

# High Holiday Repentance Workbook 2020

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To acknowledge our own screw-ups is an important first step. But the High Holidays are not about getting ourselves to feel guilty, but rather engaging in a process of change. If we don't make those changes internally and in our communities and in our society, all the breast-beating and self-criticism become an empty ritual.

In many situations and relationships, you are not the only part of the problem—but for the sake of this process, it is your part that you are to focus on, not the part contributed by your partner, spouse, parents, children, friends, etc. Begin to work on your part during these ten days of repentance/teshuvah!

On these days, our focus is not on what others did to us, but on what we ourselves did to lessen our connection to our highest possible selves and to our highest manifestation of the God-energy of the universe!

# What is spiritually out of alignment in my relationships with...

PROBLEM	WHAT YOU CONTRIBUTE TO IT
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## *Parents*

1.

2.

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## *Spouse or Partner*

1.

2.

3.

4.

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*Friends*

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

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*Children*

1.

2.

3.

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## How spiritually nourishing is your work?

**W**hat have been the problems you've faced here? Have you had good relationships with co-workers? Have you felt fulfilled in your work? Have you been involved in collective efforts to change the workplace, or the union, or tried to organize, or have you felt powerless and unable to envision changing anything? If you were in a supervisory position, did you treat your supervisees with the respect that they deserve? Did you discharge anger from work by punishing yourself (e.g., through alcohol or drugs) or by dumping on friends or lovers-or did you express that anger at the appropriate targets or through collective action? Have you taken any of the steps to fight for a "new bottom line" at work? See [www.spiritualprogressives.org](http://www.spiritualprogressives.org) for ideas on how to do this.

PROBLEM	WHAT YOU CONTRIBUTE TO IT
<i>Relationship to co-workers.</i>	
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<i>Relationship to supervisors or supervisees.</i>	
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- How healthy were your coping mechanisms for stress at work?

Did you inappropriately blame yourself, or dump anger inappropriately on others?

- What kind of political action did you take in relationship to work?
- Did you share with others at work the kind of world you yearn for. Urge them to read Rabbi Lerner's book *Revolutionary Love* as an easy way to start a conversation about the kind of world they might also want?

**Did you care for your body  
this past year? If not, what didn't  
you do that you  
should have done?**

Eating

Exercise

Vacations

Clothing, Appearance, and Self-Presentation

Quiet Time or Meditation

- Are you taking enough time to nourish your soul?
- Did you care for your soul this past year? If not, what didn't you do that you could have done? In what ways did you care for your soul this past year?
- In what ways did you neglect your soul? Did your soul give you any messages that you ignored? What were they?
- Did you take time to read books that would have expanded your awareness of spiritual life? If not, what do you want to read this next year? Did you give yourself alone time for meditation, for prayer, or for walks in nature?
- Did you take the time to read other books that would have given you pleasure and joy? If not, what do you want to read this next year?
- What courses (evening schools in liberal arts or a new profession, art programs, Hebrew, Jewish studies, studying a new musical instrument, learning about another culture or philosophical tradition) did you take to expand your horizons? What would you like to take this next year?
- What pleasures did you give to yourself this year? Which do you want to expand or initiate this coming year? Did you allow yourself to go on zoom to art exhibits, plays, musical concerts, poetry readings, discussion groups, community political action activities, or other events that would have given you pleasure? What do you want to do in this regard in the next year?
- In what ways did you explore your relationship with God or however you wish to name the spiritual dimension of consciousness this past year? In what ways did you ignore that dimension of life? Did you read any books, attend lectures or courses, or dedicate time to exploring the spiritual dimension of your life? Would you be willing to read (or reread) *The Left Hand of God*, *Spirit Matters*, *The Politics of Meaning*, *Jewish Renewal*, *Embracing Israel/Palestine*, or other spiritually

enlightening books, and make a commitment now to doing so in the course of this coming year? Start by ordering *Revolutionary Love* at [www.tikkun.org/lj](http://www.tikkun.org/lj) or any other spiritual book that either intrigued you or seemed smart rather than simply filled with meaningless jargon?

## **Tikkun Olam**

### **Repairing and Healing Our World**

- Are you giving real energy to tikkun olam, to healing and repairing the world?
- Which of our society's political, economic, or social institutions have destructive consequences to the environment, social justice, or our capacity to be loving and compassionate human beings? Have you challenged any of them in the public arena?
- What concrete steps have you taken to be involved? What will you personally do to change the status quo? Will you support the Global Marshall Plan [tikkun.org/gmp](http://tikkun.org/gmp) and the Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment to the U.S. Constitution [tikkun.org/esra](http://tikkun.org/esra) and Tikkun's plan for a guaranteed income for all citizens (read about it in *Revolutionary Love* or on Tikkun's website)? All of these seem "unrealistic" but are the necessary preliminary steps to save our planet from environmental catastrophe.
- Would you back a campaign to give Palestinians living under Israeli rule full political, voting and human rights until Israel assists Palestinians to create an economically and politically viable Palestinian state in all of the West Bank and Gaza conquered by Israel in 1967? If not, what steps will you take to support Palestinian human rights that are flagrantly denied every week (see [Btselem.org](http://Btselem.org) for documentation of this claim).

- Will you support Tikkun's campaign for a New Bottom Line? The old bottom line, which still rules not only in our economics but also in much of people's unconscious assumptions about daily life, is the degree to which our activities, or economy, our corporations, our politics, and our government maximize money and power. Tikkun's New Bottom Line says that our economy, corporations, government policies, our judiciary and criminal justice system, our education system, our cultural systems, our health care systems, and our religious and spiritual activities should be judged efficient, rational and productive to the extent that they maximize our capacities to be loving and caring, generous and kind, acting for social and economic and environmental justice and sanity, treating all other human beings as embodiments of the sacred (and not just valuing them for what they can "do" for us, but rather seeing them as intrinsically valuable even if they never can contribute anything to your goals), and responding to Earth and the universe not solely as a source of raw materials which can be turned into products to be sold, but rather responding with awe, wonder and radical amazement of the universe and gratitude toward the beauty and mystery of life itself and the preciousness of Earth. Will you join us in popularizing this New Bottom Line and in our efforts to convince social change movements that they should all embrace this New Bottom Line and hence make it clear that beyond their specific focus that they share this ethical/spiritual vision along with all the other social change movement?
- In 2020 we face elections which will have a significant impact on the future environmental sustainability of the Earth. What will YOU do to help elect candidates who are most likely to support policies that will begin to undo the damage done by 150 years of insensitivity to the way the economic philosophy of endless growth has encouraged a competitive capitalist marketplace to use tools of consciousness manipulation (aka advertising, facebook, etc) to make hundreds of thousands around the world feel unsuccessful in their lives unless they consume the latest gadgets, new products and even the latest therapies or drugs. Will you reach out to people who have not yet



voted for whoever you believe to be the best candidates and challenge all the false information floating around on the Internet?

- In 2020 we have witnessed more clearly the reckless violence of police toward African Americans and the persistence and growth of racist ideas toward people of color and toward Jews! In Tikkun [www.tikkun.org](http://www.tikkun.org) we have written about what kind of structural changes are needed in the economy, our educational system, our legal system, policing and our cultural systems and the dismantling of white premacy reflected in our Constitution. To be successful in changing our society on these issues we must be careful to avoid demonizing all Americans (or all Canadians, Germans, Israelis, etc. etc.) avoid saying things that seem to be saying that everyone not yet on our sides is simply a racist, sexist, homophobe, anti-Semite or just stupid. This is the kind of talk which often drives people into the hands of the racists and strengthens the hands of the resurfacing fascist movements in the U.S. and around the world. When people not yet with in the struggles for democracy, non-violence and a world based on love and generosity (the Caring Society described in *Revolutionary Love*) they feel deeply disrespected and often will turn to extremist movements that do not make them feel bad about themselves. So will you spread these ideas and support Tikkun and Beyt Tikkun to project these ideas not only because they might make you more successful in 2020 but also successful in the coming decades.
- If you haven't been involved in work to heal our society and/or the planet, what were the reasons you gave yourself? Which of those reasons presupposed a "surplus powerlessness" (a way in which you were actually assuming yourself less able to initiate things or take leadership than is "objectively" true)? In what ways did you buy the message that "they will never listen," or, "I can never get things to happen," or, "I'm not powerful enough to start something so I'll wait for someone else—like President Obama—to do it," or, "Other people are not together enough, or too immoral, or too passive, so there's no point in me trying to mobilize them," or other similar messages?

Would you be willing to start a study group with friends to read about a positive vision of a transformed world, for example Rabbi Lerner's book *Revolutionary Love*, Arthur Waskow and Phyllis Berman's *Freedom Journey*, Ana Levy-Lyons' *No Other Gods*, and Peter Gable's *The Desire for Mutual Recognition*?

- If you tried to be involved, and had hassles or disappointments with other people in the process, what were those and what part did you have in making or sustaining them? What did you do to confront the problems directly? Would you be open to working with the Network of Spiritual Progressives (NSP), Tikkun, Beyt Tikkun, the One Campaign, the School of the Americas Watch, 350.org, the B'Tselem (Israeli Human Rights Organization), J Street, Jewish Voice for Peace, Pax Christi, Zen Peacemakers, Evangelicals for Social Action, UUA, Baptist Peace Fellowship, or some other national organization doing work with ideals in which you can believe, and which one will you commit to now and actually stick with that commitment?
- Did you help build a connection to Judaism and the Jewish world or to whatever spiritual tradition or discipline makes sense to you?
- How much did you seek to deepen your knowledge of Judaism, Jewish history, Jewish texts, or the culture of the Jewish people or of Israel? Or of whatever other religious tradition or spiritual discipline speaks to you? What opportunities were there and what were the reasons you gave yourself for why this year wasn't the right time? Will you make time for this in this New Year?

- Did you allow yourself to take twenty-five hours out of your busy schedule each week to observe Shabbat or some similar weekly spiritual practice in a traditional way? Did you meditate, pray, say the prayer of forgiveness before going to sleep, or some other spiritual practice? How fulfilling or spiritually deep did you allow it to be? If it wasn't, what explanations did you give yourself for why it wasn't working? What could you personally do to make that spiritual practice or some other spiritual practice on a daily or weekly basis?
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We urge you to use not only the two days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur but also all the days between them to focus on these issues raised in this Tikkun guide to transformation (t'shuvah). This is the spiritual goal of the Jewish High Holy Days, and it is a path that is equally useful to people of all religions and every variant of secular, agnostic and atheist beliefs. This is our gift to you. Please use it in a spirit of inquiry, taking what makes sense and ignoring the rest, and in a spirit of generosity toward yourself and not self-blaming or feeling inadequate. So we end this by saying:

May you inscribe yourself in the Book of Life by using this time to develop concrete strategies to use all year round to not fall back into less ethically and spiritually patterns that you've come to recognize thru using this guide. It happens to all of us to some extent that we fall back into old patterns, so use this by reading it once a week or once a month or whatever works for you to help you reconnect with the highest version of yourself that you aspire to be. And please connect to Beyt Tikkun Synagogue Without Walls, join our Torah study and holiday celebrations, and join as a member! [www.beyttikkun.org](http://www.beyttikkun.org)

Many blessings for a Shana Tovah u'metukah, a good and sweet year ahead.

--Beyt Tikkun Community