

YOM KIPPUR

On Yom Kippur, we stand together—physically in our synagogues or spiritually across time zones and continents—as one people. We chant, we fast, we reflect, and above all, we pray. We declare out loud, “we have sinned.” Not I have sinned, but we. On Yom Kippur, we exist as a collective.

This language is no accident. At the heart of Yom Kippur lies a core Jewish understanding: that responsibility is shared, that justice is communal, and that the future depends on us—not as isolated souls, but as an interconnected people.

Yom Kippur reminds us that the health of a society—just like the health of a soul—depends on the strength of its moral fabric. It calls for accountability, honest reflection, and courageous action. It insists that every voice matters, and that silence in the face of injustice is not neutrality—it is complicity.

The prophet Isaiah, whose words we read on Yom Kippur, gives us one of the most powerful indictments of hollow ritual in all of Tanakh. “Is this the fast I choose?” God asks through Isaiah. “A day that people starve their bodies?” It feels ironic to read this as so many are in the deepest throes of hunger pains. “No, this is the fast I desire,” God continues. “To unlock fetters of wickedness, and untie the cords of the yoke. To let the oppressed go free; to break off every yoke. It is to share your bread with the hungry, and to take the wretched poor into your home. When you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to ignore your own kin.”

Yom Kippur is not merely about our relationship with God—it’s about our obligations to one another. Isaiah’s message cuts through any temptation to think of holiness as private or piety as personal. Righteousness is measured not in solemn words but in concrete acts of justice.

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This message resonates deeply today. In a world of rising polarization, injustice, inequality, and moral confusion, we are called—especially as Jews—not just to “repent” but to recommit ourselves to building a just society. That includes active engagement in civic life, raising our voices for the voiceless, advocating for policies that protect the vulnerable, and fostering inclusive communities rooted in chesed (lovingkindness) and tzedek (justice).

But this work must begin within our own Jewish communities. Yom Kippur calls us to build communities where every Jew and every person feels seen and valued, where diverse voices are not just tolerated but celebrated, and where the ideals of Torah guide how we care for one another and partner with others for the common good.

May this Yom Kippur move us to action—not just for our own sake, but for the sake of our communities, our nation, and our world.

G’mar chatimah tovah—may we all be sealed for a year of justice, compassion, and peace.