Dear Friends,

Shalom and welcome to the Congregation for Humanistic Judaism’s (CHJ) High Holiday programs.

The Jewish New Year of 5781 finds us in the grip of a global pandemic. Although we are unable to observe the Holidays in our usual way, CHJ is pleased to be able to offer an online experience that will provide the same high-quality and meaningful Humanistic Jewish services to which we are accustomed. Despite not being physically together, we can take pleasure in knowing that we are sharing the experience of observing the High Holidays, and that we remain a strong and connected community.

As the only Humanistic Jewish congregation in Connecticut, CHJ believes it is important to offer our High Holiday programs to the greater community, and at no charge. We warmly welcome our guests and gratefully accept and appreciate contributions to help defray our costs. Contributions may be made online via CHJ’s website or by check.

Often, our guests discover that Humanistic Judaism strongly aligns with their own philosophy and choose to join CHJ for its year-round programs and for strong social and Jewish connections. If you are considering membership I urge you to visit CHJ’s website. Questions can be directed to membership@humanisticjews.org.

In addition to a good year and a sweet year, I especially wish you and those you love a safe and healthy New Year.

Shanah Tovah!

Steven Getz
President, Congregation for Humanistic Judaism

P.O. Box 82, Westport CT 06881 • 203.293.8867 • www.HumanisticJews.org
www.facebook.com/CongregationforHumanisticJudaism
ROSH HASHANAH
2020/5781

[Musical Prelude]

I. OPENING

Song Leader: “In the seventh month on the first day of the month, there shall be a solemn service, a time to refrain from work, a day of commemoration proclaimed to the sound of the Shofar.”
(Lev. 23:24)

Leader 1: Tonight, all over the world, the Shofar will sound, and that cry will be understood by Jews in Israel and throughout the diaspora. No matter what language Jews speak to conduct their secular or spiritual lives, the poignant bleat of the ram’s horn transcends mere words.

The Shofar is the ritual horn of ancient Israel, recalling primitive times when the ram’s horn summoned families and tribes to solemn assembly. Its emphatic cry, in every age, remains a call to conscience.

Leader 2: Tonight we assemble to the sound of the Shofar to review and reconsider our lives. Rosh Hashanah heralds an opportunity for new beginnings. Now is the time to pause and reflect, to evaluate the past year and to discard what no longer fits the person we want to be. Self-reflection, self-evaluation, self-renewal: These are the tasks we are called to by the Shofar’s blast. Our minds are open to broader issues, but Rosh Hashanah reminds us to begin with self-improvement.

With Jews everywhere, we celebrate the significance of this day, the first day of Tishri, as we usher in a period of reflection that culminates on Yom Kippur. It is good to gather in our own community on Rosh Hashanah, “The Head of the Year.”

Song Leader & Congregation: Hineh Ma Tov

Hi-nreh ma tov u-ma na-eem
She-vet a-cheem gam ya-chad. (repeat many times)

(Behold how good and pleasant it is to dwell together in unity)
Greeting:  Congregation President Steven Getz

Leader 1:  
In the twilight of the vanishing year, thanksgiving fills our hearts. Our souls are stirred by the memory of joy, as Rosh Hashanah and the new year begin.

We were sustained by love and kindness; comforted in times of sorrow; found happiness in our homes and gladness with our friends. As the new year begins, our spirits rise in grateful song.

Leader 2:  But there were dreams that came to naught, and times when we refused to dream. These, with much regret, we now remember, as the new year begins. As the new year begins, contrition fills our souls.

Some of our days were dark with grief. We shed tears for the ties that were broken. We look back with sorrow, as the new year begins. As the new year begins, tears well up within us.

Leader 1: Yet we look ahead with hope, giving thanks for the chance of renewal, for the promise of good to come. May this Rosh Hashanah, birthday of the world, be our day of rebirth into life and peace, serenity and safety, as the new year begins.

Let us say together:

Leader 1 & Congregation:  As the new year begins, so is hope reborn with us!

II. SHOFAR

Song Leader: “Sound the Shofar on the New Moon, at the time appointed for our festival day.”

(Psalms 81:4)

Song Leader & Shofar:  T’kee-ah!  תקיעה
She-va-reem!  שבורם
Te-roo-ah!  תרועה
T’kee-ah!  תקיעה

Leader 1: Today, wherever Jews are, the call of the Shofar resounds. It speaks to our hearts, our minds, and our souls. It rouses us to listen to the voice within.

“Awake, O sleepers, Awake from your sleep!” cries the Shofar.

“Search your deeds and …look to your souls, and better your ways and actions.”

(Adapted from Maimonides, 12th century Jewish scholar)
Leader 1: We will spend the coming days reflecting on where we have been and where we are going, for our future must be informed by our past.

Leader 2: The sound of the ram's horn is sharp; It breaks through the echoes of the day just spent; It cuts through our usual occupations and concerns; It penetrates the air and makes this a special place; It marks the time.

Reader 1: Sounds fill the air about us But we do not listen to them all.
We select, we decide Which sounds we respond to.
What do we really care to hear? A baby crying, a sound of beauty, a word of love, a cry for help?

Reader 2: What will we hear? What will cause us to turn, To renew a part of life Which too quickly passes by?
When our children tell us their troubles Or proudly share their joys, do we really listen?

Reader 1: Do we hear the loneliness of the our elders Through their talk, as through their silence? And when we hear, do we turn in understanding?
Do we help the young to hear the voice of the ages? Do we help their elders to hear the beat of the new?

Reader 2: Do we listen to the sounds of nature, To a bird, to a breeze Or lose them in offensive noise?
Do we hear the sounds of chaos and of creation in our own lives? And hearing, do we love each other more?

Reader 1: Today the Shofar calls out to remind us that time does not stand still. And that it is never too late.
It is an alarm, to waken us from that slumber and stupor Which shut out concern for others, and for ourselves.
III. SHABBAT CANDLE LIGHTING

Leader 1: Tonight we celebrate both Rosh Hashanah and Shabbat. May the flames of these Sabbath lights brighten our paths and help us see the good we can do.

Song Leader & Congregation: **Mah Yafeh Hayom**

*Mah yafeh ha-yom, Shabbat shalom. (repeat)*
*Shabbat, Shabbat shalom (repeat 3 times)*
*Shabbat, shalom.*

(How beautiful is the Sabbath day, Sabbath peace.)

Leader 1: Candles are a powerful symbol in Judaism, used on both joyous and mournful occasions. These flames we have kindled represent the eternal flame of the Jewish people, and connect us with our heritage.

Leader 2: In the candle’s flame we see the spark of life and the inner light of humanity, which we seek to turn to good ends. Together we have the power to push back the darkness. Let us we say together:

Leader 2 & Congregation: **Radiant is the light in the world.**
*Radiant is the light within each of us.*
*Radiant is the light of life.*

Song Leader & Congregation: **Ay-fo o-ree?**

*Where is my light? My light is in me.*
*Where is my hope? My hope is in me.*
*Where is my strength? My strength is in me.*
*And in you. And in you.*
*Where is my strength? My strength is in me.*
*And in you. And in you.*

*Ay-fo-o-ree? O-ree be.*
*Ay-fo tik-va-tee? Tik-va-tee be.*
*Ay-fo ko khee? Ko-khee be.*
*V’gam bakh. V’gam bakh.*
*Ay-fo ko-khee? Ko-khee be.*
*V’gam bakh. V’gam bakh.*

*Where is my light? My light is in me.*
*Where is my hope? My hope is in me.*
*Where is my strength? My strength is in me.*
*And in you. And in you.*
*Where is my strength? My strength is in me.*
*And in you. And in you.*

("Where is My Light?" - Lyrics, Rabbi Sherwin Wine; Music, Mickie & Abe Mandel)
IV. THE MESSAGE OF ROH HASHANAH

Leader 2: It is Rosh Hashanah, a time of reflection and aspiration. We plumb the past for memories and their meanings. We assess our potential for becoming our best selves. We look backward and forward, but we do not stand still.

Reader 3: The Head of the Year

The Moon is dark tonight, a new Moon for a new year. It is hollow and hungers to be full. It is the black zero of beginning.

Now you must void yourself of injuries, insults, incursions. Go with empty hands to those you have hurt and make amends. It is not too late. It is early and about to grow. Now is the time to do what you know you must and have feared to begin. Your face is dark too as you turn inward to face yourself, the hidden twin of all you must grow to be.

Forgive the dead year. Forgive yourself. What will be wants to push through your fingers. The light you seek hides in your belly. The light you crave longs to stream from your eyes. You are the moon that will wax in the new goodness.

(Marge Piercy)

Leader 2: On Rosh Hashanah, we sit in judgment of ourselves. The reality of our daily lives meets the sharp scrutiny of our ideals. The list of our deeds stands exposed. This is a time for truth, a time to respond to difficult questions.

Have I expressed the love I feel for my dear ones, or have I shut them out?
Have I treated others honestly, or have I cheated them, thereby cheating myself?
Have I spoken out when I should have, or remained silent in fear of what others might say?
Have I accepted the challenge of new ideas, or do I cling blindly to the old?
Leader 1:  Have I developed my talents to the limit, or settled for mere adequacy?

Have I burrowed in the narrow rut of comfortable routine?

Have my words become tired? Has my imagination grown stale?

Is my courage spent? Have I been less than I can be?

(Rabbi Daniel Friedman, adapted)

Leader 2:  Traditional Jewish teachings speak of Rosh Hashanah as a day of divine judgment. As Humanistic Jews, we must assume all roles in our process of looking inward. We must admit our shortcomings, confess our misdeeds, and accept responsibility. Then we must forgive ourselves and prepare for the year to come.

Leader 1:  No other person can give meaning to my life. While I cannot control all the factors that define my life, I possess the capacity to determine, if not the length of my days, at least their quality and depth.

Leader 2:  We want to be so much more than we are. We want to be wiser, kinder, more vital, and more confident in the act of living. We want to seize the world zestfully and turn it to some urgent purpose.

The task is daunting. Each Rosh Hashanah brings new resolutions, most of which we fail to keep. We fear the risk of failure in the unfamiliar. New ideas, new ways, new faces—all threaten our comfort zone.

Leader 1:  Still, we must pursue the dreams that challenge us with their visions. We need to seek out and celebrate the strength in our own selves.

We must be bold enough to discover our virtues and strong enough to bear our mistakes. The philosopher Kierkegaard reminds us: “To venture causes anxiety; but not to venture is to lose one’s self.”
Reader 4: I will not die an unlived life. 
I will not live in fear 
of falling or catching fire. 
I choose to inhabit my days, 
to allow my living to open me, 
to make me less afraid, 
more accessible, 
to loosen my heart 
until it becomes a wing, 
a torch, a promise. 
I choose to risk my significance; 
to live so that which comes to me as seed 
goes to the next as blossom 
and that which comes to me as blossom 
goes on as fruit. 

(Dawna Markova)

Reader 4: And let us say together:

Reader 4 & Congregation: This moment, this night, this community grants me the time and permission to search within, to find the knowledge and courage to fashion my way forward.

[Music and Silent Reflection]

Leader 2: At the turning of the season, we see the natural world in flux. The leaves turn from green to red and gold. The birds head once more toward the south. The animals begin to store their food for the winter.

For leaves, birds, and animals, turning comes instinctively. But for me, turning does not come easily.

Leader 1: It takes an act of will for us to change. It means breaking old habits; it means losing face. It means starting all over again. It means saying, “I am sorry.” It means recognizing that I have the ability to change.

Leader 2: Change is hard, often painful. But unless we turn, we will be trapped in yesterday’s ways. Then let us turn—from callousness to sensitivity, from hostility to love, from pettiness to purpose, from envy to contentment, from carelessness to discipline, from fear to hope. And let us turn toward each other.

(Rabbi Jack Riemer, adapted)
Song Leader & Congregation: Kehillah Kedoshah

If you are “a-tem,” then we’re “ni-tza-vim.”
We stand here today and remember the dream.
If you are “a-tem,” then we’re “ni-tza-vim.”
We stand here today and remember the dream.

Kehillah kedoshah, kehillah kedosha,
Kehillah kedoshah, kehillah kedosha.


Each one of us must play a part.
Each one of us must heed the call.
Each one of us must seek the truth.
Each one of us is a part of it all.
Each one of us must remember the pain.
Each one of us must find the joy.
Each one of us, each one of us.

Kehillah kedoshah, kehillah kedosha,
Kehillah kedoshah, kehillah kedosha.

Each one of us must start to hear.
Each one of us must sing the song.
Each one of us must do the work.
Each one of us must right the wrong.
Each one of us must build the home.
Each one of us must hold the hope.
Each one of us, each one of us.

Kehillah kedoshah, kehillah kedosha,
Kehillah kedoshah, kehillah kedosha.


(“Sacred Community,” Music & Lyrics,
Dan Nichols & Rabbi Mike Moskovitz)

Reader 5: According to tradition, it is the year 5781 of the Jewish people. We reflect on how we have endured and remained cohesive.

Reader 6: It is the year 244 of our nation. We reflect on Jewish life in America since colonial times, and how we have thrived in its climate of freedom.
Reader 7: It is the year 72 of the state of Israel. We reflect on its struggle to be strong yet remain a beacon of justice and righteousness.

Reader 8: It is the year 53 of our congregation. We reflect on our efforts to define a contemporary Judaism and forge a strong community.

Leader 2: We gratefully acknowledge all that the past year has brought us of life and health, of love and joy, of beauty and truth, of strength and courage. Whatever good we have known this year, we reflect upon with gratitude; yet, we also reflect upon our sorrows, failures, and disappointments.

Leader 1: Who of us can be entirely content with even our personal lives when we know the injustices in the world? And, yet, the New Year is a reminder and celebration of the eternal possibility of renewal and improvement.

Leader 2: May this day help us to find meaning in our lives. Let the Shofar’s call also awaken the voice of our communal conscience and call us to action.

And let us say together:

Leader 2 & Congregation: *May the spirit of our coming together this night grant us peace, that most precious gift, and give us the will to proclaim its message to all the peoples of the earth.*

Song Leader & Congregation: **Na-a-se Shalom**  
*Na-a-se sha-lom ba-o-lam*  
*Na-a-se sha-lom a-ley-nu.*  
*V’al kol ha-o-lam*  
*V’im-ru, im ru sha-lom.*

*Na-a-se sha-lom*  
*Na-a-se sha-lom*  
*Sha-lom a-ley-nu,*  
*V’al kol ha-o-lam.*

*Na-a-se sha-lom*  
*Na-a-se sha-lom*  
*Sha-lom a-ley-nu,*  
*V’al kol ha-o-lam*  

(Let us bring peace upon ourselves and upon all the world.)
VI. TORAH CEREMONY

Leader 2: Our tradition asserts itself in the symbol of the Torah. This ancient scroll contains much of the early record of our people’s experience. Their trials and successes, their mistakes and achievements, are revealed with all the color and fury of a glorious history. Through the Torah we learn the customs and laws, the questions and answers of our own ancient family. Although many centuries separate us from the events and beliefs of our ancestors, there is wisdom to be gleaned from their stories, and their courage and passion still speak to our hearts.

For ceremonial purposes, Jews have continued to read from handwritten parchment Torahs in scroll form, housed in arks. Our congregation has such a scroll, a Torah from Czechoslovakia, salvaged from the Holocaust. Due to the pandemic, we will not be reading directly from this scroll. Still, with Jews the world over, we read tonight to honor tradition and to connect us to the ancient text.

Leader 1: As Jewish Humanists we are comfortable in freely interpreting the text, looking beyond the literal message for truths and insights that speak to us today. Today we venture beyond the traditional holiday Torah reading with a passage from the Book of Exodus, in which Moses seeks to protect the Israelites from God’s wrath.

Exodus Chapter 32

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<th>7 And the Lord spoke unto Moses: ‘Go, get thee down; for thy people, that thou broughtest up out of the land of Egypt, have dealt corruptly;</th>
<th>8 they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them; they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed unto it, and said: This is thy god, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.’</th>
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<td>9 And the Lord said unto Moses: ‘I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people.</td>
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<td>יְהֹוָה יִכְלָל</td>
<td>10 Now therefore let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them; and I will make of thee a great nation.’</td>
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11 And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said: 'Lord, why doth Thy wrath wax hot against Thy people, that Thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?

12 Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, saying: For evil did He bring them forth, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from Thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against Thy people.

Torah Commentary: David Shafer

VII. MEMORIAL SERVICE

Leader 1: Let us pause now for a moment as we recall those whom we have loved who are no longer among us. Though vanished from our sight, they live on in our hearts. What was good in their lives endures in our memory. We are grateful for their lives, for their time with us and our companionship with them, and for the sweet memories they left behind. We say together:

Leader 1 & Congregation: In tribute to our departed, may we live wisely, courageously and usefully. Thus will they remain as living influences among us.

Reader 9: In everything, there is at least an eighth of death. It doesn’t weigh much. With what hidden, peaceful charm we carry it everywhere we go. In sweet awakenings, in our travels, in our love talk, when we are unaware, forgotten in all the corners of our being—always with us. And never heavy.

(Leah Goldberg, trans. M. Falk)

[Silent reflection, with music]
Leader 1: We light this memorial candle in honor of those who touched our lives but are no longer with us.

[Lights candle]

Leader 2: We light this second memorial candle in memory of the six million lost in the Holocaust, many of whom left no mourners.

[Lights candle]

Leader 1: We light this final memorial candle for the lives lost around the world in the barbaric wars, strife, and acts of terrorism still raging in the twenty-first century. May it spark within us the courage and resolve to seek peace, justice, and security for all.

[Lights candle]

Reader 10: There are stars whose radiance is visible on earth though they have long been extinct. There are people whose brilliance continues to light the world though they are no longer among the living. These lights are particularly bright when the night is dark. They light the way for humankind.

*(Hannah Senesh)*

Song Leader & Congregation: Zay-kher Tza-dee-keem

*Zay-kher tza-dee-keem, lee-v’ra-kha.*
*Zay-kher tza-dee-keem, lee-v’ra-kha.*
*Lee-v’ra-kha, lee-v’ra-kha,*
*Zak-kher tza-dee-keem, lee-v’ra-kha.*

(The remembrance of righteous people is a blessing to us.)

VIII. CLOSING

Leader 1: Let this New Year be the beginning of a new life in each of us, wherein old things are passed away. Those ideas that remain to feed and encourage our prejudices – let them pass away.

Let them pass away, but not the old thoughts that are still true.

Leader 2: The anger and bitter feelings – let them pass away. Let them pass away, but not the old emotions filled with kindness.

Leader 1: The harsh words, the suspicious looks, the clenched hands and unwilling feet – let them pass away.

Let them pass away, but not the compassion and caring that nourish humankind.
Leader 2: The new fashions that distract us from behaving responsibly and kindly – let them pass away.

Let them pass away, but not the old habits that guide our conscience.

And let us say together:

Leader 2 & Congregation: May all that is good and precious remain, but let the clutter of our heads and hearts depart, that new inspirations and affections may enter to gladden our lives.

Reader 11: Let the rain come and wash away the ancient grudges, the bitter hatreds held and nurtured over generations. Let the rain wash away the memory of the hurt, the neglect. Then let the sun come out and fill the sky with rainbows. Let the warmth of the sun heal us wherever we are broken. Let it burn away the fog so that we can see each other clearly. So that we can see beyond labels, beyond accents, gender or skin color. Let the warmth and brightness of the sun melt our selfishness. So that we can share the joys and feel the sorrows of our neighbors. And let the light of the sun be so strong that we will see all people as our neighbors. Let the earth, nourished by rain, bring forth flowers to surround us with beauty. And let the mountains teach our hearts to reach upward to heaven.

(Rabbi Harold S. Kushner)

Song Leader & Shofar: T’kee-ah! שלום! She-va-reem! ברוך! Te-roo-ah! הרגעה! T’kee-ah G’do-lah! זָדוֹלָה!
Leader 1: In the coming year, and the years that follow, let us renew our commitment to our highest ideals. Let us live mindfully and courageously. Let us welcome new beginnings.

Reader 12: I opened my door and many, many crowded to come in. I therefore pushed back the walls of my room to welcome all my guests. And my room became the home of my friends And my room became the world.

(Amir Gilboa)

Leader 1: May it be a good year. May it be a healthy year.

Leader 2: May it be a year of peace. May we have the strength to make it so.

Song Leader & Congregation: Od Yavo’

Od yavo’ shalom aleinu
Od yavo’ shalom aleinu
Od yavo’ shalom aleinu
Ve al kulam.

Od yavo’ shalom aleinu
Od yavo’ shalom aleinu
Od yavo’ shalom aleinu
Ve al kulam.

Salaam.
Aleinu ve al kol ha olam
Salaam, Shalom.

Salaam.
Aleinu ve al kol ha olam
Salaam, Shalom. (repeat all)

(Again peace will come upon us and on all the world.)

Leader 1: Our Rosh Hashanah service will soon conclude, but let us first symbolically observe a traditional holiday oneg. We will take a moment to appreciate the fruitful earth and those who labor to provide food for our table. And let us never forget those in our community and beyond whose days are defined by hunger.
Leader 2: We celebrate the fruit of the vine and the bounty of nature as we lift this cup and sip. For we are part of nature, which gives us birth and continues to sustain us. Please read with me:

Leader 2 & Congregation: *May there be such wine
To quench the thirst
Of all who are still parched.*

Leader 1: May the sharing of this challah strengthen our bonds with others who walk upon this earth. We are grateful to all who have helped bring bread to our table, and we vow to respond in turn to those in need. Let us say together:

Leader 1 & Congregation: *May there be such bread
To purge the emptiness
Of those who yet hunger.*

Song Leader: Let us sing of hope for the New Year.

All: **Bashana Ha-ba’a**

La la la, la la la
La la la, la la la
Ba-sha-na ba-sha-na, ha-ba’a
Od tir-eh, od tir-eh
ka-ma tov yi-h’ye
Ba-sha-na, ba-sha-na, ha-ba-a

Soon the day will arrive
When we will be together
And no longer will we live in fear.

And the children will smile
Without them wondering whether
On that day, dark new clouds will appear.

Wait and see, wait and see
What a world there can be
If we share, if we care, you and me.

Wait and see, wait and see
What a world there can be
If we share, if we care, you and me.
Some have dreamed, some have died
To make a bright tomorrow
And their vision remains in our hearts.

Now the torch must be passed
In hope and not in sorrow,
And a promise to make a new start.

La la la, la la la
La la la, la la la
Ba-sha-na ba-sha-na, ha-ba’a

Od tir-eh, od tir-eh
ka-ma tov yi-h’-ye
Ba-sha-na, ba-sha-na, ha-ba-a
La la la, la la la, la la la…

**Song Leader:** L’Sha-nah To-vah!

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**Join us as our High Holiday observances continue**

Yom Kippur/Kol Nidre – September 27 at 7:30 pm
Zoom Meditation – September 28 at 4:15 pm
Yom Kippur Memorial & Closing – September 28 at 5:00 pm

Register at www.HumanisticJews.org
Acknowledgments

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