

## Welcome

**Song: Hinei Mah Tov (“Behold, How Good!”) / הִנֵּה מַה-טוֹב**

**Leader:**

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is  
For people to dwell together in unity.

As evening casts its shadows over the earth,  
ushering in this most significant day,  
our thoughts join with those of other Jews throughout the world.

**Reader 1:**

We put aside petty concerns and vain desires.  
We ask ourselves important questions.  
What is our life and of what avail is our strength?  
What is our wealth and to what purpose our power?  
How can we control the course of our lives?  
What is our future?

**All:**

On this Kol Nidre night, bound by the long memories of our people,  
we stand united with generations past.  
Recalling the lives of our forebears,  
we are stripped of pretense and revealed in all our vulnerability.  
Amid the uncertainties of life,  
we seek peace within ourselves and with other people.

### Candle Lighting

**Reader:**

*Na'eh ziv Yom ha-Kippurim*

נָאֵה זִיו יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים.

**(Candles one and seven are lit.)**

**All:**

*Na'eh ziv Yom ha-Kippurim*

How wonderful is the glory of Yom Kippur.

נָאֵה זִיו יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים.

**Reader:**

*Na'eh ziv ha-olam.*

נָאֵה זִיו הָעוֹלָם.

**(Candles two and six are lit.)**

**All:**

*Na'eh ziv ha-olam.*

נָאָה זִיּוֹ הָעוֹלָם.

How wonderful is the splendor of the world.

**Reader:**

*Na'ah tiferet ha-adam*

נָאָה תִפְרֵת הָאָדָם.

**(Candles three and five are lit.)**

**All:**

*Na'ah tiferet ha-adam.*

נָאָה תִפְרֵת הָאָדָם.

How radiant is the glory of humankind.

**Reader:**

*Na'ah tiferet ha-chayyim.*

נָאָה תִפְרֵת הַחַיִּים.

**(Candle four is lit.)**

**All:**

*Na'ah tiferet ha-chayyim.*

נָאָה תִפְרֵת הַחַיִּים.

How beautiful is the glory of life.

**Reader:**

In the year to come, may we succeed  
in examining our lives  
and in living with our realities.

**Leader:**

*Or zaru'ah la-tzadikim, u-l'yishrei leiv  
simcha.*

אוֹר זָרַע לְצַדִּיקִים וּלְיֹשְׁרֵי לֵב שְׂמֵחָה.

**All:**

*Or zaru'ah la-tzadikim, u-l'yishrei leiv  
simcha.*

אוֹר זָרַע לְצַדִּיקִים וּלְיֹשְׁרֵי לֵב שְׂמֵחָה.

Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the just in heart.  
(Psalm 97:11, adapted)

**Reader:**

Let us celebrate the light of the candles.

**All:**

They burn for us.  
They reflect the hope in our hearts.  
May they light our way in the years to come.

**Song: Ayfo Oree / איפה אורי**

## **Kol Nidre**

**Reader:**

Kol Nidre is not a prayer, but a chant. It is concerned with the importance of vows, oaths, and promises of human behavior.

**Leader:**

In the fifth chapter of Ecclesiastes, the author says, "It is better not to vow at all than to vow and not fulfill." But our forebears understood the need for escape clauses in human intentions. For despite good intentions, all of us make promises we cannot keep.

**Reader:**

Jewish tradition has established that unfulfilled promises and commitments to other people require forgiveness from those wronged. This is the cornerstone of the Secular Humanistic Jewish view of Yom Kippur – human interaction is the highest form of relationship and it is only at this level that forgiveness and interpersonal rebuilding can be undertaken.

**All:**

Kol Nidre – chant of ages,  
Chant of Israel, chant of sorrow,  
Measuring off the throbbing heartbeats  
Of a people bowed in anguish,  
Crushed by tyrants, thwarted, broken.  
Wand'ring ever – homeless, weary.

**Reader:**

Generations set your motif  
Out of trials, hopes and yearnings,  
Added each its variations  
To your theme and to your cadence.  
Diverse lands and diverse periods  
Poured their soul into your music.

**All:**

When we hearken with our hearts tuned,  
We can hear the lamentations  
Through time's corridor resounding;  
We can see revealed before us  
Heroes, martyrs, saints and scholars,  
Loyal, steadfast people of Israel.  
(Rabbi Morris Silverman, adapted)

**Traditional Kol Nidre**

*Kol nidre v'esarei v'chamei v'konamei  
v'khinuyei v'kinusei u-sh'vu'ot din'darna u-  
d'ishtabana u-d'achareimna v-di'asarna al  
nafshatana mi-yom kippurim zeh ad yom  
kippurim ha-ba aleinu l'tovah kul'hon  
icharatna b'hon kul'hon y'hon sharan  
sh'vikin sh'vitan b'teilin u-m'vutalin la  
sh'ririn v'la kayyamin nidrana la nidrei ve-  
esarana la esarei u-sh'vu'atana la  
sh'vu'ot.*

כָּל נִדְרֵי וְאֶסְרֵי וְחַרְמֵי וְקִנְיָי וְכִנּוּיֵי וְקִנּוּסֵי  
וְשְׂבוּעוֹת דְּנִדְרָנָא וְדִאֲשְׁתַּבְעָנָא וְדִאֲחַרְמָנָא  
וְדִאֲסָרְנָא עַל נַפְשֵׁתָנָא: מִיּוֹם כְּפָרִים זֶה עַד  
יוֹם כְּפָרִים הַבָּא, עֲלֵינוּ לְטוֹבָה, כָּלֵהוֹן  
אֲחַרְטָנָא בְּהוֹן כָּלֵהוֹן יְהוֹן שְׁרֵן שְׁבִיקִין  
שְׁבִיתִין בְּטָלִין וּמְבַטְלִין לֹא שְׁרִירִין וְלֹא  
קִיָּמִין נִדְרָנָא לֹא נִדְרֵי וְאֶסְרְנָא לֹא אֶסְרֵי  
וְשְׂבוּעָתָנָא לֹא שְׂבוּעוֹת.

**Leader:**

All personal vows we are likely to make, all personal oaths and pledges we are likely to take between this Yom Kippur and the next Yom Kippur, we publicly renounce. Let them be relinquished and abandoned, null and void, neither firm nor established. Let our personal vows, pledges and oaths, be considered neither vows nor pledges nor oaths.

**All:**

Here we stand, heirs of the past  
And creators of the future –  
Let us open our eyes to wisdom  
With a new heart, a new spirit  
And a new resolve.

**Reader:**

Once more Yom Kippur has come  
And we strive to rid ourselves of self-pretense  
We stand now between the day that was  
And the one that will be.

**Leader:**

In the year gone by  
What did we take? What did we give?  
To what were we blind?

**All:**

Our passion shall now be for wisdom  
Love and truth we shall find,  
Justice and peace we shall embrace,  
And our impulse for good shall prevail.

**Reader:**

Kol Nidre – chant of ages,  
Chant of pain and chant of pathos,  
Mingled with your notes of sorrow  
Are notes of joyous exultation.

**Leader:**

Kol Nidre – chant of the ages,  
Chant of grief and chant of triumph,  
Echoing, this night of memories,  
In the ears and hearts of Israel,  
As once again we draw together.

**All:**

With your plaintive chant, Kol Nidre,  
Rise our hopes for the dawn of peace,  
When all hearts are purged of hatred,  
Passions and lusts that rend asunder –  
So that all may stand together.

**Leader:**

May our hearts and minds be open to what this day asks of us.

**All:**

May we be prepared to listen with our minds and hearts.

**Kol Nidre Instrumental**

**Leader:**

We began this year, as all years, with promises and good intentions for improving our lives. Too many promises have been forgotten, too many hopes not realized.

**All:**

Who will hear our regrets?  
Who will open our prison and set us free?  
To whom can we raise our voices?

**Reader:**

As we accept our imperfections and confirm our hopes, we grow in ethical and moral strength. With a sense for life's potential, we move beyond finding fault to seeking new opportunities for growth.

**Leader:**

What can we learn from the Kol Nidre?

**All:**

We must avoid making empty vows.  
We must commit ourselves to deeds rather than words.  
We will strip away old habits.  
We will be open to change.

### Humanistic Kol Nidre

*Kol nidrei ve'esarei v'chamei v'konamei  
v'khinuyei v'kinusei u-sh'vu'ot di-n'darna  
u-d'ishtabana u-d'acharemna v'di-asarna  
I-ma'an ahavah u-tz'dakah yih'yu  
kayamim.*

כָּל נִדְרֵי וְאֶסְרֵי וְחַרְמֵי וְקִנְיֵי וְקִנּוּיֵי וְקִנּוּסֵי  
וְשְׁבוּעוֹת דְּנִדְרָנָא וְדִאֲשְׁתַּבְעָנָא וְדִאֲחַרְמָנָא  
וְדִאֲסָרָנָא לְמַעַן אֲהַבָּה וְצַדִּיקָה יְהִי קִיּוּמֵיהֶם.

**All:**

All personal vows we make  
All personal oaths and pledges we may take  
That are made for love and for righteousness  
We affirm and accept.

**Leader:**

We began this year, as all years,  
with promises and good intentions for improving our lives.

**Reader:**

Too many promises have been forgotten,  
too many hopes not realized.  
As the promises were ours, forgiveness must be ours.

**All:**

As we accept our imperfections and affirm our hopes,  
we grow in ethical and moral strength.  
With a sense for life's potential,  
we move beyond finding fault or blame  
to seeking new opportunities for growth.

**Reader:**

While we may have a modern philosophical outlook, we are not so different from our ancestors. The underlying ideas of the Kol Nidre still possess significance for us today. These are the sincere longing for a clear conscience, the release from feelings of guilt, the recognition of the sacredness of the promised word, and the desire to be absolved from vows which could not be carried out.

**Leader:**

How many of us have fulfilled all that we have vowed?  
Who among us has not broken a heartfelt promise?

**All:**

I hereby forgive those who have hurt me,  
Whether deliberately or by accident.

As I forgive and pardon fully  
Those who have wronged me,  
May those whom I have harmed in any way  
Also forgive and pardon me.

And may I not willfully repeat  
The wrongs I have committed in the past.  
And lovingly forgive myself as I forgave and was forgiven by others.

**Reader:**

May tolerance and justice light our days.  
May tolerance and justice light the world.

## Humanistic *Vidui'im* (Confessionals)

### Perhaps

***Leader:***

Perhaps part of the blame falls on me.  
Because I kept silent, uttered no cry.  
Fear froze my heart and confused my mind.  
And I did not resist the lie.

***Reader:***

My clear voice was choked and dumb.  
And I allowed them, without protest,  
To outrage and violate  
What was dearest to me, holiest.

***All:***

Cowardice came down and walked the earth.  
We hid our true feelings one from another.  
We did not hear the cry of a friend.  
And our own cry we often had to smother.

***Leader:***

Black suspicion, like the plague,  
Murdered faith, and left hearts cold.  
Courage was branded treason.  
Betrayal was called heroic, bold.

***Reader:***

The courts were ordered what verdicts to give.  
Trials were secret, the results never in doubt.  
Light hung its head in shame.  
Waiting that at least one man should cry out:

***All:***

“No!” But no one cried.  
Before he formed the word, could articulate,  
His head was broken, and his tongue torn out.  
Only one thing was left – the patience to wait.

**Leader:**

To wait that justice might prevail one day.  
Perhaps that was part of my blame.  
That I kept silent, did not speak,  
As though I had nothing to say.

*(Binem Heller, the Polish Yiddish poet who wrote this poem, was influenced by the execution of Soviet Yiddish writers in 1952.)*

**Song: B'Makom / במקומו**

**I Have Seen**

**Reader:**

I have seen violence scar the face of our planet;

**All:**

Yet I did not speak.

**Reader:**

I have heard cries of hungry children;

**All:**

Yet I did not speak.

**Reader:**

I have seen poverty and diseases;

**All:**

Yet I did not speak.

**Reader:**

I have witnessed the pain and suffering of others;

**All:**

Yet I did not speak.

**Reader:**

I have wanted to scream out in rage against injustice;

**All:**

Yet I did not speak.

**Reader:**

I too have been in pain;

**All:**

Yet I did not speak.

**Reader:**

I have wanted to laugh with joy;

**All:**

Yet I did not speak.

**Reader:**

I have wanted to share words of love;

**All:**

Yet I did not speak.

**Reader:**

Yet there were times of outrage, pain, and joy;

**All:**

When I did speak.

**Reader:**

May I always have the courage to speak what must be spoken.

**All:**

May we always have the courage to speak what must be spoken.

**Leader:**

Deep in the center of this holiday is the concept of commitment – individual and communal. If the year does not begin fresh with hope and clean of wrongdoing, then we suffer and the community suffers. But the choice is ours – it is not foreordained. The world of possibilities is born again each year. Perhaps all of us in all our relationships – to ourselves, to our loved ones, and to our society – need to re-evaluate our sense of commitment. We also need to reevaluate society's commitment to us. Perhaps this symbolizes the true meaning of Yom Kippur for us – to assume responsibility for all that we want and all that we are.

## In Our Hands

**Reader:**

In whom can we place our belief? Ourselves.  
In whom can we set the soul aglow? Ourselves.  
Who has the power to assuage guilt and to end the reasons for guilt?  
We do – we ourselves – we of human heart and spirit.

**Leader:**

To whom should we give our first applause?  
In whose inner being lies the power to exalt our “humanness?”  
Let us give ourselves the first applause –  
Let us reach into our inner selves and find that which we call righteousness.

**All:**

For it is not found in the heavens or beyond the mountain.  
It is found here, inside our inner human depths.  
It waits there for us to seek it out.

**Reader:**

Can we give an accounting of our souls? Do we dare – to ourselves?  
What will we find in the recesses of our mind, in the echoes of our past?

**All:**

We have the power and the choice, to narrow the abyss,  
between the thought of good and the deed of good.  
Can we find the will? We can, and we shall!

*(Dr. Jerald Bain, Oraynu Congregation, Toronto, Canada)*

## A Litany of Atonement

**Leader:**

For remaining silent when a single voice would have made a difference.  
For each time that our fears have made us rigid and inaccessible.

**Reader:**

For each time that we have struck out in anger without justice or cause.  
For each time that our greed has blinded us to the needs of others.

**All:**

We forgive each other and ourselves. We begin again in love.

**Reader:**

For the selfishness that sets us apart and alone.  
For falling short of admonitions of the spirit.  
For losing sight of our unity.

**Leader:**

For those and for so many acts both evident and subtle that have fueled the illusion of separateness.

**All:**

We forgive each other and ourselves. We begin again in love.  
(Adapted from a poem by Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs)

## Nizkor / נִזְכוֹר – We Remember

**Leader:**

“*Zakhor*” means remember. We are condemned to remember. It is the very nature of the human condition. Because we remember, we have culture. Because we remember, we have tradition. Because we remember, we are able to learn from our past. Even if we wanted to stop remembering, it would insist on intruding. We cannot be the creatures of our evolutionary past who lived from moment to moment without the assault of conscious memory. Our past stays with us vividly. We must learn how to live with it.

The Yizkor service is a customary part of many Jewish Holidays. The word itself is derived from the beginning lines of a prayer... “*Yizkor elohim nishmat...* May God remember the soul of...” As Humanistic Jews it makes more sense to refer to this important part of our tradition as “*Nizkor...* Let us remember.”

(Rabbi Miriam Jerris)

**Reader:**

It is not death I fear, but dying.

**All:**

May strength and courage be mine.

**Reader:**

It is not dying I fear, but pain.

**All:**  
May strength and courage be mine.

**Reader:**  
It is not leaving I fear, but being left behind.

**All:**  
May strength and courage be mine.

**Reader:**  
It is not separation I fear, but saying goodbye.

**All:**  
May strength and courage be mine.

**Leader:**  
Each of us remembers our traditions in our own way. It is through our actions today that we build our own legacy. Our traditions will be preserved and passed on to new generations. Their memories will be shaped by our present. We are children of the past. We are parents of the future. If we dwell too much on the past we shall neglect the future.

But we cannot only look forward or we will forget the lessons that history provides. We are always the bridge between the past and the future. We stretch between the old and the new. We do not betray the future by ignoring our roots. We pay tribute to both.

## **Song: We Remember Them**

### **Candles of Memory**

#### **First Candle: The Holocaust**

**Leader:**  
We light this candle in memory of those killed in the Holocaust. Though they are silent, our ancestors speak with our voices. Though their hands are still, they labor through us. They live in us, in our faces and our bodies, in the energy that moves our muscles, and in our thoughts. They survive in our memories.

**All:**  
It is good to have the gift of remembrance, to transmit the story of our people from generation to generation.

***Reader:***

There are things in Jewish history too terrible to be believed, but not too terrible to have happened. Let us honor the martyrs of the Holocaust in Europe, and of all the other holocausts unleashed on the innocent of this world. In their memory, we reaffirm our commitment to freedom and peace.

## **The Jewish Ghetto at Lodz**

***Leader:***

If you choose to die,  
leap from the upper floor  
of the cold house,  
or from the bridge  
next to the Church  
of the Blessed Virgin.  
Or slit your wrists,  
or wander to the fence  
where a guard will shoot you,  
or just lie down on the frozen ground.

***Reader:***

If you choose to live,  
there is music  
to hide the rumbling  
of your empty stomach.  
Bronislawka plays her violin  
in the House of Culture.  
In soup kitchen no. 2.  
Stajman the tenor sings.  
Or you can trade on the black market  
your last table cloth or sheet  
for a loaf of bread.

***Leader:***

But there are times  
when you do not choose.  
A notice is tacked to your door.  
Fate has chosen you  
to ride the train.

*(Harold Black)*

**All:**

We will remember. To forget is a crime against memory.

## Second Candle: Peace

**Leader:**

We light the second candle for peace in the world. We remember lives lost in strife and yearn for a day when the words ring true:

*Lo yisa goy el goy cherev  
Lo yilm'du od milchamah*

לא ישא גוי אל גוי חרב  
לא ילמדו עוד מלחמה.

*(Isaiah 2:4)*

**All:**

Then nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
neither shall they learn war any more.

**Leader:**

May Israel live in peace.

**All:**

May all the world know peace.

**Reader:**

I am a member of the world family. . .  
I am related to those who stand next to me  
. . . by the air we breathe  
. . . by the light we share  
. . . the hope we have for a better world.

**All:**

I have a responsibility  
. . . to give  
. . . to receive  
. . . to be open, tolerant, free.

**Leader:**

I have inherited this world from those who have lived here before. . .  
I occupy space and time for a few short years. . .

I hold this world in trust for those who will follow.

**Reader:**

My life -- with others -- can fashion this world toward  
. . . peace, other than strife  
. . . hope, rather than despair  
. . . freedom, rather than slavery.

**All:**

I, with those about me, can make [common humanity] a living thing.  
I pledge my willing spirit to this thought.  
We will do this together!

*(The United Nations (1981))*

**Song: *Lo Yarei'u* / לֹא יִרְעוּ**

**Third Candle: Remembering Our Loved Ones**

**Leader:**

We light the third candle to remember our more personal losses. We are all victims of loss. Some of us have wept, some of us now weep, some of us will weep tomorrow. Today we remember those who are no longer living. In tribute to them, we live wisely, courageously and usefully.

**Reader:**

Each of us is more than an individual. We are members of a living people. Our lives stretch back into the past and reach forward into the future. As we dream of tomorrow, we do not forget our yesterdays. We remember our loved ones who have died. So long as we live and remember, they too shall live.

**Leader:**

Please stand for a moment of silence as we remember those we carry in our hearts.

*Zeikher tzadikim liv'rakhah*

זֵכֶר צְדִיקִים לְבְרָכָה.

**All:**

May the memory of good people be a blessing for us.  
May the memory of those we loved in life sweeten our thoughts and our deeds.  
May the grace of their presence reach out to touch our hearts and inspire our days.

**Leader:**

Please be seated.

From generation to generation – *l'dor va-dor* – we are linked in time to the traditions of our people both in community and innovation. We celebrate the cycle of nature, the chain of tradition, the lessons of our ancestors, the gift of hope, and the joy and preciousness of life.

**Song: There Are Stars**

**Leader:**

The days pass, a year goes by, but the melody remains.

The days pass, a year goes by, but the love remains.

The days pass, a year goes by, but the friendship remains.

**Reader 2:**

The history of the Jewish people is long, filled with accounts of menace and isolation, emphasizing our need for connection and peoplehood. We cling to each other for affirmation and mutual support. Even in good times we remember past dangers, and find comfort in those who share our memories of survival.

**All:**

But in this world, all people are equal in adversity. We are all threatened by common dangers: nuclear holocaust, hunger, disease, persecution, loneliness.

**Reader:**

Even when the suffering of Jews becomes a memory, we must honor the lessons we have learned through our historical experience of suffering by caring for those who still suffer.

**All:**

We believe in the future of the Jewish people. We believe in the future of humankind.

**Song: *Machar* / מחר**

**Reader:**

We see the Jewish people as our family;  
Our Jewishness as our home.

**All:**

We see humankind as our family,  
And the whole world as our home.

**Reader:**

As we enter the New Year, we carry with us wishes of peace, health, and the  
absence of suffering for all.

**Leader:**

*L'shanah tovah u-m'tukah!*

לְשָׁנָה טוֹבָה וּמְתוּקָה!

**All:**

*L'shanah tovah u-m'tukah!*

לְשָׁנָה טוֹבָה וּמְתוּקָה!

A Good and Sweet Year!

**Song: Bashanah / בַּשָּׁנָה**

**All:**

May we go in peace until we meet again.