



Rosh Hashanah Journal

Who do you know that is absolutely perfect? Who do you know that always makes the right choices, is always helpful, friendly, kind, and never gossips?

No one is perfect; we all have room for improvement. That's where *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* come in.

The *Yamin Noraim* (High Holidays, Days of Awe) provide each one of us with an opportunity for genuine soul-searching and reflection. It is a time to look at the blessings of the past year and give thanks. It is also a time to evaluate our own past behavior and make plans to change for the better.

This process is called *teshuvah*.

The word *teshuvah*, means “turning” (literal meaning) or “repentance” (traditional interpretation). Much like a captain of a ship has to check maps to make sure the vessel is on course to its final destination, the process of *teshuvah* helps us take stock and make course corrections on the path to being the best person we can be.

A very important aspect of this process is making things right with people we may have hurt during this past year. Apologizing is the first step, and changing our actions so as not to repeat the behavior is the next.

One tool for *teshuvah* is journaling. Writing in a special book is a great way to “rethink” the year.

Below are some thought questions and sentence starters to help guide you while working in your journal. Cut out the prompts and glue them on the top of different pages. Then, grab your favorite pen or marker, find a quiet spot and get started!



Shalom Bayit (Peace in the Home)

Our homes are meant to be sanctuaries from the outside world, a place that is safe, loving and peaceful. This kind of family life doesn't just happen. It takes hard work! Speaking respectfully, being considerate of each other's space and belongings, listening, and helping each other, all take effort and commitment.

Think about this past year.

What was one thing you did to increase *Shalom Bayit* in your home?

What was one thing you did to detract from *Shalom Bayit*? What could you have done differently?

What is one action you can do to promote *Shalom Bayit* in this New Year?



Dibuk Chaverim (Cleaving to Friends)

Just as it takes work to foster *Shalom Bayit*, it takes a true commitment to be a good friend. How we treat our friends, showing loyalty and respect to those we care about, is a measure of the kind of person we each strive to be.

Again, think about this past year.

What was one *mitzvah* you did to help a friend? How did your friend respond?

Describe something wonderful a friend did for you. How did your friend's action make you feel?

Write about something you did or said which hurt a friend. How did you know that you hurt your friend?
(Remember, after you identify the situation you should go to that person and apologize).

What is one way you can be a better friend in the coming year?



Other personal thoughts about friendship...

So far we have reflected on our relationships with other people. During the *Yamim Noraim* we also take time to turn inward and evaluate how we treat ourselves.

Shmirat Haguf (Taking Care of your Body)

In our tradition, we learn that we are created “*B’tzelem Elohim*,” in the image of God. We each have a responsibility to take care of the *guf* (body) we’ve been given. *Eating right, getting enough exercise and sleep, abstaining from harmful behaviors, and practicing good hygiene, are all ways we practice Shmirat Haguf.*

What is one way you took care of your body this past year?

What is one way you could have taken better care of your body?

Name some positive changes you will make this year to take better care of your body.



Other personal thoughts about caring for myself...

Shmirat Hanefesh (Taking Care of your Soul)

Taking care of our souls is equally as important as taking care of our bodies. Listening to music, drawing, or reading for pleasure are ways to add joy to each day. Talking to God, through our own thoughts or prayers can help us feel good, too. Making time to nourish our souls keeps us feeling balanced and happy.

When do you feel the greatest connection to God?

When do you feel your soul lagging?

What are some things you can do in the upcoming year to take better care of your soul?

What is one new interest you would like to pursue?

What are some ways you might deepen your connection to God?



Tikun Olam (Repairing the World)

As Jews, we have a responsibility to make the world a better place. The New Year is a good time to make plans to help others. It could be helping at a food pantry, collecting clothes for donation, recycling or volunteering at an animal shelter.

Take a few minutes to think about the question: “What can I do to make this a better world?” Write down your ideas.

Fill the rest of your journal pages with your own private thoughts about personal change for the New Year. You may want to draw, write poetry or songs, or create a collage to express your feelings.

May you be inscribed in the Book of Life for a healthy, meaningful and fun New Year! *Shanah Tovah!*