truth and understanding and Torah....”

## **SPEAKER**

**Leader:**        Our services continue with a vision of peace.

**Reader 1:**     May we see the day when war and bloodshed cease, when a great peace will embrace the world.

**Reader 2:**     Then nation will not threaten nation, and humankind will not again know war.

**Song:**        **LO YISSA GOI - לֹא יִשָּׂא גּוֹי** (Isaiah 2:4)

Lo yissa goi el goi <u>h</u> erev,	לֹא יִשָּׂא גּוֹי אֶל גּוֹי חֶרֶב,
lo yilm' du od mil <u>h</u> amah.	לֹא יִלְמְדוּ עוֹד מִלְחָמָה.

“Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, nor learn war any more.”

**Congregation:**

For all who live on earth shall realize we do not need to hate or to destroy.

**Reader 3:**     We can choose to labor and to love.

**Reader 4:**     Let us enlighten the leaders of all nations with the power of compassion.

**Congregation:**

Let love and justice flow like a mighty stream.  
Let peace fill the earth as the waters fill the sea.

*--adapted from Nathan Sternhart*

**Song:**        **NA-ASEH SHALOM - נַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם** (from the end of the “Qaddish”)

Na-aseh shalom ba-olam,	נַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם בְּעוֹלָם,
na na-aseh shalom aleinu,	נַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ,
v'-al kol ha-olam.	וְעַל כָּל הָעוֹלָם.
V'-imru, imru, “Shalom!”	וְאָמְרוּ, אָמְרוּ, “שָׁלוֹם!”

Na-aseh shalom,	נַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם,
na-aseh shalom,	נַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם,
shalom aleinu,	שָׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ,
v'-al kol ha-olam.	וְעַל כָּל הָעוֹלָם.

(repeat last four lines)

We shall make peace in the world  
We shall make peace for ourselves  
And peace for all the world.

**Leader:**        Standing on the threshold of a new year we become aware of the speeding of time and the ebbing of years.

**Congregation:**

And remember that the companionship of time is but of short duration. It flies more quickly than the shades of evening. We are like children who grasp in their hands a sunbeam. We open our hands soon again, but, to our amazement, they are empty and the brightness is gone.

*--Yedaya Penini*

**Leader:**        Let us consider the limited time we have on earth and use it wisely. Let us create value in each of our days.

**Congregation:**

May we use with diligence and foresight our span of time.

**Leader:**        We resolve to avoid the desolating loneliness to which we could condemn ourselves by exclusively self-centered aims.

**Congregation:**

We open our eyes to the great value of friends and community.

**Leader:** Let us carefully select the treasures of past generations, and use them to enrich our understanding of our selves.

**Congregation:**

And let us pass those treasures on to future generations, enhanced by worthy deeds of our own achieving.

**Leader:** May we have the wisdom to dispel from our hearts the restless urge to outrun our fellow men and women in the race for self and power.

**Congregation:**

Rather, let us outdo ourselves by awakening to the virtues that lie within ourselves.

**Song:** EIZEHU HAKHAM? - אֵיזְהוּ חָכָם?

Eizehu hakham?	אֵיזְהוּ חָכָם?
Eizehu gibor?	אֵיזְהוּ גִבּוֹר?
Eizehu ashir?	אֵיזְהוּ עָשִׁיר?
Eizehu m'khubad?	אֵיזְהוּ מְכַבָּד?
Eizehu hakham?	אֵיזְהוּ חָכָם?
Ha-lomed mi-kol adam.	הַלּוֹמֵד מִכָּל אָדָם.
Eizehu gibor?	אֵיזְהוּ גִבּוֹר?
Ha-kovesh et yitsro.	הַכּוֹבֵשׁ אֶת יִצְרוֹ.
Eizehu ashir?	אֵיזְהוּ עָשִׁיר?
Ha-sameah b'-helqo.	הַשֹּׂמֵחַ בְּחֵלְקוֹ.
Eizehu m'khubad?	אֵיזְהוּ מְכַבָּד?
Ha-m'khabed et ha-briyot.	הַמְכַבֵּד אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת.

Who is wise? One who learns from every person.  
Who is strong? One who controls themselves.  
Who is wealthy? One who is content with their lot in life.  
Who is honored? One who honors humanity.

(from *The Mishnah, Pirkei Avot* 4.1.  
music: E. Shurin. Translation: Rabbi Binyamin Biber.)

## MEMORIAL

**Leader:** At this time, let us all stand for a moment of silence to remember those we have known, and to memorialize those who were taken from us whom we will never know.

...

Please remain standing.

**Reader 1:** "Remember on this Day of Judgment, that we are incomplete.  
Remember that we are a body mutilated.  
Remember the chimneys, the ingenious habitations of death  
where part of Israel's body drifted as smoke through the air.

**Reader 2:** "We lament the fields of loneliness  
for six million of our number torn away.  
Forget them not.  
There are some who have no memorial.  
They are perished as though they had never been.  
Remember them.

**Reader 3:** "Remember the landscape of screams  
engraved at the entrance gates to death.  
Remember the yet unborn dreams.  
Remember the terror of children, whose tears were burned.

**Reader 4:** "Remember the agony of parents, whose hopes were broken.  
Remember. We have not forgotten  
though all this has befallen us.  
Remember, and help us to obliterate terror.  
Remember, and help us obliterate agony."

*--Mahzor for Rosh Hashana  
by Rabbi Jules Harlow.*

**Leader:** Please be seated.

**Leader:** Let us consider our good fortune for having been spared the terrors of totalitarianism and for being able to live with dignity in a democratic land.

**Congregation:**

May we continue to work to protect and strengthen the values of our pluralistic society.

**Leader:** What is good has been explained,  
This is what we ask of ourselves:  
To act justly,  
To love mercy,  
And to walk as equals with one another.

**Reader 1:** Cultivate these in yourself,  
And they will be real.

**Reader 2:** Cultivate these in the family  
And they will abound.

**Reader 3:** Cultivate these in the community,  
And they will grow.

**Reader 4:** Cultivate these in the nation,  
And they will be abundant.

**Congregation:**

Cultivate these throughout the world,  
And they will be everywhere.

*--Institute of Creative Judaism*

**Reader 1:** That life is both fleeting and uncertain is a truth that presses upon the mind with special force as the old year ends and the new begins. Time speeds on and we go with it, and though we have seen the year close, we can never be sure of seeing the end of the new. Since life is so fleeting and frail, we must begin the serious use of it at once, and begin it by entering upon the task of self-examination and self-ennoblement which is its essential preliminary. A new year, say the rabbis, should inaugurate new life.

*--Rabbi Morris Joseph, (1848-1930)*

**Song:**                   **TURN! TURN! TURN!**  
                                  (Adapted from *Ecclesiastes* by Pete Seeger)

(CHORUS:)  
To every thing  
    (Turn, Turn, Turn)  
There is a season  
    (Turn, Turn, Turn)  
And a time for every purpose under heaven.

1.     A time to be born, a time to die;  
       A time to plant, a time to reap;  
       A time to kill, a time to heal;  
       A time to laugh, a time to weep.

CHORUS

2.     A time to gain, a time to lose;  
       A time to rend, a time to sew;  
       A time to love, a time to hate;  
       A time for peace, I swear it's not too late.

CHORUS

**Reader 2:**   We must begin with ourselves, but not end with ourselves. Turning (t'shuvah) means something greater than repentance and acts of penance. It means that by the reversal of each person's whole being, those who had been lost in a maze of selfishness, find a way to ... fulfillment ... . Repentance can only be an incentive to such active reversal. Those who go on fretting about repentance, torturing themselves with the idea that acts of penance are not sufficient, withhold their best energies from the work of reversal. It is written: "Turn from evil and do good" (*Psalms* 34:15). If you have done wrong, counteract it by doing right.

--*Martin Buber*



**Leader:** We have come together – all of us. Family, friends, neighbors. We are united by a common bond, a sharing of our thoughts, a desire to gather today to celebrate an ancient ritual in a special way.

Together we have looked back and honored an ancient culture that has meaning for us. Together we look forward to the coming year. Today we begin the newest chapter of a story that started thousands of years ago, with the hope that the new year would be good to us, to all of Israel, to all humanity. May we respond to the challenge of the new year, its promise of new growth and its hope for love and peace.

**Song:** HINNEH MAH TOV - הִנֵּה מַה־טוֹב (adaptation of Psalm 133.1)

Hinneh, mah tov u-mah na'im	הִנֵּה, מַה־טוֹב וּמַה־נָּעִים
shevet ammim gam yahad!	שִׁבְתַּת עַמִּים גַּם יַחַד!

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is  
when diverse peoples dwell together in unity!

**Leader:**

לְשָׁנָה טוֹבָה וּמְתוֹקָה!  
*L'-shanah tovah u-m'tuqah!*

**Congregation:**

לְשָׁנָה טוֹבָה וּמְתוֹקָה!  
*L'-shanah tovah u-m'tuqah!*

[A Good and Sweet Year!]