

Who Are You?

Who Do You Want To Become?

How Can Judaism Guide You Along the Way?

# **An Invitation to participate in the process of Cheshbon Hanefesh (an accounting of the soul)**

When? The process begins with a special Tashlich session and service following the Rosh Hashanah morning service.

What? Cheshbon hanefesh, an accounting of the soul, is a process of honest self-reflection for the purpose of creating change.

Why? Each one of us can improve the way we relate to ourselves, our community and the world.

How? A combination of individual reflection and communal learning and exploration.

For more information about *Cheshbon Hanefesh* visit:  
[www.cheshbon-hanefesh.blogspot.com](http://www.cheshbon-hanefesh.blogspot.com)

# ***Cheshbon Hanefesh* Participant Binders**

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## What is *Cheshbon Hanefesh*?

### *Cheshbon*

The Hebrew word *cheshbon* comes from the root *chet/shin/bet*. The word, in this form, means to **take an accounting, or calculation**. In Modern Hebrew, the word *cheshbon* is translated as: a calculation, mathematics, and a bill or check. Biblical references of *cheshbon* can be found throughout the book of Ecclesiastes with the translation, “the reason of things.” An example can be found Ecclesiastes 7:25, “I put my mind to studying, exploring, and seeking wisdom and the reason of things...”<sup>1</sup>

### *Nefesh*

The Hebrew word *nefesh* is one of the most difficult and contentious Hebrew words to define and translate. Some of the most popular translations include, “soul, spirit, life, living, being, and person.” The first biblical use of the word is found in Genesis 1:20. The term ‘*nefesh chayah*’ is used to refer to living creatures. This usage indicates that the word *nefesh* is not limited to human beings.<sup>2</sup> Some understand *nefesh* to mean soul or spirit, in opposition to *guf*, or the physical body. Others, however, believe the word includes all aspects of a person’s being, including the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual.

### History of *Cheshbon Hanefesh*

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Levin, otherwise known as Rabbi Mendel of Satanov, wrote the first, and only published work about the process of *cheshbon hanefesh*. He wrote the text in 1812 and it was published in 1845. Rabbi Mendel was part of the Mussar tradition, a popular movement in 19<sup>th</sup> century Lithuania that focused on recovering the emotional or spiritual elements of Judaism. Mussar emphasizes discipline, focus and intention as a means to serve God. It is not surprising that this piece of literature came from a movement seeking to help individuals develop a personal connection to God through practice and discipline.

In his introduction, Rabbi Mendel provides a history of the development of the process of *cheshbon hanefesh*, starting with the biblical period. He suggests that our earliest biblical ancestors did not need *cheshbon hanefesh* because they had *yirat Hashem*, or fear and awe of God. Later generations of the Mishnah and Talmud lost this sense of *yirat Hashem*, and compensated by emphasizing the importance of character traits in the literature they produced. Later generations lost more *yira*, and could not get by with the literature of the Mishnah and Talmud alone. It is at this time that we see the earliest practices of the process of *cheshbon hanefesh*. According to Rabbi Mendel, the earliest process of *cheshbon hanefesh* consisted of thinking about one’s sins for an hour a day.

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<sup>1</sup> Ecclesiastes 7:25. JPS translation.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 1:20. JPS translation.

Later, this turned into recording and one's sins throughout the day, reflecting on them before bed and revisiting them upon waking in the morning. Eventually, people became so involved with the process of recording sins that it took up the majority of one's waking hours. Individuals were so focused on recording and recounting their sins that they no longer had time to serve God and perform *mitzvot*. Rabbi Mendel noticed this challenge and decided to develop a structured process appropriate for his generation. He called his step-by-step guide *Cheshbon Hanefesh*.<sup>3</sup>

Rabbi Mendel differentiates between what he calls the 'intellectual human spirit' and 'the animal spirit' in order to describe the process of *cheshbon hanefesh* in his time.<sup>4</sup> Mendel describes that the 'animal spirit' is "swayed and moved by the sudden gusts of the winds of desire and pain – instincts which are implanted in it from its formation."<sup>5</sup> The human intellectual spirit, on the other hand, has the responsibility to "teach [it] ethical behavior and develop positive character traits."<sup>6</sup> In this way, Rabbi Mendel defines soul (animal spirit), not in opposition to the physical body, but rather in opposition to the intellectual mind. According to his theory, the intellectual human spirit has the capacity to control the physical urges and desires of the animal spirit, creating harmony between how one thinks and how one acts. Without this harmony, one can easily fall into the trap of breaking commandments or performing commandments with ill intentions. *Cheshbon hanefesh* is a necessary process that can help an individual develop character traits to avoid sins and perform *mitzvot*. It can also help an individual bridge the gap between action and the intention that goes behind the action.

Rabbi Mendel develops a process of *cheshbon hanefesh* according to what he understands about the capabilities and the fallibilities of the human mind over the animal spirit. He acknowledges the challenges of identifying and overcoming one's weaknesses and develops a rigid plan that requires dedication and discipline. The plan, or regimen, is based off of four methods that must be addressed simultaneously: "dealing with the desire before the animal spirit is aware of it, accumulating traces of strength so as to combine them, intensifying these traces, and stimulating the spirit so as to strengthen the response."<sup>7</sup> In other words, he hopes to combat the animal spirit on multiple fronts, helping an individual build the strength to prevent, and also combat habitual unwanted behavior. For Mendel, the process is not something that can be done over a period of 10 days, but rather one that requires daily commitment over the course of a year and beyond. He creates a cycle through which individuals address one (of thirteen) identified character traits every week for 13 weeks. The person then repeats the process four times, allowing for appropriate periods of rest throughout. At first, individuals might have to make a point of putting themselves in situations where they can address the weekly trait. In addition to focusing on one trait a week, individuals should monitor and revisit all other

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<sup>3</sup> Cheshbon Ha-Nefesh. Rabbi Mendel of Satanov. Forward by Rabbi Yitzchok Isaac Sher of Slobodka. Published in 1845. Reprinted with forward and translation 1995. Feldheim Publishers. Jerusalem and New York. Pages 43-45.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Page 37.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. Page 29.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. Page 37.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. Page 103.

traits. In order to do this, Rabbi Mendel provides a chart, which individuals can use to document their daily sins in the different categories. Eventually, individuals will recognize which traits need more attention and can adjust their regimen appropriately.<sup>8</sup> By the fourth cycle, an individual may find that they have succeeded in overcoming a number of traits. At this time, that individual should focus his or her energy on the traits that still need work. The 13 different character traits are: equanimity, toleration, order, decisiveness, cleanliness, humility, righteousness, frugality, zeal, silence, calmness, truth, and separation. See next document for an example of Mendel's chart.<sup>9</sup>

Mendel acknowledges that the process will be different for each person. At times it will be slow, and other times fast, and there will be many challenges along the way. He encourages his reader to persist, promising success and a reward for following his regimen. Mendel says, "eventually you will be able to replace all of the original traits with new ones...testimony to the purity of your heart and the triumph of your intellectual spirit over the animal spirit. The entire purpose of your creation was this. At this point you will be able to serve God without interference."<sup>10</sup> This statement reflects the confidence Rabbi Mendel had in this regimen. He not only believed that individuals will find success, but also asserted that they will receive divine reward for their work.

Unfortunately, we do not know how popular this process was in Rabbi Mendel's time. What we do know is that there has been very little subsequent literature produced on the topic of *cheshbon hanefesh*. Rabbi Mendel's book, reprinted in 1995, continues to be the only published work on the topic.

### ***Cheshbon Hanefesh* today**

Today, *cheshbon hanefesh* functions, at best, in the context of the High Holy Day season. The reprinting of Rabbi Mendel's book in 1995 inspired some individuals and communities to embrace the concept, and apply it in a modern context. Today, however, the concept has not been embraced or adapted in any formal curricular setting. There are a number of articles and *divrei Torah* on the topic, encouraging individuals to go through a process of introspection during the month of Elul. The concept is typically connected to the High Holy Days, despite the fact that Rabbi Mendel does not make this connection. The phrase itself is not used in the *machzor* or in popular High Holy Day literature. There is no entry for *cheshbon hanefesh* in either version of Encyclopedia Judaica. There is no entry on [www.myjewishlearning.com](http://www.myjewishlearning.com) or [www.jewfaq.org](http://www.jewfaq.org), two of the most popular liberal websites for those seeking to learn more about Judaism. The only mention of *cheshbon hanefesh* on Wikipedia is in relation to Rabbi Mendel's book. Though searches on [www.aish.com](http://www.aish.com) and [www.chabad.org](http://www.chabad.org) retrieved a few hits, they were insignificant in comparison to other topics with similar themes. For example, there were six articles that contained the phrase "*cheshbon hanefesh*" and 705 for "*teshuvah*."<sup>11</sup> Similarly, a Google search of *cheshbon hanefesh* reveals that there are some individuals engaging in the topic

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid. Page 59-63.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. Page 185.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. Page 61.

<sup>11</sup> [www.aish.com](http://www.aish.com)

today, most of whom are building or relying on Rabbi Mendel's guidebook. This is surprising, given the potential effect the process may have on people's lives. It makes us question whether the concept of *cheshbon hanefesh* has disappeared from the radar of contemporary Jewry, or whether it has been replaced or integrated by other concepts, like *teshuvah*.

As we transition toward thinking about what a process of *cheshbon hanefesh* looks like today, we must identify how the Jewish world has evolved since Rabbi Mendel's time and determine what that means for the way we approach the topic through a modern Jewish lens. We must determine how we will address and adapt the problematic aspects of Rabbi Mendel's approach while maintaining the spirit of his work.

One problematic aspect of Rabbi Mendel's work is his assertion that a person's character traits *can* be changed and *need* to be changed. He consistently uses language like "replace" or "corrected," assuming that something is wrong that should and can be corrected if a person works hard enough.<sup>12</sup> Today, we have a much more nuanced understanding of the development of character traits. Our society is much more sympathetic to the idea that individuals have different strengths and weaknesses, as well as unique personality types. Though there are many arguments about the role of nature verses nurture, a general understanding exists that at least some part of our character is determined by our genetic makeup and thus cannot be changed. Though we may succeed in developing our character, we will never achieve the type of perfection of which Rabbi Mendel speaks. A second problematic aspect of Rabbi Mendel's work is the suggestion that we should dwell solely on our weaknesses in order to overcome them. Today, many believe that we should utilize our strengths as a way to overcome our weaknesses. Third, Rabbi Mendel's process is primarily individual. Though he discusses opportunities to work with individuals throughout the process, he does not lay out a framework for how to use one's community for support and assistance. Today, many believe that an intimate community of individuals can help foster growth. A tight-knit community can inspire, share, teach, and support and must be an integral and intentional aspect of this type of process. Finally, it is important to acknowledge that we are operating in a very different Jewish world. Rabbi Mendel was speaking to a community of individuals who were concerned about performing all the *mitzvot* for the purpose of serving God. Today, we must acknowledge that many Jews in our community are not operating through this framework. This process must be relevant for Jews who are seeking to serve God by developing their character, as well as Jews who are seeking to improve their lives in a Jewish way and hope to develop a better understanding of God's role in their life.

Though there are currently very few Jews going through a process of *cheshbon hanefesh*, the concept is being addressed in different ways. I hope to compile these different efforts in a structured format, and recreate the sacred tradition of *cheshbon hanefesh* in a way that speaks to the lives of liberal Jews. I hope to explore the relationship we all have to ourselves, to our intimate community, and to our global world by asking the following questions: Who am I? Who do I want to become? And how can Judaism guide me along

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid. Page 73.

the way? I hope that you will join me in recreating this tradition and experiencing a process of spiritual growth and transformation during these Days of Awe, and beyond.

### **Why participate in Cheshbon Hanefesh?**

We each live in constant dialogue with ourselves, with our communities and with the greater world. We strive to perfect these relationships in different ways and each fall short at different times and in different ways. The first step toward improving each of these areas of our lives involves taking an accounting of our current state of being. Only after we take an account of our current state, can we start to move forward to improving the way we relate in this world. Jewish tradition not only asks us to go through this process, but also can serve as a guide us through a process of reflection, determination, and action.

Jewish communities throughout the generations have sought ways to go through a process of self-reflection in order to improve their relationship with themselves, their community and the world. Each generation addressed the challenges unique to their own time and used technological advances to make change. The process of *cheshbon hanefesh* that Rabbi Mendel developed is no longer realistic for modern Jews. The process has yet to be adapted in a meaningful and organized way that addresses the needs of our contemporary age. We can use the wisdom of the tradition that exists to guide us toward recreating a process in a way that is relevant to the way we relate to ourselves, to our intimate community and to the world. This curriculum reclaims and reinvents what this process might look like in the Jewish world today.

It is appropriate to begin the process during the *tashlich service* on Rosh Hashanah because this service functions as the gateway to the ten days of awe. Alan Lew, author of This is Real and You are Completely Unprepared, writes about these days:

*For ten days the gates are open and the world is fluid. We are finally awake, if only in fits and starts, if only to toss and turn. For ten days, transformation is within our grasp. For ten days, we can imagine ourselves not as fixed and immutable beings, but rather as a limitless field upon which qualities and impulses rise up and fall away again like waves on the sea... ... For ten days, the field of mind is like a painting by Kandinsky. Energy and form float in that field, and we have the sense that we can shape our lives by choosing where to invest our focus and intention, by choosing which forms to follow and which to let go.*<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Lew, Alan. This is Real and You are Completely Unprepared. Little, Brown and Company. Boston, NY, London. 2003. Pages 151-152



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We must take advantage of the opportunity of this sacred season of change. The High Holy Day season makes us feel vulnerable as we stand before God. We recognize that life is fragile, precious and unpredictable. We understand that there are things we have control over, and many more that we don't. This season is both humbling and moving, screaming out to us to look within, to be truly honest about who we are and who we want to become. It is the perfect season to begin a serious process of change before God.

There are multiple learning components to this curriculum that attempt to address the different needs of our diverse community. *Cheshbon hanefesh* must be both an individual and a communal process. For that reason, the curriculum has an individual component, where individuals continually assess the way they relate to themselves, their communities and the world. There is also a small group component that enables participants to explore intimate questions in a safe environment. These communities will enable participants to share personal experiences and learn and explore Jewish text and tradition.

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<sup>14</sup> Kandinsky, Wassily. "Composition VII". Oil on Canvas. 1913.  
<http://www.wassilykandinsky.net/work-36.php>



## How Does The Process Work?

We will join together as a large community three times during the High Holy Day season to kick off what will be a yearlong process of change.

### **Lesson 1: *Tashlich*: What is *Cheshbon Hanefesh*?**

Participants will meet for a special *tashlich* session and service where we will learn more about what *cheshbon hanefesh* is and why it is relevant and necessary in our lives.

Participants will break up into small groups that will serve as our *cheshbon hanefesh* communities throughout the year.

### **In between Lesson 1 and 2: Inventory Forms: Reflection**

There are three inventory forms that ask participants to honestly evaluate the way you relate to yourself, your community and the world. Each participant will fill out these forms individually and independently. We acknowledge that everyone is at a different stage in life, and that certain questions will be more relevant than others. These forms will guide the learning and discussions small groups do throughout the year. Though individuals will not be asked to share their responses directly, they will be asked to identify themes and share these themes in a small group setting.

### **Lesson 2: Yom Kippur Afternoon: From Reflection to Consideration**

Small groups will meet to explore connections between Yom Kippur and the process of *cheshbon hanefesh*. Participants will get to know others in their group, and begin an initial conversation about what each person gained from filling out the inventory forms.

### **Lesson 3: Sukkot: From Consideration to Action**

Small groups will meet to explore connections between Sukkot and *cheshbon hanefesh*. Participants will identify individual interests and work together to create a communal *brit* of shared goals for the year to come.

### **Beyond Lesson 3**

Small groups will meet once a month to explore different themes relevant to the entire group. Each individual will have the opportunity to facilitate two or three sessions on his or her own, or with a partner. Participants will receive resources and support from the synagogue leadership to develop his or her sessions. Each session should explore the theme through the lens of our sacred Jewish tradition. Facilitators are encouraged to incorporate their own experiences and expertise.

### **Online Component**

In addition to learning with your small group; you may also choose to be in communication with your larger community. Participants are invited to respond to different prompt questions in an online blog format.

## Guidelines for Participation

- *Cheshbon hanefesh* is an optional process that begins with you. Nobody can force you to participate and only you can decide whether you are ready and willing to make an honest and open commitment to change. We acknowledge that we are all at different stages in our life and sometimes we are ready to go through this process and sometimes we are not.
- We are committed to creating a safe space for you to learn and grow. This means that participation in a *cheshbon hanefesh* group hinges on a confidential commitment to respect.

We are all really looking forward to going on this journey with you. We want to learn with and from you and are open to your own suggestions and ideas for how to continue this journey of *cheshbon hanefesh* in the year to come!

## **Tashlich Session Small Group Activity**

*Welcome to your cheshbon hanefesh small group! Look around. You will likely see some familiar faces as well as some new faces. As the year goes on, we hope you will develop relationships with one another through this important process of cheshbon hanefesh. Thank you all for your willingness to open yourself up to the possibility of change!*

### **Introductions**

Take a moment to introduce yourself to one another. Share:

- Your name
- One hobby, passion or talent
- What is/will be/was your profession?
- Who are the important people in your life?

### **Activity**

The process of *cheshbon hanefesh* is about uncovering both our strengths and our weaknesses for the purpose of growth. Take one or two minutes to reflect on a time when you first recognized a strength, talent, or passion. Feel free to write down your thoughts if you would like. When everyone is ready, take some time to share with one another:

1. How did you become aware of this strength?
2. What actions did you take after acknowledging this strength?
3. How did the important people in your life respond to your actions?

### **Logistics**

Next sessions:

- Yom Kippur afternoon (complete inventory forms before this session!)
- Sukkot

After these two sessions, you will plan monthly sessions according to your own convenience. We ask each member to host one session in his or her home and also to facilitate two sessions with a partner. The group should designate one individual to serve as the group liaison. This person will be in charge of helping the group organize meetings and will also be in touch with the leader in order to communicate information and distribute any additional materials. Take some time to discuss who in your group will serve as liaison. Before returning to the group the liaison should collect everybody's information (phone and e-mail). This person is responsible for e-mailing the leader a list of the participants.

### **Food For Thought**

If you have time, discuss the following meditation. Do you agree or disagree and why?

*Every human being has merits and faults. The righteous person has more merits than faults, the wicked one more faults than merits. The average person is (more or less) evenly balanced between the two.<sup>15</sup>*

### **Cheshbon Hanefesh Inventory** **How Do I Relate To and Treat Myself?**

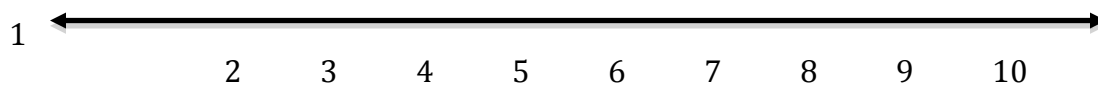
*If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am for myself, what am I?  
And if not now, when? (Pirkei Avot 1:14)*

Please place yourself on the following scale, with 1 being the lowest or least frequent and 10 being the highest, or most frequent. This inventory is for your own growth. You will not be asked to share your responses beyond the degree to which you feel comfortable.

A. I have a regular exercise practice.



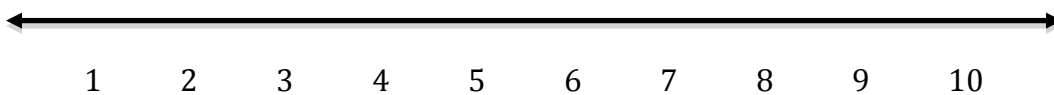
B. I maintain a healthy and balanced diet.



C. I get enough sleep.



D. I listen to my body when I am sick, in pain, stressed or overworked.



E. I care about the way I look and present myself.



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<sup>15</sup> Maimonides. Gates of Repentance. Page 11

2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

F. I am confident in my work or field.



G. I do the best I am capable of at work.



H. I push myself to grow in the workplace.



I. I have high expectations for myself, both in the workplace and in my personal life.



J. I feel as though I am meeting the expectations I have set for myself, both in the workplace and in my personal life.



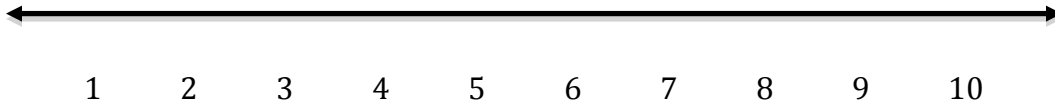
K. I find my work personally fulfilling.



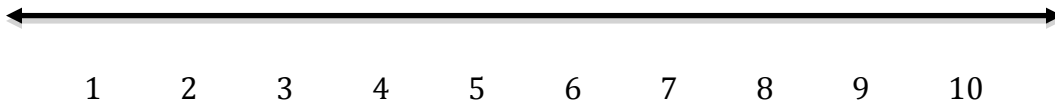
L. I know what my passions and hobbies are.



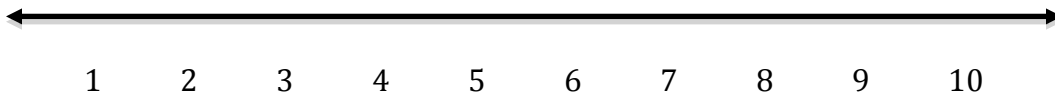
M. I make time to enjoy my passions and hobbies.



N. I push myself to grow and develop my passions and hobbies.



O. I enjoy reading and learning new things that are not related to my work.



P. I make time to read and learn things that are not related to my work.



Q. I am financially stable.



R. I spend an appropriate amount of money on necessities (food, housing, clothes, insurance).



S. I spend an appropriate amount of money on luxuries.



T. I am satisfied with how much money I set aside for the future.



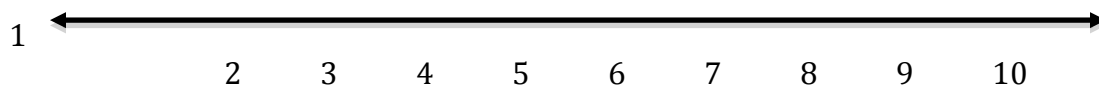
U. I am able to organize and manage a reasonable schedule.



V. I give myself appropriate time for self-reflection and personal growth.



W. I feel like I am in a relationship with God.



X. I have a spiritual practice.



Y. I yearn for a relationship with God and/or a spiritual practice.



Z. I make time to develop a relationship with God and/or a spiritual practice.

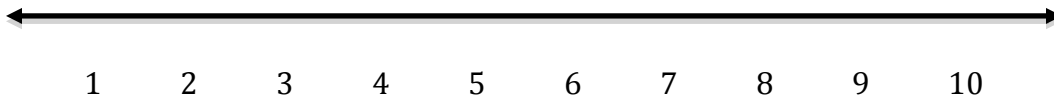


**Cheshbon Hanefesh Inventory**  
**How Do I Relate To And Treat My Intimate Community?**

*"That which is hateful to you do not to another. That is the entire Torah; the rest is commentary. Now go and study." – Rabbi Hillel (B. Talmud Shabbat 31A)*

Please place yourself on the following scale, with 1 being the lowest or least frequent, and 10 being the highest or most frequent. This inventory is for your own growth. You will not be asked to share your responses beyond the degree to which you feel comfortable.

A. I can be myself around my family and closest friends.



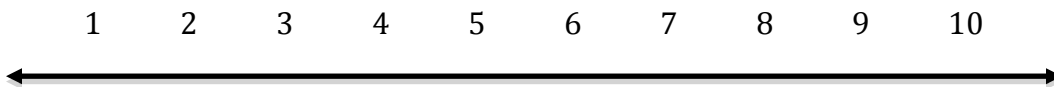
B. I am able to say no to my friends and family.



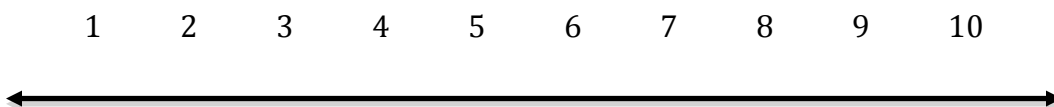
C. I am satisfied with the amount of time I spend with my family.



D. I am satisfied with the amount of time I spend with my friends.



E. I take care of my friends and family when they are sick or in need.





F. I celebrate my friend's accomplishments and joys.



G. I am genuinely happy for my friend's accomplishments.



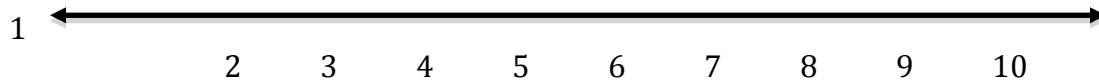
H. I share my accomplishments with my friends and family.



I. I care about what other people think about me.



J. I avoid gossip and slander.



K. I am able to find an appropriate balance between doing what is best for me and doing what is best for others.




L. I am a good listener.



M. I follow through on the promises I make to friends and family.




N. I ask for help when I need it.



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

O. I like and respect the people I work with.



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

P. I show respect to the people I work with.



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q. I collaborate well with others on group assignments.



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

R. I know when to speak up and when to listen.



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10


S. I am honest with my family about how much money I spend.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



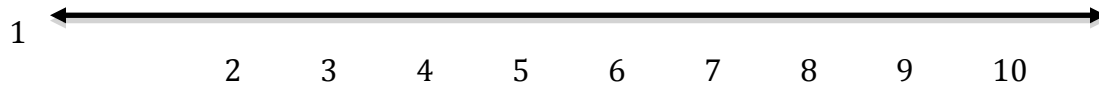
T. I feel comfortable providing for others financially.

1



2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

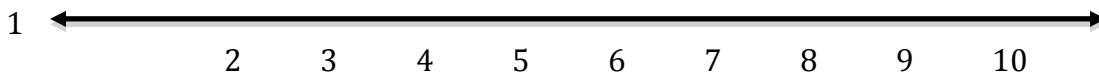
U. I feel comfortable allowing others to provide for me financially.



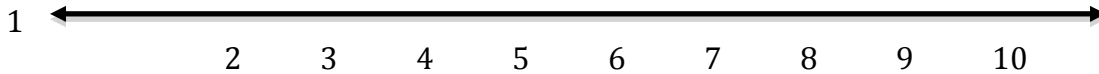
V. I have people in my life with whom I learn with.



W. I have people in my life who push me to grow and learn.



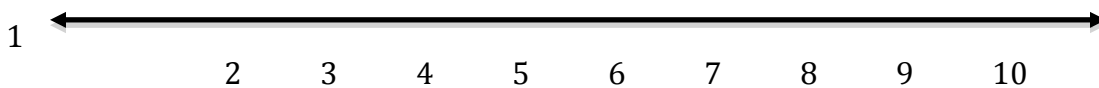
X. I push those I care about to grow and learn.



Y. I am in dialogue with others about spiritual matters.



Z. I am part of a spiritual community.



**Cheshbon Hanefesh Inventory**  
**How Do I Relate To And Treat The World**

*It is not your duty to complete the work. Neither are you free to desist from it.*  
(Pirkei Avot 2:16)

Please place yourself on the following scale, with 1 being the lowest or least frequent, and 10 being the highest or most frequent. This inventory is for your own growth. You will not be asked to share your responses beyond the degree to which you feel comfortable.

A. I am knowledgeable about what is going on in the world.



B. I am satisfied with the amount of time I dedicate to learning about current events.



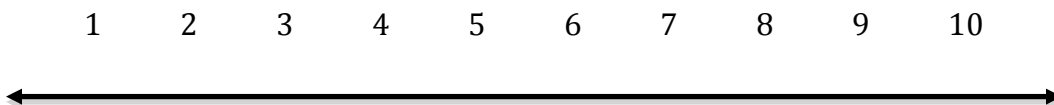
C. I have strong opinions and ideas about how to make the world a better place.



D. I talk about my opinions on how to make the world a better place with my friends and family.



E. I feel like I am part of a community that works together to create change in the world.



F. I give to strangers who directly ask me for help.



G. I acknowledge strangers who directly ask me for help with a smile or words.



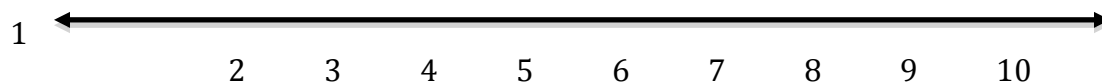
H. I am conscious of the social inequalities that exist in my own society and the greater world.



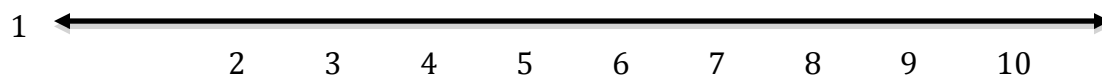
I. I take active steps to advocate for the oppressed or disadvantaged members of society.



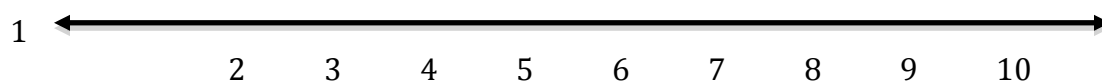
J. I am satisfied with the amount I do and/or give to those in need.




K. I treat those I meet for the first time equally and fairly.



L. I work hard to overcome my own personal stereotypes.




M. I work hard to overcome stereotypes held by those in my workplace or community.




1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

N. I seek out opportunities to learn from those who are different from me.



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

O. I am conscious of my carbon footprint.



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

P. I purchase products that are good for the environment.



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q. I purchase products that were made in ethical working conditions.



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

R. I feel a sense of personal responsibility to protect animals.



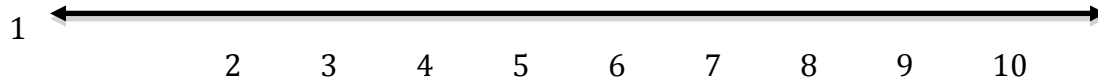
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

S. I feel connected to the greater Jewish world.

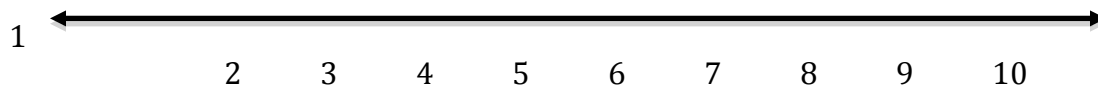


1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

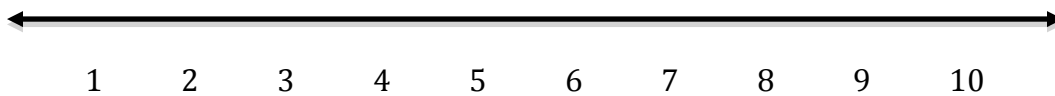
T. I feel at home in Israel.



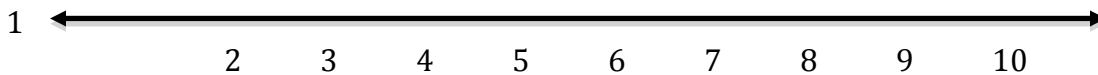
U. I feel a responsibility to support Jews in need and Jewish organizations.



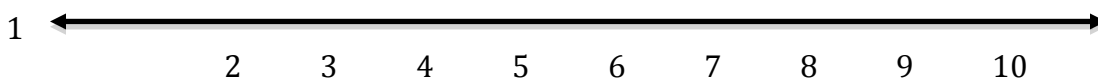
V. I am satisfied with the effort I make to develop an ongoing relationship or connection to Israel.



W. I have the right to certain freedoms and services.



X. Every human being has the right to these same freedoms and services.



Y. I have the responsibility to give back to my local and national government for providing these rights.



Z. I am satisfied with the extent to which I give back to my local and national government.



## Yom Kippur Breakout Session Text Study

### Mishnah Yoma 8:9

*Ki bayom hazeh y'kaper aleichem l'taher etchem mikol chatoteichem lifnei Adonai titharu.* For on this Day of Atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you of all your sins; you shall be clean before the Lord (Lev 16:30).<sup>16</sup>

Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah expounded on this verse, saying:  
For transgressions against God, the Day of Atonement atones; but for transgressions of one human being against another, the Day of Atonement does not atone until they have made peace with one another.

### Guiding Questions

1. What issue from the Leviticus verse is Rabbi Eleazar addressing? What are his concerns and why do you think he came to this conclusion?
2. What do you think qualifies as a transgression against God? What about a transgression against other humans?
3. Consider the statements in the inventory forms you filled out. Do these statements reflect potential transgressions against God, humans, or both? Why?

### Midrash Leviticus Rabbah 34:3

One time, when Hillel the Elder concluded his studies, one of his disciples asked him: Master, where are you bound?

He answered: To perform a religious duty.

What, they asked, is this religious duty?

He said to them: To wash in the bathhouse

They said: Is this a religious duty?

Yes, he replied; if the statues of kings, which are erected in theatres and circuses, are scoured and washed by the man who is appointed to look after them, and who thereby obtains his maintenance through them. Even more, he is exalted in the company of the great of the kingdom. How much more I, who have been created in the Image and Likeness; as it is written, "human beings were made in the image of God." (Gen 9:6)

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<sup>16</sup> JPS translation



### Guiding Questions

1. What does this text say? What is the message?
2. According to the teaching behind this text, why should individuals go through a process of *cheshbon hanefesh*?
3. How does this text change the way you think about *cheshbon hanefesh*?
4. What role does God play for you as you think about changing the way you relate to yourself, your community, and the world?

### Yom Kippur Breakout Session Journal Prompt

*You should not look at all the bad things in your life and say, "Now I will improve myself." Rather, you should look at your positive traits and dwell upon your goodness. From there you can say, "Now I will prove myself."<sup>17</sup> -Nachman of Bratslav*

1. Choose one statement that reflects an area where you excel.
2. How often do you interact in this area in your day-to-day life? Provide specific examples.
3. Consider how you might find more opportunities to interact in this area daily.
4. Choose one statement that reflects an area of weakness that you would like to improve.
5. How often do you interact in this area in your day-to-day life? Provide specific examples.
6. Consider how you might find more opportunities to interact in this area daily.

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<sup>17</sup> Rosen, Harriet and Rabbi Richard Address, Marcia Hochman, Rabbi Lisa Izes. *Becoming a Kehillat Chesed: Creating and Sustaining a Caring Congregation*. URJ Press. New York. 2004. Page 39

7. Consider how can you your strength to help you improve in the area where you struggle.

<b>Statements that reflect areas where I would like to improve</b>	<b>Statements that reflect areas where currently excel</b>

**Sukkot Session  
Chart for Identifying Interests**

<b>Themes that encapsulate these statements</b>	<b>Themes that encapsulate these statements</b>

**Sukkot Session  
Small Group Brit**

Group goals and guidelines

Agreed to by:

SESSION DATES	THEME	FACILITATOR (S)
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October:		
November:		
December:		
January:		
February:		
March:		
April:		
May:		
June:		
July:		
August:		

# APPENDIX

## Rabbi Mendel's sample chart

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### SAMPLE CHART WEEK I - EQUANIMITY

*Rise above events that are Inconsequential — both bad and good —  
for they are not worth disturbing your equanimity.*

TRAITS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Equanimity							
Toleration							
Order							
Decisiveness							
Chastity							

שבוע א': מנוחת הנפש

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שבוע א' — מנוחת הנפש: התגבר על מארעות פחותי  
הערך, רעות או טובות, שאינם כדאי לבלבל מנוחת נפשך.

רמזים	א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז
מנוחה							
סבלנות							
סדר							
הרצות							
נקיות							
ענוה							
צדק							

## Tashlich Service

We gather together at this *tashlich* service to ask God to forgive us for our sins and allow us to begin this new year with an open heart, an open mind and an open soul.

We stand here before you and pray that you will give us the strength to look deep within our souls, to recognize our merits and also our sins. We symbolically cast away that which inhibits us to move forward toward this year of growth.

Micah 7:18–20

מִי־אֵל כְּמוֹךָ יְיָ אֵל עֶזְרָא וְעֶבֶר עַל־פְּשָׁע לְשֹׂאֲרֵית נִחַלְתּוֹ לֹא־הִחְזִיק לְעַד אָפּוֹ כִּי־חָפֵץ חֶסֶד  
הוּא: יָשׁוּב יִרְחַמֵּנוּ וְיִכַּבֵּשׁ עֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ וְתִשְׁלִיךְ בְּמַצְלוֹת יָם כָּל־חַטָּאתָם: תִּתֵּן אֶמֶת לְיַעֲקֹב  
חֶסֶד לְאַבְרָהָם אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לְאַבְתָּינוּ מִיָּמֵי קֶדֶם

Who is a God like You, forgiving iniquity and remitting transgression; who has not

maintained His wrath forever against the remnant of His own people, because He loves graciousness! He will take us back in love; He will cover up our iniquities, You will hurl all our sins into the depths of the sea. You will keep faith with Jacob, loyalty to Abraham, as you promised on oath to our fathers in days gone by. (JPS translation)

Glory to those who hope!  
For the future is theirs;  
Those who stand unflinching against the mountain  
Shall gain its summit.

So hopes the river, running to the sea,  
To fulfill its dreams in the crash of waters.  
So longs the tree, branching skyward  
At last to touch the palm of sun.

Therefore we love dawn as a promise of day,  
The nightingale's love-song as a longing for birth,  
The flowing of streams as the beat of dreams made real,  
Streams cutting channels for rivers of the future  
and never growing weary.

And all who join hands, trusting creation –  
These are the companions of hope.  
Forge, then, the vision of days to come:  
As the waves shape the rocky shore,  
As the smith moulds white-hot steel at will,  
Form dreams of faithfulness.  
Desolation will not leave the desert  
Until it leaves the heart.<sup>18</sup>

–David Rokeach

### **\* Tashlich Meditation \***

I stand at this bank with a heavy heart. With this act of *tashlich*, of casting away, I free myself of the great burden that rests on my shoulders. I cleanse myself of the

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18 David Rokeach. Gates of Repentance. Pages 13-14.

past and look forward to the future.

May the road ahead bring me comfort.

I pray, O God, that I may find guidance and strength with you. Walk beside me, and be my partner as I strive to be holy. May the *Shechinah*, God's nurturing presence, enshroud me with a blessing of peace, and may I come to be source of blessing for the ones I love.<sup>19</sup>

\* \*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שְׁחַחֵנוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִנֵּי עָנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה

*Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam shechecheyanu, v'kiy'manu, v'higianu lazman hazeh*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, for giving us life, for sustaining us, and for enabling us to reach this season. May we all go forward with the strength, humility, compassion and determination to change our lives, our communities and

#### MORNING SERVICE

#### ונתנה תקף

On Rosh Hashanah we reflect,  
On Yom Kippur we consider:  
Who shall live for the sake of others,  
Who, dying, shall leave a heritage of life.

*Who shall burn with the fires of greed,  
Who shall drown in the waters of despair.*

Whose hunger shall be for the good,  
Who shall thirst for justice and right.

*Whose tongue shall be a thrusting sword,  
Whose words shall make for peace.*

Who shall be plagued by fear of the world,  
Who shall strangle for lack of friends.

*Who shall rest at the end of day,  
Who lie sleepless on a bed of pain.*

Who shall go forth in the quest for truth,

*Who shall be locked in the prison of self.*

Who shall be serene in every storm,  
Who shall be troubled by the passing breeze.



## Dwelling in the Sukkah

On Rosh Hashanah we began a process of reflection, looking inward to discover our merits and our shortcomings. We thought honestly about the way we relate to ourselves, to our community and to the world. On Yom Kippur we considered what it means to hold some of these character traits as we stand before God on this awesome day. We considered how we might build on our strengths in the future to develop a more well-rounded character. Five days later, the Jewish calendar asks us to join together once again. This time, instead of standing next to one another as individual souls before God, we sit facing each other as one community. We dwell, we invite others in, and we look out and up to the world beyond. One individual cannot build a *sukkah* alone. It requires teamwork, communication, and trust. As we dwell together today, we offer a blessing to God, asking for the strength to grow together.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו לישב בסוכה

*Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu  
leishev basukkah.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, who hallows us with mitzvot,  
commanding us to dwell in the Sukkah.

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May the One whose spirit is with us in every righteous deed,  
Be with all work for the good of humanity  
And bear the burdens of others,  
And who give bread to the hungry,  
Who clothe the naked,  
And take the friendless into their homes.  
May the work of their hands endure,  
And may the seed they sow bring abundant harvest.<sup>20</sup>

## Waving the Lulav

Face east while reciting the blessing. Hold the *lulav* in the right hand and the *etrog*  
face-down in the left hand. Shake the *lulav* in the following order: ahead, right,  
behind you, left, up, down.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו, וצונו על נטילת לולב.

*Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav,  
v'tzivanu  
al n'tilat lulav*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, who hallows us with mitzvot,  
commanding us to take up the lulav

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, שהחיינו וקיימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה.

*Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam, shehecheyanu, v'kiy'manu v'higianu  
lazman hazeh*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, who has kept us alive,  
sustained us, and brought us to this season

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