

Inviting Your Full Self to the High Holy Days – 2012/5773

The *Yamim Noraim* (Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur) are here. We're tasked with reflecting on our lives and practicing *teshuvah* (returning). Through *teshuvah* we examine our actions over the past year, seek forgiveness from ourselves, others, and the Divine and dedicate ourselves to do better next year. These sacred days provide an opportunity to ask ourselves the hardest questions and explore all the nooks and crannies of our thoughts, words, and actions over the past year. What's beautiful about this process is we're given the awesome opportunity to meet ourselves exactly where we are and practice being accountable. *Teshuvah* is about living a reflective life and taking responsibility for how we treat ourselves and interact with our family, friends, loved ones, colleagues, and even strangers.

Practice Instructions:

Let's invite our full selves to this practice. Right now in the present, look back over your past year's journey, while visioning out the potential in the year to come. Before working with the three simple steps below close your eyes for a moment and take a few deep breaths. Bring your awareness to this moment in time, check in with your breath and your body. Feel the seat beneath you. Now return to your breath. Notice how you fill with breath and then how this same breath is released back to the world. As thoughts arise, notice if and where they reside in your body. Notice where you feel tension, and observe your reactions and responses.

Use the questions below to guide your *teshuvah* practice. Spend time with each question and invite yourself to write your most honest answers. This is your practice, your life, and your opportunity to bring your entire self to the process. Whenever your mind inevitably wanders or wavers (which is what minds do), bring yourself back to this work and this paper in your hands. See the holiness in the task at hand, your role in creating the life you want to live and the capacity that you hold at every moment. With every breath, you can use the practice of *teshuvah* to return, reflect, forgive, and move forward.

1. Reflect

Over the past year, did I fully live my values? Did I treat other people how I would want to be treated? What do I most regret? What am I most proud of?

2. Seek

Forgiveness

From whom must I ask forgiveness? To whom must I offer my forgiveness (regardless of outcome)?

3. Letting Go &

Moving forward

How can I release myself from any residue of the past year? What do I want to practice, seek, or commit myself to this year?

may we all be blessed with a sweet and meaningful new year.

שנה טובה

