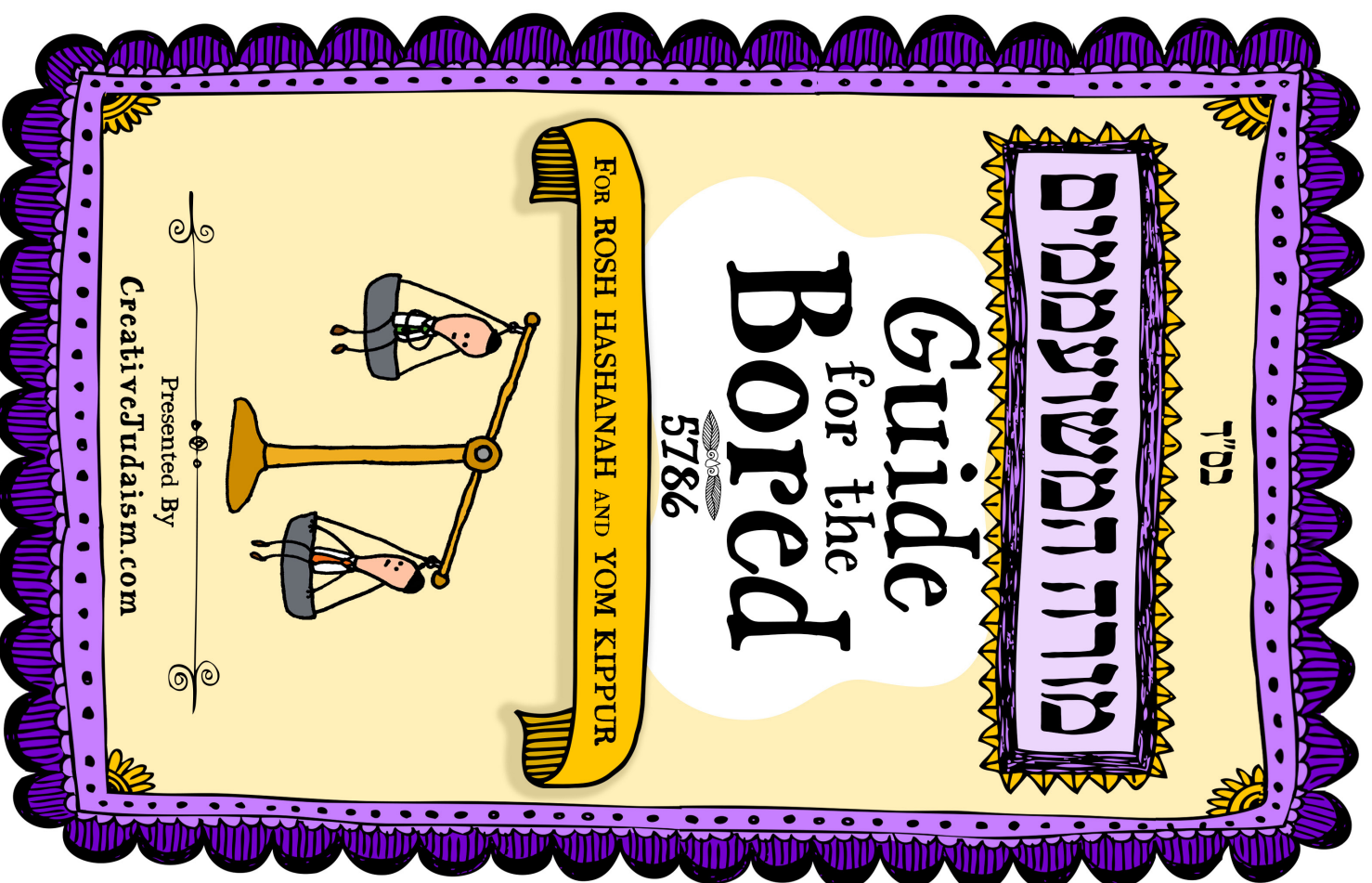


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THE TIMEKEEPER

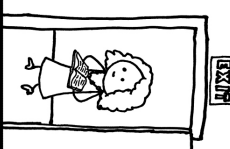


"We usually get to Musaf by now"

ALWAYS LOOKING AT THE WALL CLOCK OR AWATCH. OFTEN HEARD TALKING ABOUT HOW EARLY/LATE IT IS, OR WHAT TIME THEY PREDICT SHOF AR TO BE.



THE NOMAD

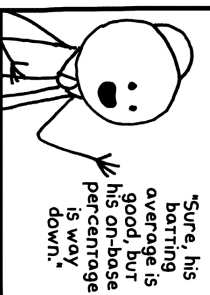


"Just stretching my legs..."

CAN'T STAY IN ONE PLACE. OFTEN SEEN PACING, GOING IN AND OUT OF SHUL, OR SITTING IN VARIOUS DIFFERENT SEATS.



THE SCHMOOZER



"Sure, his barting average is good, but his on-base percentage is way down."

CONSTANTLY CHATTING. SOMETIMES WITH THE SAME SCHMOOZE-BUDDY THE WHOLE TIME. SOMETIMES WITH WHOEVER WILL LISTEN.



THE LOUD WHISPERER

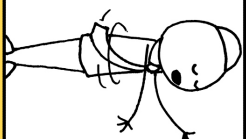


"..GOMEL CHASADIM TOVIN.."

DURING ALL THE PARTS WE WHISPER QUIETLY TO OURSELVES, YOU CAN HEAR EVERY WORD THEY SAY.



THE LAWN SPRINKLER



DURING EMOTIONAL PARTS, SWAYS BY ROTATING TORSO BACK AND FORTH, WITH FEET PLANTED AND ARMS LOOSE.



THE SEAT-SAVER

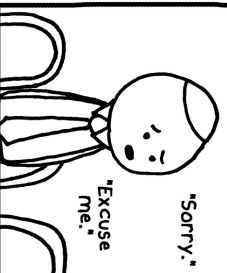


"Sorry, someone's sitting here."

YOU CAN TELL THAT THE PERPETUALLY EMPTY SEAT NEXT TO THEM IS BEING SAVED BECAUSE THERE'S A MACHZOR ON IT. BUT JUST IN CASE, THEY'LL LET YOU KNOW EVERY TIME YOU PASS BY.



THE SHUFFLER



"Sorry."

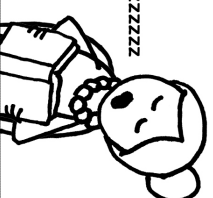
"Excuse me."

"Excuse me."

ALWAYS NEEDS TO GET IN OR OUT OF THEIR SEAT BY SCOOTING DOWN THE ROW.



THE SNOOZER



zzzzzzzz

FREQUENTLY NODS OFF, THEN WAKES UP WHEN COMMUNAL SINGING STARTS UP AGAIN. OFTEN LOOKS TO SEE IF THEY NEED TO POP UP.



KEY

VOCALIZATION:



QUIET MODERATE LOUD

ACTIVITY



LOW MEDIUM HIGH

HABITAT

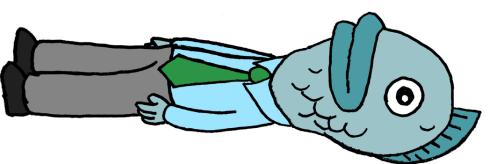


FRONT MIDDLE BACK

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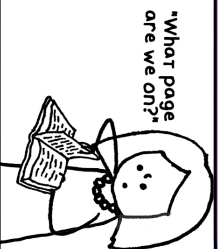
Created by David Taub
Layout by Dena Taub

Dedicated to
The Fish Head



BESIDES FOR ALL THE PRAYING, PERHAPS ONE OF THE GREATEST THINGS ABOUT THESE DAYS IS HOW IT BRINGS TOGETHER SO MANY DIFFERENT PEOPLE. BUT NO MATTER HOW DIVERSE YOUR CONGREGATION IS, THERE ARE CERTAIN ARCHETYPES THAT POP UP IN EVERY SHUL. HERE'S A GUIDE TO SOME OF THE MOST FREQUENTLY SPOTTED SPECIES.

THE LOST SOUL

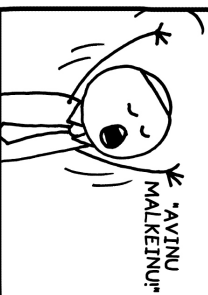


"What page are we on?"

CONSTANTLY FLIPPING PAGES OF THEIR MACHZOR, OFTEN ATTEMPTS TO DISCREETLY LOOK OVER PEOPLE'S SHOULDERS TO SEE WHAT PAGE THEY'RE ON.



THE VOLCANO

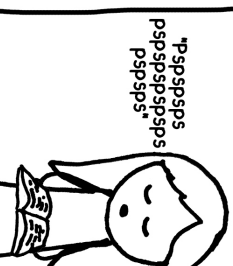


"AVINU MALKEINU."

QUIET AND INTENSELY FOCUSED MOST OF THE TIME, THEN OCCASIONALLY BURSTS WITH THUNDEROUS, EMOTIONAL SINGING AND AMENS.



THE SPRINTER



"Pspspspsp
pspspspspsps
pspsps"

QUICKLY SAYS BIG CHUNKS OF THE MACHZOR BY THEMSELVES, THEN WAITS PATIENTLY FOR THE NEXT CALL AND RESPONSE PART.



THE TOWN CRYER



"TOP OF PAGE 294 IN THE NEW MACHZORI MIDDLE OF 321 IN THE OLD MACHZOR!"

DESPITE NOT BEING OFFICIALLY APPOINTED TO DO SO, THEY LOUDLY ANNOUNCE THE PAGE NUMBER EVERY TIME WE START A NEW PAGE, AS WELL AS BEFORE AND AFTER



THE PREPPER

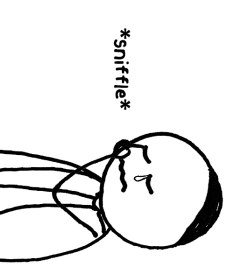


"Do you need reading glasses? What strength?"

ARRIVES TO SHUL WITH MULTIPLE, OVERSTUFFED BAGS OF EVERYTHING AND ANYTHING THEY MIGHT NEED. CONSTANTLY RUMMAGING TO FIND THE THING THEY WANT.



THE WATERFALL



sniffle

EVERY TIME YOU LOOK AT THEM THEY'RE TEARING UP. USUALLY SILENTLY CRYING, BUT SOMETIMES AUDIBLY WEeping.



THE STANDER



ALWAYS THE FIRST TO STAND. OFTEN STANDS FOR PARTS YOU DIDN'T REALIZE YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO, FOLLOWED BY A SLOW TRAIL OF EVERYONE ELSE.



Table of Contents

If you are reedding this on Rosh Hashanah, the contents of the table waiting at home for you may include a fish head. If you're reading this on Yom Kippur, the contents of the table waiting for you at home is probably nothing. The contents of this booklet are:

Introduction	1
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Introduction

Two years ago I put out the first Guide for the Bored. People seemed to like it, which was the point, so here we are again.

One of the things I thought I'd hear a lot of was criticism of suggesting that anyone could be bored during prayer on the holiest days of the Jewish year. Surprisingly, I didn't get a lot of that (I guess it's pretty relatable). But that didn't stop me from thinking about it anyways, and the real question is, why do so many of us find ourselves struggling with boredom on days that are filled with so much meaning?

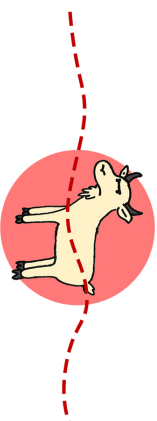
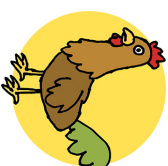
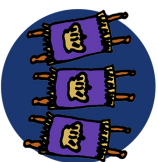
I think it's because a lot of the meaningfulness is hard to access. You could try to plow through it - just stay focused on the words until you break through. I do that sometimes with mixed results. But the goal of this booklet is to try to find back doors.

There are so many sights, sounds and ideas associated with these days that can spark our imaginations. Maybe if we try enough of them we'll find a secret passageway to some of that out-of-reach meaningfulness.

K'siva V'chasima Tova
Dovid Taub



METHOD #3: TEFILOS



If I had to pick a winner, I think I'd go with method #3. But, there's one more option...

METHOD #1/1: THERE IS NO HALFWAY POINT

THERE ARE FIVE TEFILOS ON YOM KIPPUR: MAARIV, SHACHARIS, MUSAF, MINCHAH AND NEILAH. HALF WAY THROUGH WOULD PUT US IN THE MIDDLE OF MUSAF. THIS FEELS VERY CLOSE TO PERFECT. BEFORE MUSAF FEELS LIKE WE'RE NOT QUITE HALFWAY THROUGH YET. AFTER MUSAF FEELS LIKE WE'RE ALREADY OVER THE HUMP. BUT WHERE EXACTLY IS THE MIDDLE OF MUSAF? BETWEEN THE SILENT AMIDAH AND THE REPETITION? THAT'S WAY TOO SKEWED. WE COULD TRY METHODS #1 AND #2 AGAIN WITH MUSAF ITSELF, BUT THEN WHERE DOES IT END?

PHILOSOPHERS HAVE WRESTLED FOR MILLENNIA WITH WHETHER TIME IS ONE CONTINUOUS WHOLE OR A CHAIN OF DISCRETE MOMENTS. THE ROGATCHOVER GAON² TAKES THIS LENS TO HALAGHAH.³ IN A CASE WHERE A CHILD BECOMES AN ADULT DURING YOM KIPPUR⁴, SOME OPINIONS HOLD THEY ARE NOT REQUIRED TO BEGIN FASTING THE REST OF THE DAY. THE ROGATCHOVER SUGGESTS: THAT'S BECAUSE YOM KIPPUR ISN'T MADE OF PARTS AT ALL; IT'S ONE INDIVISIBLE UNIT.

WHICH MEANS: THERE IS NO HALFWAY POINT.

I don't think this will make me stop thinking about whether we're halfway done yet, but it could give us an interesting perspective to keep our minds curious and engaged on this holy day.⁵

²R' Yosef Rosen, 1858-1936 CE

³Me'aneach Tzeitunos, Ch. 3, Sec. 10

⁴This is talking about when they would use visible signs of physical maturity to determine adulthood

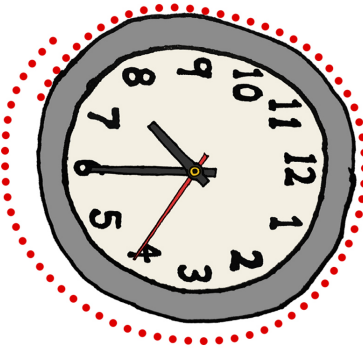
⁵Maybe not the whole time, but at least for the first half.

YOM KIPPUR HALFTIME

AN INFOGRAPHIC

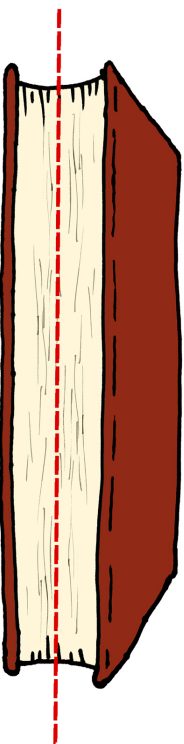
Everybody does it: "I think we're halfway through." But are we? Or are you just guessing? I think it's worth trying to do this correctly, so here's a handy infographic illustrating a few possible ways to figure out the exact halfway point of Yom Kippur.

METHOD #1: HOURS



FOR THE SAKE OF SIMPLICITY, LET'S SAY THE FAST BEGINS AT 7:00 PM AND ENDS AT 8:00 PM THE FOLLOWING DAY.¹ THAT WOULD PUT THE HALFWAY POINT AT 7:30 AM. TECHNICALLY, THIS IS THE MOST ACCURATE. BUT IT DOESN'T ACCOUNT FOR THE ACTUAL EXPERIENCE AND THE WORK THAT NEEDS TO BE DONE. A LOT OF THAT FIRST HALF WAS SPENT SLEEPING, AND WE ONLY GOT THROUGH ONE OF FIVE PRAYER SERVICES AND IT WAS ONE OF THE SHORTEST.

METHOD #2: PAGES



I TRIED THIS OUT WITH MY MACHZOR WHICH IS 309 PAGES. EXACTLY HALF WAY THROUGH IS 155 PAGES. IN MY MACHZOR THAT'S THE END OF YIZKOR, RIGHT BEFORE MUSAF. THAT DEFINITELY FEELS A LOT CLOSER THAN 7:30 AM DID, BUT I DON'T THINK IT'S PERFECT. MUSAF IS LOOONG. THERE'S STILL A LOT OF WORK TO BE DONE. ALSO, THERE ARE A LOT OF DIFFERENT MACHZORIM AND THEY'LL ALL YIELD DIFFERENT RESULTS (TRY YOURS AND SEE WHERE IT LANDS).

¹These times are made up. Please don't do stuff based on them.

Things to Think About

Welcome to the most boring section of this booklet. Here you'll find some musings about Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Most of it is backed up with real Torah sources, but sometimes I'll propose my own made up ideas. I'll try to let you know when that happens. Or just skip to the pages full of drawings. That's what I would do.

Inspirational Prayer

Inspiration. It's what everybody is searching for on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur (also Machzorim and sometimes their kids). Some people find it in the Rabbi's speeches (which is, coincidentally, when many people lose track of both their Machzor and their kids.) Others find it during the sounding of the Shofar (hopefully you've already found your kids or they'll miss it).

But let's face it – the main place most people are hoping to find inspiration is through prayer. We spend the majority of these days doing it, and some people paid good money to be here, so it better pay off. Unfortunately, if you're reading this booklet it's likely that

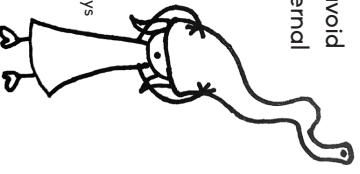
you, like me, have trouble finding prayer inspirational.

BUT - there may be a loophole.

We usually think of the word 'inspire' as meaning to motivate or influence. But inspire also literally means to inhale. That's what the actual Latin root means. If you don't believe me, find the guy in Shul who likes to talk about etymology and ask him. And the opposite of inhale is exhale, or expire, which is definitely something we're trying to avoid doing on these days of supernal judgment!

The thing is, the whole time we're praying, we're

¹ Another antonym is flatulence (which comes from another Latin word for breathe or blow), which is also something everybody is hopefully avoiding doing in Shul on the most crowded days of the year.



breathing out. So maybe we're doing it all wrong. If we tried to say all the words while *inhaling*, it would literally be inspiring.

Again, if you're reading this booklet, I assume you've tried, at some point in your life, to talk while inhaling.² If you haven't, go ahead and try it right now. It's not easy. And it sounds weird. But if that's what it takes to come out of this experience feeling inspired, then maybe it's worth it.

The question then becomes whether this is an acceptable and appropriate manner of prayer. And before you dismiss it, let me point out that it's actually more common than you think. When people whisper large chunks of davening really fast, they'll often say a few words while breathing in just to keep the flow going. Look around at the pro-Daveners. One of them is probably doing it right now (bonus points if they're yawning³).

So, it's definitely something people do. Surely it must be mentioned in some book of Jewish law, at least in a "better not to" context. But nope. I couldn't find any mention

of inhaling while praying in any Halachah texts.

Midrash connects the general idea of Breathing to the general idea of praising G-d: "With each breath that a man takes, he must praise the Creator. What is the source? Let every soul (*neshama*) praise G-d"⁴—I read as) Let every breath (*neshima*) praise God."⁵

But which part of the breath does that apply to? We've just been assuming that it's the breathing out part, but maybe we should be praising G-d every time we breathe in!

Or maybe not. Ri Chaim Volozhiner⁶ explains⁷ that since Tefillah serves as a stand-in for the sacrifices in the Beis Hamikdash, the words of prayer allow the soul to ascend as an offering with each breath. That would only apply to breathing *out* (because otherwise you're slurping your soul back in), which suggests that we're stuck with regular, expirational prayer.

There is, however, a verse in Tehillim that specifically mentions breathing in: "With open mouth



² It's just the sort of thing that people who are often bored end up trying, along with walking backwards and reading upside-down.

³ The bonus points are for them. Continuing to say the words through a yawn is real commitment.

⁴ Tehillim 150:6

⁵ Bereishis Rabbah 14:9

⁶ 1749 – 1821 CE. Foremost disciple of the Vilna Gaon and the founder of the Volozhin Yeshiva

⁷ Nefesh HaChaim, Shoar 2, Ch. 14

Things to Look At

There are a lot of words in this booklet. Hopefully they're interesting. But sometimes you just want to look at pictures. I know I would. So here are a few pages that are more visually oriented.

Doodle Inventory

You've almost certainly already noticed that I've taken the liberty of doodling in the margins for you. I hope you don't mind. They're all just silly, spontaneous drawings inspired by Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Some of them vaguely connect to the content of the page they're on, but most of them don't (which is usually how my margin doodles go in text books or hospital forms).

I'm not going to explain them (some of them are beyond explanation). But I did name them (but you'll have to figure out which is which).

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| ■ Al Chet | ■ Judge Mint |
| ■ Angelic | ■ Kaparos |
| ■ Apple Guys | ■ Kashrak |
| ■ Avinu Malkeinu | ■ Organic Shofars |
| ■ Fish Head | ■ Repentipede |
| ■ Full of Mitzvos | ■ Scales |
| ■ Gazoose | ■ Shofar Lady |
| ■ Happy Shofar | ■ Tekiasaurus Rex |



The Yom Kippur Job

There is a custom to wear all white on Yom Kippur. Some people even wear a special white robe called a Kittel.¹ One of the reasons given for that is that it makes us look like angels.² But why are we trying to look like angels? Just because we're doing angel stuff like praying and not eating? By that logic, whenever I drop a package off at a friend's house I should dress up like a mail carrier, but we don't do that (although now I want to³). So maybe we're doing it as a disguise, to try to get away with something.

The Alter Rebbe famously explains the nature of the Hebrew month of Elul⁴ (the month leading up to Rosh Hashanah) with a parable of a king who goes out to the fields to be seen by all of his subjects. But then the king goes back to the palace where access is extremely restricted and only a few elite individuals are authorized to enter. That's Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

So, based on that idea I'd like to argue that the reason we dress like angels on Yom Kippur is because we're trying to pull off an elaborate heist. We're not above sneaky tricks on these days. There's a bunch of stuff we do on Rosh Hashanah to "confuse the Soton"⁵ so that we can avoid judgment or something like that. So maybe on Yom Kippur we're trying to sneak into the king's palace to steal a clean slate.

I told you I'd warn you when I make stuff up, and this is one of those times. All my sources are legit, but the idea that it's a heist is my own. If you're on board, let's see how this heist plays out...

Step 1: The Disguise

We already established that we wear white to look like angels. But there are also a bunch of other things we do on Yom Kippur that make us look like we fit

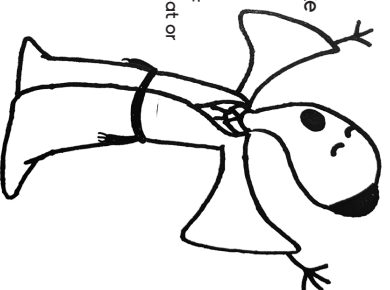
¹ One of the Yom Kippur miracles is that my Kittel is somehow full of stains even though I only wear it once a year on a day when I don't eat or drink anything.

² Rama, Shulchan Aruch, Orech Chaim 610:4

³ Nevermind, I looked it up and I think it's a federal offense.

⁴ Likutei Torah, Re'eh 32b

⁵ Rosh Hashanah 16b



What you'll need:

A Machzor. This game is diceless. The prayer book is how you "roll."

Amens

Throughout the game you may collect as many **Amens** as you want, by answering Amen (at the right times) with the congregation. You'll have to keep track of how many you have with your fingers or just remembering. You'll be able to use them to help make difficult tasks easier.

Turns

On your turn **you decide and describe** what you want to do. It could be "I use my Sho'far to stun the angels into a state of ecstatic inspiration so I can sneak past them." Or "I take off my shoes."

Choose a Forgiveness Force

On your turn, you have to decide which Forgiveness Force your action is most powered by - Teshuvah (repentance), Tefillah (Prayer) or Tzedakah (Charity and kindness).

- **Teshuvah** is about **personal change**. "I stop being scared." "I put my shoes back on."
- **Tefillah** is about **expression and asking for external help**. "I sing a song." "I ask the Angel where the Heavenly records room is."
- **Tzedakah** is about **helping others and creating external change**. "I help my friend out of the judgment vortex." "I break down the door."

You get to choose the Forgiveness Force for your action. But other players can object, and then you'll talk it out until you come to a consensus.

The GM decides on a difficulty level for this action (based on your GM choice above, that could be a dedicated person, all of the other players, or yourself). **Difficulty levels are:**

1. Easy
2. Moderate
3. Hard
4. Miraculous

Using Amen

You can use **one Amen to decrease your difficulty by one level**. You can use as many as you want (1 Amen to go from Miraculous to Hard, 3 Amen to go from Miraculous to Easy). Amen can be shared. But watch out - **If you ever have zero Amen**, you get expelled from the heavenly court and returned to earth and **you're out of the game**.

Machzor "Roll"

Open the Machzor to a random page (you'll use both the left and right sides. The full spread). Look for a word that belongs to the Forgiveness Force for your action (see list below). Where and how often your word(s) appear on the pages, and the difficulty of your action, will determine success or failure.

The presence of any of your Forgiveness Force words on either page is a **Forgiveness Force Appearance or FFA**



Droshos and Dinim

A TRPG (Tefilla-Based Role Playing Game)

The Story

The Heavenly Court is in session. The angels are gathered, and the books of life and death are open. But something is missing. **A single page has slipped from the Sefer HaZichronos** (the book that records the verdict for each and every thing in the entire universe). Not the whole book, just the entry for the **Blue Morpho Butterfly of the Amazon River Basin**.

You have been summoned to the Heavenly Court to **find and retrieve the missing page** using the forces of **Teshuvah, Tefillah and Tzedakah**. If the page is not restored before the final Kaddish, the species will cease to exist. You may not notice the change right away.. but there will be rippling consequences. A butterfly effect, if you will.

How To Play

Number of Players: 1-4

The general idea is that you are building a story and interacting with it. On your turn you can do anything you want, just by describing it, and various factors will determine whether you succeed or fail.

Be respectful. If you're playing this with two or more people, there's going to be a lot of talking and explaining. So make sure to do this somewhere where you won't be bothering anybody, like the hallway or lobby. BUT... hearing what's going on inside is actually part of the game, so you'll have to pop back in once in a while.

If you're playing solo, then you can do all of this silently in your own head, so there's not much of a risk of annoying anybody.



Game Master

The Game Master (or GM) gets to decide what happens when a turn succeeds or fails. Essentially, they get to write the next part of the story each time. Any of the following options work for this game:

Dedicated GM - One person serves as the GM. Instead of having turns like the other player, they get to determine how the story reacts to each thing a player does.

Collaborative GM - All the other players (besides for the player who's turn it is) talk it out and decide what happens next.

Solo Mode: If you're playing this as a single-player, you'll be your own GM. Once you "roll" and find out if your action worked or not, you'll decide what happens.

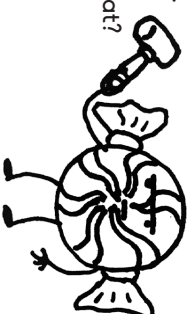
in with the heavenly crowd. A Midrash tells of a conversation that the angel Samael has with G-d on Yom Kippur that highlights several of these similarities:

Just as the angels have bare feet, so have the Israelites bare feet on the Day of Atonement. Just as the ministering angels have neither food nor drink, so the Israelites have neither food nor drink on the Day of Atonement. Just as the ministering angels have no knees, in like wise the Israelites stand upon their feet.⁶

So, in addition to the white angel suit, our disguise also includes not wearing shoes, not eating or drinking and standing all day.⁷

I think it's worth acknowledging that most of us *are* actually wearing shoes. But in this context, Jewish law defines shoes as specifically ones made of leather. I've always found that kind of funny, that we're supposedly not wearing shoes when we clearly are. But the fact that this angel says we're not wearing shoes proves that it works - apparently angels have halachah-vision and don't perceive sneakers.

So, our disguise was successful. We're in. Now what?



Step 2: The Secret Password

One of the most dramatic moments for me on Yom Kippur happens pretty early on, in Shema of the evening prayer, when we say *baruch shem kevod malchuso le'olam v'ed* ('Blessed be the name of the glory of His Kingdom forever and ever') out loud. On every other day of the year we whisper that line after Shema Yisrael. So when we belt it out on Yom Kippur it's a thrilling demonstration of how very different this day is.

According to Midrash,⁸ the reason we usually whisper this line is because it's stolen. When Moses ascended to the supernal realms to receive the Torah and bring it back to us, he overheard the angels saying those words, and then he taught it to us when he came back down. But because we're not supposed to have it, we have to whisper it. The Midrash compares this

⁶ Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer ch.46

⁷ We're actually imitating angels every time we put our feet together for the Amidah (Berachos 10b). Maybe we're pulling off little mini heists every day.

⁸ Devarim Rabbah 2:36

to someone who stole some jewelry from the king's palace and gave it to his wife and told her that she can wear it in the house but never in public.⁹

So we've got this secret passcode that unlocks all sorts of spiritual stuff, and because the way we got it wasn't completely above board we have to keep it on the down low. But on Yom Kippur we're allowed to say it out in the open because we look like angels.¹⁰ That means our disguise worked, we have access, and we've started using it. Our odds of nabbing that precious clean slate are looking good. But we're not in the clear yet...

Step 3: The Guard

We may have succeeded in blending in with angels, but there's one guy who's job is specifically to keep track of everything we've done and make sure we have to answer for it – the Soton, or the prosecuting angel. According to Midrash,¹¹ he complained that he didn't have jurisdiction over the Jews, so G-d gave him Yom Kippur. This makes sense – if Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are the king's palace (like we said above), then there would definitely be a guard specifically appointed to it. What this means for our heist is that no matter how angelic we look right now, it doesn't matter. This guy has an itemized list of everything we've done and if he thinks we don't cut it, we're not getting in.



Luckily, he really likes goats.

One of the strangest parts of Yom Kippur is the Mitzvah of the two goats,¹² one which is offered as a sacrifice to Hashem and the other is sent 'to Azazel.' There are a lot of different explanations of what Azazel is, but according to that same Midrash it means the Soton, and it's how we bribe him to leave us alone. Like I said, the guy likes goats.¹³

So now we've blended in, started hacking the mainframe and gotten past the last and most difficult guard. We should be ready to get our clean slate and get out. But not so fast...

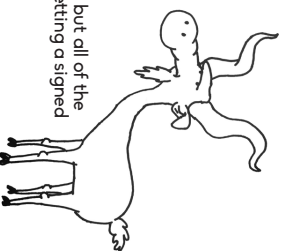
⁹ Happy anniversary!

¹⁰ Tur, Orech Chaim 619:1

¹¹ Pitkei DeRabbi Eliezer, ibid. Did I use ibid right?

¹² Vayikra 16:7-22

¹³ According to Rabbeinu Bachya (on Vayikra 16:7) it's not the goats he likes, but all of the transgressions we've transferred onto it. I guess he gets so excited about getting a signed confession that he forgets to actually prosecute.



☞ The Heart Beats

Put your arm inside your shirt and bang, so it looks like your heart is visibly beating.

☞ The Jamboree

Stomp your foot between each chest bang, so it looks like you're doing a little one-person percussion thing.

☞ The Metronome

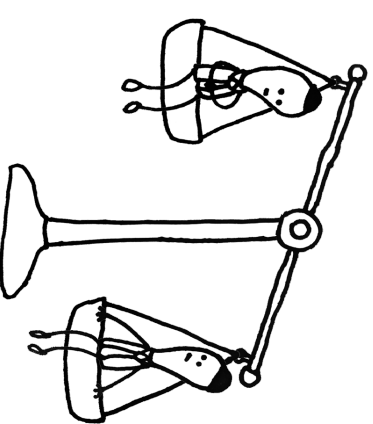
Keep a perfect rhythm, changing the pace of the words to maintain the same duration between each hit.

☞ The Round-About

Hook your arm up over your head and around your neck. (It's difficult to reach your heart but I tried it and it's possible. For me at least.)

☞ The Double Whammy

Cover your fist with your other hand, then bang with both arms.



Off the Beaten Path

One of the most interesting parts of Yom Kippur is arguably the most serious: The Viduy (confession). This is where we list off all the different categories of terrible things we've done and pound lightly on our chests each time. Sure, it's a time to reflect on our mistakes, but it's also one of the rare times we get to actually do stuff. So, why not make the most of it?

So, here's your challenge: come up with as many weird ways of banging on your chest as you can, and actually try them out.

Here's a short list of a few example ideas to get you started...

☞ The Vortex

Start with your fist as far out as you can, moving it around in large circles, spiraling inward towards your chest, increasing speed and decreasing the size of the rotations, until you zero in on your target.

☞ The Drop

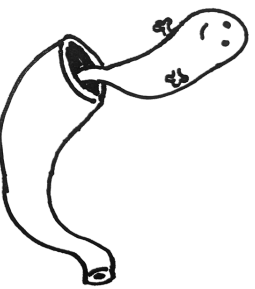
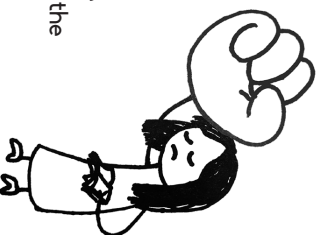
Raise your arm all the way up, then swing your fist all the way down to your chest in one fell swoop.

☞ The Cough Klop

Use the thumb side of your fist instead of the knuckles. (once you've got this perfected, try the pinky side)

☞ The Fakeout

Go in for a big strong bang, then stop just before your chest for one second, then hit softly.



Step 4: The Hitch in the Plan

No matter how far we can scam our way through the palace, eventually we're going to come face to face with the king, and the king is going to decide personally whether or not we get what we came for. There's no way to sneak or cheat or steal. It's just us and the king.

But... All of my favorite heist stories have a point where it seems like our eclectic group of rag-tag robbers has slipped up, costing them everything, but then it turns out that really it was part of their ingenious plan all along.

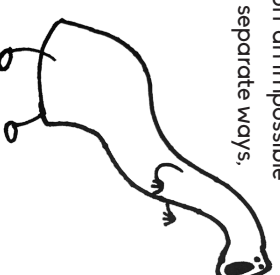
Flashback to Moses stealing "Baruch Shem." According to Maharzu¹⁴ on that Midrash, it doesn't make sense to say that Moses stole anything. But it seems pretty clear from the analogy with the guy giving his wife a sketchy anniversary present that that's what happened, right? Well, according to Maharzu, it must be that the guy had permission from the king to go wherever he wanted in the palace and take anything he wanted. The only reason his wife can't wear it in public is because members of the royal family might see her wearing their royal jewelry and get jealous and make a fuss. Same thing with the angels, but on Yom Kippur, we look like we're one of them, so nobody notices.

The important part of all of this for our heist is that the king was in on it. The king *let us* have those codes. Turns out, we had an inside man. Or, more accurately, an inside all encompassing, infinite everythingness.

But why? According to the Alter Rebbe,¹⁵ that face to face moment is the whole point of Yom Kippur. That's what Teshuvah (repentance) is - finding a way to bypass all of the superficial obstacles and gatekeepers that usually make us feel separated from G-d so we can turn around and realize we've actually been face to face the entire time.

Epilogue

Of course, after our group of misfits successfully pulls off an impossible heist, it's time for each of us to take our cut and go our separate ways, back to our everyday lives. Until the next heist...



¹⁴ R' Zev Wolf Einhorn, 1792-1862 CE
¹⁵ Likutei Torah, Yom HaKippurim, 68a

Things to Do

For those of you who have been bored in Shul a lot, you already know that there are ways to use the environment of the Shul itself to have fun. Tag and hide and seek are the go-to classics. But I think we can up our game (pun not originally intended, but very much welcomed when I realized I did it). The following are things you can do that leverage the unique and sometimes strange elements of the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur experience.

Bathroom-Break Interviews

On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur the Shul lobby is a bustling hub where you can cross paths with everyone. Some of us are finding excuses to step out as often as we can because sitting in our seats for too long is just too hard (the sitting and also sometimes the seats). Others just need to use the bathroom or get a tissue.

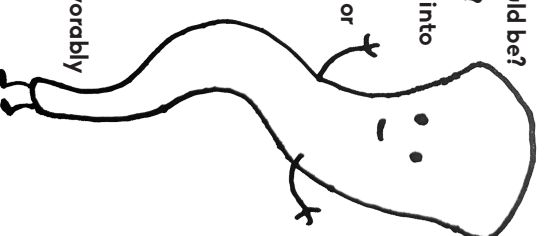
When we cross paths in the lobby with people we don't really know, usually we just let the moment pass. But that's a missed opportunity. Why not make the most of this chance encounter by asking a series of probing questions? At the very least, it'll stretch out your break time. At best, it may give you a new perspective when you go back in.

Here are some sample questions:

- ★ What is your favorite part of Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur services and why?



- ★ What games did you play in Shul when you were a kid?
- ★ What was the strangest Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur service you ever attended?
- ★ What are you most looking forward to eating right now?
- ★ If a freak snow-storm hit and we all had to live in this Shul for a month, which area would you stake out as your home? What would be your strategy for acquiring supplies and staving off invaders?
- ★ What superpower do you think would be the most useful here today?
- ★ Where is the best place to sit in Shul and why?
- ★ If you could swap bodies with one person in the room right now, who would it be and why?
- ★ If you could ask Hashem one yes-or-no question, what would it be?
- ★ What's the most important object in the Shul?
- ★ What do you think the Shofar is saying?
- ★ If this Shul had a mascot, what do you think it should be?
- ★ What's the best hide and seek spot in this building?
- ★ Please recite a part of today's Davening translated into sound effects only.
- ★ What's the most important part of Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur services?
- ★ What's the least important part of Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur services?
- ★ How many? (Just let them go wherever they want with that. If they ask "how many what?" just repeat the question.)
- ★ What animal do you think is being judged most favorably today?



Note: Obviously, be respectful. Only do this in places where you won't be disturbing people who aren't bored. Also, if someone looks like they're in a rush, just let them take care of whatever they need to take care of. Oh, and don't do it in the actual restroom. That's weird.