

# High Holy Days

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## Discussion Questions

- What themes during the High Holy Days are most meaningful to you?
- Discuss a certain holiday experience in your life that was especially meaningful to you. Why did it resonate with you?
- In what ways, if at all, do you find the prayer leader's interpolations, readings, and explanations helpful to you? Or do they interrupt the flow of the service? Are you one of those who would rather read about the prayers by yourself in advance, rather than have them read during worship? Or do you reap benefit from hearing something about a prayer before it is recited? Discuss your personal preference for learning and talk about why you think this is so.
- How do you think people change after experiencing High Holy Day services? Do they? Or do you find that resolutions are made, as on New Year's Day, that are ignored shortly after? What, do you think, are the causes for this?
- What place do you think Judaism attributes to the concept of sin, as compared with other traditions?
- Do you prefer to take the words of a prayer literally? ("Who will live and who will die?") Or do you prefer to look at and understand the phrases poetically and metaphorically? Discuss your answer and explore why you interpret words the way you do.
- Which do you prefer: to know the history of a prayer—such as the authors and their backgrounds and the historical context in which a prayer was composed—or do you find such information irrelevant to the meaning of the words? Alternatively, would you prefer to find out more about how the meaning of a prayer in the prayer book (*Mahzor*) might be interpreted for our contemporary generation?
- Do you think the actual words move people during the High Holy Days, or is it the music that is most significant in causing the desired emotional effect? What most moves you during the High Holy Days?
- How does the length of a service affect you? How do you deal with the fact that High Holy Day services are often very lengthy?
- What is one thing which prayer leaders could do to enhance the prayer experience during the High Holy Days? Discuss how this would change the experience for you.