



Jewish High Holy Days Task

Aims:

- To gain an insight into the process of *teshuvah* or repentance.
- To spend time in reflection about the wrongdoings within our community. This can then be used to consider how we can improve our community.

Rosh Hashanah begins a period of *Teshuvah* that ends on Yom Kippur. *Teshuvah* means return, as in returning to G-d, and is a process of reflection, confession, and making amends.

On Yom Kippur the community confesses together the sins or mistakes that have been committed. Prayers list sins that might have been committed by people and everyone reads them together. The idea is that it is easier for an individual to confess their mistake while others are reading the same confession. This does mean that people will read sins of mistakes they have not actually done but that does not matter as it is a community confession. The whole community bears the responsibility of one person's acts.

The 'Al Chet' confessional prayer begins:

"Now may it be your will, Eternal One our G-d and G-d of our ancestors, to forgive all our sins, to pardon all our wrongdoings and to blot out our transgressions"

The prayer then lists a variety of wrongdoings including:

- Sins committed by choice or under pressure
- Sins committed knowingly or without knowing
- Sins involving thoughts
- Sins involving words
- Arrogance
- Foolish talk

The list, as with many Hebrew prayers takes the form of an acrostic (each letter of the alphabet starts each line). Many non-Orthodox prayer books

contain updates lists which include more contemporary sins such as damaging the environment, remaining silent in the face of wrong sin society etc.

Activity

- Explain how confession works on Yom Kippur.
- Ask the children to think about wrong doings that have been done by their community (the class, school community, or wider community depending on what you think works best). This obviously requires sensitivity so make it clear this is not about individuals but about a community of people.

The most common idea you will get is bullying. This needs to be broken down - sharing untrue stories about people, excluding people, saying mean things etc

Depending on the age of the children you could get them to consider online or digital wrongdoings - sharing mean pictures or videos, sharing without permission etc

- Record the ideas on the board.
- This list can be used to create a community confession. Schools with a religious character can consider using the Jewish text. Community schools could use the attached non-religious text.
- After the opening statement there should be a list.
- For extra challenge, the children could produce their list as an acrostic based on the English alphabet

E.g., arrogance, broken things, cheated on a test, dropped litter, gossiped, hurt someone's feelings etc

After producing a community confession, view the completed list as a whole class:

- How easy or hard was it to come up with this list? Why can it be difficult for us to admit mistakes?
- Is it easier to admit mistakes in a group or as an individual?
- Looking at our list, what can we do to sort out these mistakes and make our community a better place?





Possible texts:

Al Chet - Our Sins

Now may it be your will, Eternal One our G-d and G-d of our ancestors, to forgive all our sins, to pardon all our wrongdoings and to blot out our transgressions.

The sin we have committed against you by.....

Non-Religious Confession

Sometimes we have made mistakes and done wrong things. This has made it difficult for people in our community and has sometimes damaged where we live. We list them here so that we can admit them and then try to put them right.

We have....