

Dear Students

The notes that follow will form the contents of your exam on the Chagim we have covered this school year.

Every student in years 7-9 will have a basic knowledge exam based on the summaries.

Students in Years 8-9 will have an extra section based on the different themes covered for your year group.



Good Luck

בהצלחה

The Month of Elul

What is Elul?

"Elul" is the **Sixth Month** of the year, counting from "Nisan". This is the month of "**Return to Hashem,**" or "**Repentance.**"

Elul is the name of the month which we are given each year to prepare for the "Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur".

Although we believe that Hashem always watches over the world, and is always waiting for us to connect with him," we also believe that, in a sense, He is more accessible during the 40-day period beginning with the start of Elul and ending in the first ten days of the Month of Tishrei. Those days, known as the "Ten Days of Repentance," begin with "Rosh HaShanah," and end with "Yom Kippur."

After Moshe smashed the stone tablets that had the Ten Commandments on them, Hashem wanted to punish the Jewish people for making the Golden Calf. Moshe began to daven/pray that Hashem should forgive the people. On the first day of the month of Elul **Moshe** went back up Har Sinai for a further 40 days to receive the Torah again. Forty days later on the 10th of Tishrei he came down with new tablets. The people had been forgiven. This day (Yom Kippur) was transformed into the day of forgiveness for all time.

The Shofar is blown and Selichot said every day (besides Shabbat) during this month.

1. We also focus on the concept of Hitchadshut {Renewal}. We look for ways to motivate ourselves to become better people and more committed Jews.
2. We try to identify the excuses we make when challenged to change and we try to propose solutions.
3. The most important is trying to make a difference. We should not worry at this stage about how long the changes will last for.

Rosh Hashana 1st and 2nd of Tishrei

Rosh Hashana is more than just a Jewish version of New Year's Day. It's a time of great introspection, of teshuva/repentance. It marks the creation of Adam and Eve. It is the Day of Judgment for mankind.

Rosh Hashana also begins the Ten Days of Repentance leading up to Yom Kippur.

A theme of Rosh Hashana is "change:" to change from what we were before and to become new individuals. We all must remember that we are responsible for our actions.

Things We Do

We eat special foods that symbolise different ideas such as:

1. Apple and honey – sweet new year.
2. Pomegranate - our merits increase like the seeds of the pomegranate.
3. Round Challah – Cycle of life

We blow the shofar {100notes} on each day of Rosh Hashana. Some reasons beside it being written in the Torah include:

- Awakening our minds from a state of spiritual sleepiness, so that we change during the next year.
- Reminding us of the shofar heard at Mount Sinai, when we accepted G-d's Torah and the need to commit ourselves to the laws.
- Crying to G-d because a shofar's notes sound like different kinds of crying.

Tashlich – On the afternoon of the first day of Rosh Hashana {second if it's a Shabbat}, we go to a river and empty our pockets- symbolically throwing our sins away. This action is meant to motivate us to repent. It also symbolizes our hope that G-d will discard our sins and cast them away to the depths of the sea. To illustrate this, we do the pocket shake. We shake our pockets and clothing as if we're throwing our sins into the water.

Yom Kippur 10th Tishrei

The Torah Commands us to “afflict our souls” on the 10th of the Seventh month. Our Rabbis have explained that this refers to five restrictions:

1. **Eating or drinking**
2. **Washing**
3. **Wearing leather shoes**
4. **Having marital relations**
5. **Using creams and lotions on oneself.**

The day is spent in Shul, confessing the many sins/mistakes we have made. There are special Tefilot said throughout the day. The highlight during the Musaf service is the description of the service that was performed by the Cohen Gadol (High Priest).

The five services are:

1. **Kol Nidrei**- We ask Hashem to forgive us for things we have promised to do and not been able to do.
2. **Shacarit**
3. **Musaf** - The story of Jonah is read, which shows how powerful Teshuva can be, no matter how distant a person is from Hashem.
4. **Mincha**
5. **Neila** – This is the final service and our last chance to ask for forgiveness before the day is over.

Yom Kippur ends at nightfall and a festive meal is eaten to celebrate being forgiven.

It is traditional to begin building the Sukkah after Yom Kippur to make sure that we stay focused on doing Mitzvot.

Sukkot 15th Tishrei -22nd Tishrei {23rd out of Israel}

The Torah tells us to “Live in a sukkah for seven days.”

Sukkot is called "zman sim'cha'teinu"(time of our happiness).

There are two reasons to celebrate.

1. Historically, Sukkot commemorates the forty-year period during which the children of Israel were wandering in the desert, living in temporary shelters. Sukkot commemorate the protective "Clouds of Glory" that surrounded the Jewish people after leaving Egypt during the forty years of wandering in the desert, Or the actual temporary dwellings during that same time. It is a reminder of the hardship of their life in the desert and their dependence on Hashem.
2. Agriculturally, Sukkot is a harvest festival and is sometimes referred to as Chag Ha-Asif, the Festival of Ingathering.

The other well-known mitzvah which is done on Sukkot is the mitzvah of taking a Lulav and Etrog. There are actually 4 elements involved in this mitzvah and all must be present to properly fulfil it. The four elements are Etrog, Lulav, (palm branch), Hadas myrtle , Aravah (willows of the brook). A bracha is said on the four species everyday of Sukkot.

Everyday Halel is said and the Arba minim are waved to symbolise that Hashem is everywhere. In Israel people live as much as possible in the Sukkah and even sleep in it. It is harder to sleep in a Sukkah in the UK as it's so cold.

At the end of Sukkot is a new festival called Shemin Atzeret, where we have no mitzvot to do. The purpose is to celebrate our relationship with Hashem. On the final day, we celebrate Simchat Torah. This is a time to celebrate the completion of the yearly Torah Cycle and our study of Torah.

Extension topics for year 8

Rosh Hashana

The concept of Bishvili Nivra Haolam and Free will.

You need to Know:

"Every person should have two pockets. In one, [there should be a note that says] *bishvili nivra ha'olam*, 'for my sake was the world created.' In the second, [there should be a note that says] *anokhi afar va'efer*, 'I am dust and ashes.'"

"One must know how to use them, each one in its proper place and right time. For many make the mistake of using them wrongly."

What makes each human being unique. Delightfully, the Rabbis suggest that we all think differently so that robbers will have a harder time figuring out where we keep our valuables.

If we are so important why were we created last?

This, is the meaning of *bishvili nivra ha'olam*, for my sake was the world created. This world is not complete, it is not fulfilling its purpose if you are not here fulfilling your purpose.

Before my birth, all the time from the beginning of creation until I was born, I was not needed in this world. For if I had been missing from any task or fulfilment, I would have been created. And since I have now been created, it is a sign that I am needed, for my time has come to accomplish some goal, to fulfil some mission. Some aspect of this world is meant to be corrected and completed through me.

Nobody can tell you that purpose. It is your reason for living, and it is your reason for living with intention, rather than for the sake of existence. For my sake was the world created! **The world has been waiting for me to arrive because without me, it cannot be complete.**

You were born into this world to make a difference because the world would have been incomplete without you. When you were stamped out of the mold of Adam, the image that emerged, the image of G-d that is integrated into your DNA, into your soul, into your life force, is that purpose for which you exist at all.

And if we believe that G-d is good - and we do - then your mission in this world is good as well. It is a complicated place, our earth. It is a complicated pilgrimage, our history. It is a complicated system, our life. More things intersect through the chambers of our hearts than we can hope to track. It makes finding that purpose, that mission all the more difficult.

FREE WILL

Every human being has control over himself. If he wants to push himself towards the right path and become a *tzaddik* (holy man) he is able to do so. If he wants to go down the wrong path and be a *rasha* (evil man) he is able to do so. This is what the Torah writes: *Behold man has become like the Unique One among us knowing good and bad: and now, lest he put forth his hand and take from the Tree of Life and eat and live forever.* (Genesis 3:22)

That is to say: This species man is unique in the universe and there is no other creature like him in the respect of

- 1) being able to determine what is right and what is wrong through the use of his own thought processes without any outside guidance; and
- 2) being able to do as he wishes without anyone being able to stop him.

The conclusion:

Getting rid of man's free will is like destroying him, because the ability to determine his own choices is what it means to be a human.

Yom Kippur:

Is a day of joy and not a sad day.

You would **think** that a day on which Jews fast, a day that we are very restricted in what is permitted, would be a day of sadness. But Yom Kippur is not a day of sadness at all. It is a day of repentance, and a day of joy.

To be sure, it is not a day during which we do much dancing or partying. In fact, partying would be forbidden. But joy?

Yes, joy. On Yom Kippur we rejoice, and even more so at the closing of Yom Kippur.

What is the reason for this joy and happiness?

When we repent and return to Hashem, there is no greater reason for joy. The time for sorrow is past, once we are returning home. Just like the joy with which a child returns home from a long overseas voyage. The parents are happy as well. That is what repentance means: returning "home."

Yes, we must indeed feel regret over our sins. Yes, we must seriously ask Hashem to forgive us and to grant us a good and sweet year. But we cannot allow that regret to control us or overwhelm us. We are not allowed to despair or to get depressed. Judaism teaches us to repent with joy, to live with joy, and above all, serve Hashem with joy and thanks.

Sukkot

Why does Succot fall on the calendar after Yom Kippur, and not after Passover? Succot deals with the fact that we sat in huts in the wilderness after we left Egypt, and the clouds that protected us. We were sitting in those huts and had those clouds right when we left Egypt, so historically, Succot should come right after, or during, Pesach.

Pesach is in the spring when the weather starts getting warmer; if we were to make huts in the spring, it might seem like we were just building vacation bungalows to escape from the heat. Therefore, the Torah commanded us to build our *succah*-booths in the Autumn when it starts getting cool, making it clear that the *succah* is a commandment and not an outdoor house.

The Vilna Gaon offers another explanation: The *succah* represents the clouds of glory with which G-d protected us in the desert. Hashem took away these clouds when we made the Golden Calf, and when He forgave us that year on Yom Kippur, the clouds came back. So, Succot celebrates the *return* of those clouds after the first Yom Kippur in the desert.

Year 9 extension topics

Rosh Hashana – The Torah reading. The story of Akeidat Yitzchak the binding of Yitzchak. You must know the story, below is a summary:

1. Yitzchak, Avraham's son went with him on a three day journey.
2. Avraham was told by Hashem to offer up his son as a sacrifice.
3. Avraham got up early in the morning and saddled his donkey eager to do what Hashem had asked him.
4. On the third day, Avraham looked up, and saw the place from afar. Avraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go to that place. We will worship and then return to you."
5. When they finally came to the place designated by G-d, Avraham built the altar there, and arranged the wood. He then bound his son Isaac, and placed him on the altar on top of the wood. Avraham reached out and took the slaughter knife to slit his son's throat.
6. "G-d's angel called to him from heaven and said, "Avraham! Avraham!"
7. "Yes."
8. "Do not harm the boy. Do not do anything to him. For now I know that you fear G-d. You have not withheld your only son from Him."
9. Avraham then looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. He went and got the ram, sacrificing it as an all-burned offering in his son's place.
10. Avraham named the place "G-d will See". Today, it is therefore said, "On G-d's Mountain, He will be seen."
11. G-d's angel called to Avraham from heaven a second time, and said "G-d declares, 'I have sworn by My own Essence, that because you performed this act, and did not hold back your only son, I will bless you greatly, and increase your offspring like the stars of the sky and the sand on the seashore.
12. Your offspring shall inherit their enemies' gate. All the nations of the world shall be blessed through your descendants - all because you obeyed My voice.'

Yom Kippur- The Story of Yonah/Jonah. You must know the story.

Chapter 1

1. And the word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying: . 2. Arise, go to Nineveh, the great city, and proclaim against it, for their evil has come before Me. 3. And Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from before the Lord, and he went down to Joppa, found a ship going to Tarshish, paid its hire, and went down into it to come with them to Tarshish from before the Lord. . 4. Now the Lord cast a mighty wind into the sea, 5. And the sailors were frightened, and each one cried out to his god, and they cast the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them, and Jonah went down to the ship's hold, lay down, and fell fast asleep. . 6. And the captain approached him and said to him, "Why do you sleep? Get up, call out to your God, perhaps God will think about us, and we will not perish." . 7. And they said, each one to his fellow, "Come, let's cast lots, so that we will know because of whom this evil has befallen us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. . 8. And they said to him, "Tell us now, because of whom has this evil befallen us? What is your work and whence do you come? What is your land, and from what people are you?" . 9. And he said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord God of heaven, Who made the sea and the dry land." . 10. And the men were very frightened, and they said to him, "What is this that you have done?" For the men knew that he was fleeing from before the Lord, because he has told them. . 11. And they said to him, "What shall we do with you, so that the sea subside from upon us, since the sea is becoming stormier?" 12. And he said to them, "Pick me up and cast me into the sea, so that the sea may subside from upon you, for I know that, because of me, this mighty tempest is upon you." . 13. And the men rowed vigorously to return to dry land, but they could not, for the sea was becoming stormier upon them. . 14. And they called to the Lord and said, "Please, O Lord, let us not perish for the life of this man, and do not place upon us innocent blood, for You, O Lord, as You wish, You have done." . 15. And they picked Jonah up and cast him into the sea, and the sea ceased storming. . 16. And the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they made sacrifices to the Lord and made vows.

Chapter 2

. And the Lord appointed a huge fish to swallow up Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights.

2. And Jonah prayed to the Lord his God, from the belly of the fish.

3. And he said: I called out from my distress to the Lord, and He answered me; from the belly of the grave I cried out, You heard my voice.

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4. And You cast me into the deep in the heart of the seas, and a river surrounded me; all Your breakers and Your waves passed over me.

5. And I said, "I have been driven away from before Your eyes," Indeed, I will continue to gaze upon Your Holy Temple.

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6. Water has surrounded me even to the soul, the deep encompassed me; the Red Sea hangs over my head.

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7. To the bottom of the mountains I descended, the earth-its bars are closed on me forever; but You brought up my life from Gehinnom, O Lord, my God.

8. When my soul grew faint upon me, I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came to You to Your Holy Temple.

9. Those who keep worthless futilities abandon their kindness.

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10. But I-with a voice of thanks will I sacrifice to You; what I vowed I will pay, for the salvation of the Lord.

11. And the Lord said to the fish, and it spewed Jonah onto the dry land.

Chapter 3

1. And the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying:
2. Arise, go to Nineveh the great city, and proclaim upon it the proclamation that I speak to you.
3. And Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a walk of three days.
4. And Jonah commenced to come into the city, one day's walk, and he proclaimed and said, "In another forty days Nineveh shall be overturned!"
5. And the people of Nineveh believed in God, and they proclaimed a fast and donned sackcloth, from their greatest to their smallest.
6. And the word reached the king of Nineveh, whereupon he rose from his throne, took off his royal robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat on the ashes.
7. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh: By the counsel of the king and his nobles, saying: Neither man nor beast, neither cattle nor sheep shall taste anything; they shall not graze, neither shall they drink water.
8. And they shall cover themselves with sackcloth, both man and beast, and they shall call mightily to God, and everyone shall repent of his evil way and of the dishonest gain which is in their hands.
9. Whoever knows shall repent, and God will relent, and He will return from His burning wrath, and we will not perish.
10. And God saw their deeds, that they had repented of their evil way, and the Lord relented concerning the evil that He had spoken to do to them, and He did not do it.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4

1. Now it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was grieved.
2. And he prayed to the Lord and said, "Please, O Lord, was this not my contention while I was still on my land? For this reason I had hastened to flee to Tarshish, for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger, with much kindness, and relenting of evil.
3. And now, O Lord, take now my soul from me, for my death is better than my life."
4. And the Lord said: Are you deeply grieved?
5. And Jonah had gone out of the city, and had stationed himself on the east of the city, and there he made himself a hut and sat under it in the shade until he would see what would happen in the city.
6. Now the Lord God appointed a kikayon, (Tree) and it grew up over Jonah to be shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort, and Jonah was overjoyed with the kikayon.
7. Now God appointed a worm at the rise of dawn on the morrow, and the worm attacked the kikayon, and it died.
8. Now it came to pass when the sun shone, that God appointed a stilling east wind, and the sun beat on Jonah's head, and he fainted, and he begged to die, and he said, "My death is better than my life."
9. And God said to Jonah; Are you very grieved about the kikayon? And he said, "I am very grieved even to death."
10. And the Lord said: You took pity on the kikayon, for which you did not toil nor did you make it grow, which one night came into being and the next night perished.
11. Now should I not take pity on Nineveh, the great city, in which there are many more than one hundred twenty thousand people who do not know their right hand from their left, and many beasts as well?

Sukkot

During sukkot there is a special mitzvah to be happy. Remember it was the harvest time and the farmers would look at their store houses and think how lucky they were and could make lots of money.

The Book of Kohelet read on Sukkot is a reminder not to get carried away with physical things.

Kohelet praises joy that is connected with the fulfilment of Hashem's commandments (simcha shel mitzvah) but declares MAH ZO OSA, "What does it [accomplish]?" for joy that is not generated by doing the will of Hashem.

By reminding ourselves of why we are here, we can learn to be happy at appropriate times .

During the year we sit in a house with a roof over our heads. Symbolically, the roof separates us from heaven. On Sukkot, we sit in a temporary structure that has no true ceiling to divide us from Hashem. In the sukkah we eat, drink and sleep, and basically live an ordinary physical life. However, in the sukkah Hashem is there. Our entire physical existence becomes a *mitzvah*, a holy act.

Hashem has given us a wonderful world to live in. It's full of beauty and song. Yet there's a catch. We are challenged. We have to allow the spiritual part of us to shine into our lives. If so, our lives become more meaningful.

If, on the other hand, we live separated from the spiritual dimension -- under a closed roof with a barrier above, living entirely "under the sun" in the physical world , even if that roof is the ceiling of the most beautiful mansion -- our life will be a waste of time.