

An Introduction to

PREPARING A SPIRITUAL BUSINESS PLAN

(short version 1)

The most important thing to know about this plan is that it is full of tools and insights that need G-d's blessing.

It's not about "getting it right", it's about asking for G-d to bless our efforts however big or small, each person as much as they can do.

May G-d inscribe us all in the book of life for a year of sweetness, whatever may come our way.

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Page 1

This handout accompanies a series of lectures and may be misunderstood without them.

It is divided into 4 parts:

Part 1: An overview of the 10 days of Awe

Part 2: creating your spiritual business plan

Part 3: The special spiritual work of Rosh Hashana

Part 4: The special spiritual work of the Intermediate days

Appendix: What is your mission?

Part 1: An overview of the 10 days of Awe

1.1) **ROSH HASHANA**- The first day in the Jewish month of Tishrei is the date on which the first man and woman were created. Since Rosh Hashana is the birthday of humanity, wired into the spiritual potential of this day for all time is the opportunity for rebirth. This holiday holds the ability to bring about a new future for every individual and all of humanity.

The 10 days from Rosh Hashana to Yom Kipur form the seed from which our year and all its resources sprout forth. What resources and challenges we personally will be presented with this year in everything from health to relationships, clarity, money, professional development accomplishments etc. all stem from this seed.

However, a deeper look would reveal that our focus, especially on Rosh Hashana is not on our desire to have a year full of blessings and positive decrees. In fact, the focus is not on us at all. All the resources that will or will not be bestowed upon us are only a natural outgrowth from the spiritual work of the day. What is its focus? What is the special work? And how do we write a Spiritual Business Plan for it?

Jewish wisdom teaches us what is the spiritual potential of these days and how to best prepare for them.

1. **Rosh Hashanah** – The seed is created largely based on our present choices during these 48 hours and our future vision and goals in the context of aligning ourselves with G-d's vision for the world.
2. The 7 **Intermediate Days** – The seed is affected by our commitment to live this vision as reflected in our present choices.
3. **Yom Kippur** – The seed is fully formed based on our effort to correct our mistakes and remove the obstacles from the past that are in the way of our vision. The last prayer service, Neila, finalizes this process. The seed is complete.

The potential for this year is completely new! This year can be like no other year for each of us and for humanity. But that depends on our choices during these 10 days. We have the opportunity to create a new or renewed vision and a new experience of living that will impact much more than just us.

Page 2

1.2) On **Rosh Hashana** our personal book is opened and our judgment takes place based on our intention and goals for the **future** in the context of G-d's vision for each of us, for the Jewish people and for humanity (see top of the spiritual business plan in part 2 below).

Who am I yearning to be and why do I want it? To what degree am I committed to contributing to others this year? Who's world am I committed to live in this year? A world in which my lower self voice or other voices of negativity set my limits and my experience of life? Or a world in which *G-d is the king and His vision determines my reality and what is and isn't possible?*

Based on the real answers to these kind of questions a judgment is written.

1.3) For the totally righteous and totally evil, the judgment is not only written but also sealed on Rosh Hashanah. For those of us in between, the books stay open for **seven intermediate days** and during those days we are evaluated to see if our behavior at the **present** is consistent with our deepest goals and vision. Are we real about making an effort to reach these goals? "Be the change you want in your life and in the world." We want to do what we know is right even if during the rest of the year it's hard to live up to that standard. We want to take a few small but real steps towards fulfilling our #1 priority (see plan in part 2). Our choices during the intermediate days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur affect our judgment.

1.4) Finally on **Yom Kippur**, the heavenly court pulls out our **past** record. How committed to G-d's vision and my true goals was I in the past, and did I remove the obstacles that came in my way? Amazingly, though, our past performance is evaluated according to how we relate to it now retroactively. Even a terrible mistake or a huge obstacle can be edited out of our record by doing the four steps of Teshuvah now. This gives us the ability to demonstrate to the heavenly court and internalize for ourselves that our commitment to our vision is so strong that we are determined to remove every obstacle in the way and **we powerfully intend to live this vision this year.**

When the **Neilah** prayer ends at the conclusion of Yom Kippur our judgment is sealed. The heavenly court decrees the resources and potential for the year for every individual and for the Jewish people as a whole. A "deposit" is made, so to speak, in our spiritual bank account. During the rest of the year we still need to make the right choices to actualize this potential and "withdraw" these resources from our "account".

Part 2: creating your spiritual business plan

2.1) Questions to consider when Writing your spiritual business plan (also referred to as: The Daily verbal introspection sheet- see extra sheet below)

I) My life's mission:

1. Please empower me to fulfill my mission **as a unique Jewish soul** (Ye'ud). **The divine values** I most want to embody and share with others are:(see separate pages on Ye'ud- your higher self mission)
2. Please help me identify and **transcend the obstacles** that keep coming up in my journey (Tikun). They most commonly manifest themselves like this: What I want to remind myself in order to transcend them?(see separate pages on Tikun- your lower self mission)

II) My next step:

1. Please help me identify my **#1 priority in life** right now. I believe it is:*What is it that if I get to it but nothing else for now, will be overall best for my life? What is it that G-d wants me to focus on right now? What will move me in the direction of fulfilling my mission?*
2. Please help me identify **my next step(s) towards my priority**. I believe it is:
3. Please help me dedicate myself (without a vow) to the **mitzvah** of: My **intention** for it is:(see page below for suggestions)

III) My top goals and commitments:

1. In my personal sphere:
 - a. Personal accounting (overview of my responsibilities and tasks ie. time management, Living arrangement, errands etc)
 - b. Physically (health, exercise, nutrition etc)
 - c. Financially (Giving charity and returning money owed can affect one's judgement)
 - d. Professionally
 - e. Emotionally (who is responsible for my wellbeing? How do I manage negativity? What are my common states of being?)
 - f. Spiritually (vision, mentor, relationship with G-d, expanding and deepening my understanding, integrity) *What kind of Jew do I want to be? What is the goal of a Jew? Of a Jewish woman? What do I need to learn or do to fulfill it more?*
 - g. Teshuva on this sphere (see pages on the 4 steps)

2. **In my relationships:**
 - a. What is my vision of who I want to be in my relationships (regardless of what I'm used to). What kind of daughter, sister, wife, mother, roommate, friend, co-worker, employer, employee, neighbor etc Do I want to be? How do I want to be remembered?
 - b. Is there anything I need to rectify or restore?
 - c. Is there any relationship habit that I want to work on removing or instilling in myself?
 - d. What do I need to do Teshuva on in this sphere? (go through the 4 steps of teshuva- rectifying)
3. **In my responsibility for the Jewish people and humanity.**
 - a. Where would I most want to make a difference? How much time per week am I willing to dedicate?
 - b. What do I need to do Teshuva on in this sphere? (go through the 4 steps of teshuva- rectifying)
4. In addition, **I undertake to remember the following.** Please bless my efforts:

2.2) Mitzva ideas (preferably daily)

- I) Please open my heart to love..
 1. Taking responsibility for my power of speech- learn 5 min/day in order to internalize (books- a lesson a day, guard your tongue)
 2. Taking responsibility for my judgments- learn 5 min/ day about judging favorably
 3. Taking responsibility for another Jew's emotional wellbeing- lifting someone's spirits, saying a kind word once every day.
 4. Taking responsibility for another Jew's spiritual wellbeing- sharing the gift of a connection to eternal wisdom, to an eternal people and to the source of all with another person (once a day/1 hour per week).
 5. Taking responsibility for another Jew's physical wellbeing- small daily acts of kindness, learning, volunteering, fundraising, educating, Israel advocacy (once a day/1 hour per week)
- II) Please open my soul to understand..
 1. Learning (preferably daily even if it's only 5 min): Who is G-d? who are the Jewish people? What is Torah? What is the purpose of creation?, The 6 constant mitzvot, G-d and suffering, G-d and prayer, To be a Jewish woman, Jewish wisdom on dating and marriage, Jewish wisdom on parenting, Jewish wisdom on fulfilling my potential, unlock the spiritual potential in the Jewish calendar, understand the Jewish life cycle etc, etc, etc...
 2. Prayer: deepen my relationship with G-d through daily prayer and learning about prayer, Taking on a specific daily prayer like- the Shema , Mode Ani in the morning, blessing after the bathroom, blessing on a drink, on other foods, saying amen to blessings, handwashing blessing, saying tehilim (psalms)
 3. Dedicating my way of dressing for the physical protection of the body of the Jewish people.

Part 3: The special spiritual work of Rosh Hashana

3.1) These 48 hours form the spiritual DNA of our potential for the year. If you have an apple seed, you won't get a banana from it. How you conduct yourself during these hours profoundly impacts your year. We are encouraged to try to the best of our ability to be the most noble we can be.

3.2) Shofar- the essence of the day:

The **shape** of the shofar starts narrow and becomes much wider. Before blowing it we recite:” From the straits I called upon G-d, G-d responded by giving me expansiveness” (Psalms 118:5) and express our desire to partner with G-d and go beyond our constrictions to a place of expansiveness beyond any limitations. The **sound** of the shofar expresses the yearning of our pure soul. It is such a pure call that is beyond words. We ask that this year we'll be able to express the purity of our spirit without anything in the way.

The moments of shofar blowing are amongst *the most important* in the Rosh Hahsana service. They announce the dawn of a new era. *It is during these moments that our judgment actually takes place and our seed for the year is created.*

Following are some suggestions of **what to focus on** (without speaking) **when hearing the actual shofar Blow.** (You don't have to be sure there is a G-d to focus on these)

1. **G-D, You have an incredible vision for all of humanity and for me. I want my life to be aligned with Your vision.**
2. **I want to recognize the blessings in my life and see the totality of the life You gave me, the pain and the joy, as an expression of Your love.**
3. **I want to transcend my greatest obstacles to fulfill Your vision for me.**
4. **I want to be a walking expression of the divine values You created me to bring to the world in order to fulfill Your vision.**
5. **I want all my resources from the coming year to be dedicated to fulfill Your vision for me.**
6. **G-D, I want to put You in the center of my life. Always.**
7. **Hashem (G-D), I want the world to discover the truth and beauty of living according to Your vision.**
8. **I want to make You King by living myself more according to Your plan (Definition of reality and instructions for living).**
9. **I resolve that I want to be connected to You, Hashem (G-D), as the source of life. And not rely on ANYTHING or ANYONE else.**
10. **I resolve that this moment is the dawn of a new era in which You are at the center of my life.**

3.3) Remembrance is one of the three themes of the Rosh Hashanah prayers. On Rosh Hashana I remind myself that G-d remembers me and is aware of me in the most profound way. He cares about me, and my choices matter to Him.

I need to realize that G-d believes in my potential to reach greatness far beyond what I imagine. He created the entire universe just so that through making noble free will choices **I** will become G-dly and make my unique contribution to the world. The world will not be complete without my contribution.

So In my prayer I can express my desire to be part of G-d's memory this year in a way that matters for His overall plan.

3.4) Kingship is another one of the three themes of the Rosh Hashanah prayers. One way to understand it is by recognizing the blessings and resources in my life, which I did not deserve but was given anyway (it's very powerful to make a list of at least 50 items- you can use the suggestions below).

On Rosh Hashana, I can express my desire to internalize that G-d is the source of all blessings, He loves me, and He put me here for an extraordinary reason.

Seeing the blessings in my life:

1. **The gift of Health**- What would you do if someone offered 500 million dollars in exchange for your eyes? Hands? One hand? Legs? Top left heart valve? The ability to think/concentrate? Do you realize what precious, priceless gifts you carry with you every day? What did *you* do to get them? Where did they come from?
2. **The blessings of the modern world**- Modern medicine, immunization, human rights, ie slave labor in India right now, ie 2 lb premature baby can survive today
3. **The gift of relative political calm**- no war, no anti-Semitism, no violent caos, G-d forbid
4. **The gift of environmental calm**- no catastrophic natural disasters, (famine, floods, earthquake, G-d forbid)
5. **The blessings of technology**- Any Middle Ages King would gladly trade his entire mansion for any of our shoe box apartments in New York. Why? We have hot and cold running water and a special box to cool food, a box to freeze food, a box to heat food within seconds, a box to heat the room with button instantly, box to cool the room; instrument to see better if near sighted/far sighted; instrument to talk to people who aren't here and hear their voice; send instant messages to someone across the world who's sleeping right now; a cell phone – wherever we are people can reach us and we can reach others.
6. **The small blessings in life** ie a shady tree on a hot day.
7. **The blessing of the people in our life**- We were taken care of by people who cared for us even if they didn't do a perfect job and even if we didn't have these relationships for as long as we would have liked rather than growing up in an orphanage, being all alone in world (ie Mirale had a letter from her mom), we were blessed to meet special friends and

- mentors, and develop other relationships we gained from even if they were not perfect.
8. **The gift of our Strengths** – the positive qualities and abilities G-d just gave us (ie voice and piano teacher at chorev).
 9. **The gift of transcending our weaknesses**
 10. **The blessing of making good decisions and great choices**
 11. **The blessing of wisdom-** I was blessed to have learned many important lessons that effected my decisions, my relationships and my life.
 12. **The gift of clarity** at different times in our life
 13. **The gift of accomplishing big and small projects successfully**
 14. **The gift of breakthroughs** in some area in our life
 15. **Life's challenges- The gift of blessings in disguise.** When I realize – I'm so blessed. I have much more than I deserve, G-d loves me and has been as gentle as possible with me in teaching me what I needed to learn, therefore I can judge Him favorably and see even negativity in the context of a loving relationship.
G-d loves us so much that he won't let us miss out on living the most meaningful life and maximizing our potential, even if it means going through challenges to get there.
 16. **The blessing of seeing the Hand of G-d in my life**
I was blessed with so much! I have much more than anything I could ever ask for (i.e., what good is it to meet one's soul mate without the health to be able to function or the wisdom to develop the relationship productively?) How much of what I accomplished myself could I really have done without the resources of having some measure of health, time, money, the ability to think, speak, and act? How much of these blessings did **I bring about?** Did I earn? Did I deserve? Where did they come from? Who has the power to bestow them? Why would I get them if I am not deserving? Someone must love me...just because I am.

Part 4: The special spiritual work of the intermediate days

Before and during Yom Kippur: Removing Past Obstacles

4.1 Tzedaka (Charity)- I want to *remove the obstacles to having greater generosity towards others* and I will start by actually giving to a Jewish charity before Yom Kipur begins (“Charity shall save one from death”). Please open me to be more generous with the people in my life.

4.2 Tefila (prayer)- I want to *remove the obstacles to a greater connection to Hashem* by making a sincere effort to be real in my prayer. I can't control how I feel when I pray, but I can remind myself that I am standing before the Creator of the universe who is all powerful, all knowing and all loving and in this context make a sincere prayer for what I truly need. (see material from prayer series)

4.3 Teshuva (Repentance)- I want to take advantage of the incredible blessing of being able to repair mistakes and *remove the obstacles that are holding me back from being the most beautiful and noble person I can be.* (see explanations to “Ashamnu” and “Al chet” confessions – aish.com)

Daily verbal introspection sheet

I) My life's mission:

1. Please empower me to fulfill my mission **as a unique Jewish soul** (Ye'ud). **The divine values** I most want to embody and share with others are:

2. Please help me **transcend the obstacles** that keep coming up in my journey (Tikun). They most commonly manifest themselves like this:

II) My next step:

4. Please help me identify my **#1 priority in life right now**. I believe it is:

5. Please help me identify **my next step**. I believe it is:

6. Please help me dedicate myself (without a vow) to the **mitzvah** of:

My **intention** for it is:

III) My top goals and commitments:

In my **personal** sphere:

- a. Personal accounting
- b. Physically
- c. Financially
- d. Professionally
- e. Emotionally
- f. Spiritually
- g. Teshuva on this sphere (see pages on the 4 steps)

In my **relationships**:

- e. What is my vision of who I want to be in my relationships
- f. Is there anything I need to rectify or restore?
- g. Is there any relationship habit that I want to work on?
- h. What do I need to do Teshuva on in this sphere?

In my responsibility for the **Jewish people and humanity**:

- a. Where would I most want to make a difference? How much time per week am I willing to dedicate?
- b. What do I need to do Teshuva on in this sphere?

In addition, **I undertake to remember the following**. Please bless my efforts:

Appendix: What is your mission?

Understanding and Aligning yourself with your true essence as a Jew and as a unique individual according to G-d's Vision.

Part 1: higher self: shining your unique light into the world

Part 2: lower self: transcending your unique negativity

Jewish wisdom (From The way of G-d by Rabbi Luzzato) teaches that G-d does not need anything from us. Rather, He created the world to give us the ultimate pleasure. What is it? The pleasure of becoming like G-d and experiencing ultimate closeness with Him. How do we become “like” G-d? No one “made” G-d. He is the cause of His own perfection. We become like G-d by becoming the cause of our own perfection. How do we do that? The closest way to emulate Him, is to use our free will to refine and perfect ourselves. In order to do that, we can't be born perfect. Rather, we must be born with imperfections. These imperfections must be significant so that through refining and fixing them we will transform into G-d-like people and be able to contain the greatest pleasures imaginable.

Each soul has unique imperfections and a unique lifelong job of refining and fixing them (tikun). Especially for the first 12-13 years (until bat/bar mitzvah) of one's life, G-d custom designs each person's imperfections by choosing their genetic makeup and the way it will interact with their environment – parents, relatives, friends, school, traumatic events etc.

Our Timeless Torah wisdom gives us guidance in how to perfect our soul as a Jew and as a unique individual so that we can fulfill our potential and bring the world closer to its ultimate destination.

Torah wisdom guides us in aligning ourselves with G-d's vision of what is good and bad. Good- is that which will help me perfect my soul, perfect the world and bring me closer to G-d (from Dr. Lisa Aiken's book “Why me G-d?”). And conversely, the definition of Bad is that which will prevent me from perfecting my soul, and that which will damage my soul, damage the world and distance me from G-d. The definition of “good” life circumstances and a “good” life depends on our definition of “good” and “bad”.

As we internalize this perspective, we have the freedom to choose to use any circumstance, even a very painful one, to help us perfect ourselves, thereby making this circumstance “good”. Living in Hashem's world gives us the power to choose to live a “good” life and not depend on external circumstances.

Part 1: What is your higher self's mission: Ye'ud

What's your unique designated purpose in life? which of Hashem's divine attributes are you meant to internalize, shine and share with the world?

Questions to ask yourself:

1. When in your happiest moments- What are you doing? How do you feel?
What are you present to?
2. What energizes you?
3. What is your easiest access to a high state?
4. When have you felt most alive? Uplifted? Inspired? Clear? Confident?
Empowered? Free? Safe?
5. What fills you with most enthusiasm when you talk about it?
6. What cause/ value are you most passionate about?
7. When do you feel most yourself?
8. What are you like when you shine your brightest?
9. What are your greatest strengths? (see attached list)
10. What's your "paradise" experience of life (preferably not physical)?
11. Looking back at the end of your life what would you most want you and your life to have been about?
12. Looking around at the people and circumstances closest to you- what is the greatest "paradise" contribution you can make?
13. Looking at the Jewish people and greater humanity, what is needed today that moves you most?
14. If you had unlimited resources (time, money, energy, power etc) what would be the greatest contribution you would want to make to the world?
15. What do you think G-d wants you to bring to the world?

**What is your higher self-
What are you meant to bring to the world?**
(a few suggestions of possible realms)

Acceptance	Sanctity
Awe	Self expression
Beauty/ the aesthetic	Simplicity
Celebration	Spirituality
Creativity	Sweetness
Comfort in Pain	Trust in G-d
Commitment	Tolerance
Connection	Truth
Contribution	Transformation
Courage	Wisdom
Curiosity	Patience
dedication	Passion
Elevation	Modesty
Endurance	Music
Faith	Motherhood
Generosity	Nurturing potential for greatness
Grace	Love
Gratitude	Loyalty
Growth	Leadership
Harmony	Loving kindness
Honesty	Play
Humility	Prayer
Imagination	Peace
Inspiration	Listening
Initiative	knowledge
Integrity	salvation
Joy	empowerment
justice	surrender
discipline	vision
understanding	unity
perfection in performance	balance
oneness	purity
goodness	order
freedom	infinity
greatness	nobility
power	tranquility
timelessness	immortality

What are your greatest strengths?

(LIST OF PERSONALITY TRAITS Taken from Gateway to Happiness by Rabbi Z. Pliskin)

Keep in mind that all traits depend on their context. Positive traits can be negative if misapplied. Similarly, traits which are usually negative, are at times appropriate.

Able/ Accepting/ Accessible/ Accomplished/ Accurate/ Adaptable/ Adept/ Adroit/ Affable/ Agile/ Agreeable/ Altruistic/ Ambitious/ Amicable/ Appreciative/ Articulate/ Assertive/ Astute/ Attentive/ Aware

Beloved/ Benefactor/ Benevolent/ Blissful/ Brave/ Bright/ Brilliant/ Buoyant
Calm/ Candid/ Capable/ Careful/ Caring/ Cautious/ Charitable/ Cheerful/ Clear/ Colorful/ Compassionate/ Composed/ Confident/ Conscientious/ Considerate/ Consistent/ Content/ Cooperative/ Courageous/ Creative

Daring/ Dauntless/ Decisive/ Deep/ Deliberative/ Dependable/ devoted/ Devout/ Dexterous/ Dignified/ Diligent/ Direct/ Discreet
Easygoing/ Earnest/ Educated/ Effective/ Efficient/ Eloquent/ Energetic/ Enthusiastic/ Erudite/ Ethical/ exact/ Expressive

Faithful/ Farsighted/ Flexible/ Fluent/ Forgiving/ Frank/ Friendly/ Frugal
Generous/ Gentle/ Genuine/ Gifted/ Giving/ Good-natured/ Graceful/ Grateful
Handy/ Happy/ Hardworking/ Healthy/ Helpful/ Honest/ Honorable/ Hopeful/ Hospitable/ Humane/ Humble
Idealistic/ Imaginative/ Imperturbable/ Indefatigable/ Industrious/ Intellectual/ Intelligent/ Intrepid/
Influences others/ Interesting/ Introspective
Jolly/ Joyful/Kind/ Kindhearted/ Knowledgeable
Leadership personality/ Learned/ Lenient/ Level-headed/ Likeable/ Lively/ Lofty/ Logical/ Loving/ Loyal
Magnanimous/ Mature/ Merciful/ Methodical/ Meticulous/ Mild/ Modest/ Moral Nature/ Noble/ Novel
Obedient/ Objective/ Open/ Optimistic/ Orderly/ Organized/ Original/ Outgoing/ Outspoken

Painstaking/ Patient/ Peace of mind/ Peaceful/ Perspective/ Persevering/ Persuasive/ Poised/ Polished/ Polite/ Popular/ Potential/ Practical/ Precise/ Productive/ Prompt/ Prudent/ Punctual
Quiet/ Quieting
Rapport with people/ Rational/ Realistic/ Reasonable/ Refined/ Relaxed/ Reliable/ Resourceful/ Respectful/ Responsible/ Righteous
Saintly/ Scholarly/ Scrupulous/ Selfless/ Self-control/ Self-esteem/ Self-respect/ Self-sacrificing/ Sense of humor/ Sensible/ Sensitive/ Serene/ serious/ Sharp/ Sincere/ Skillful/ Smart/ Sociable/ Speedy/ Spirited/ Spiritual/ Stable/ Steadfast/ Steady/ Straightforward/ Studious/ Sweet/ Swift/ Sympathetic/ Systematic
Tactful/ Thorough/ Thoughtful/ Tolerant/ Truthful/ Understanding/ Warm/ Zestful

Part 2: What is your lower self's mission:Tikun
Discovering & transcending your lower self-
Your unique negativity-

what is your unique voice of negativity (tikun)?

(the reaction of the little you from a narrow perspective)

There is something wrong with me

How could I be so stupid

I'm such a loser

It's never gonna happen, I'll never get what I need

I'm not enough, I'm a failure/Nothing/Not good enough/ I'm not so loveable/ I'm not worth it/ they won't love me, they don't want me

I'm troubled/bad/ in trouble

I can't be trusted/ I'm always messing things up

I have no say/ I don't matter

I can't do it/ I'm confused/ I don't get it

I don't care/ why bother/ it's not going to make a difference anyway

It's all my fault

I'm all alone

There is something wrong with you

You don't really love me, You don't care about me

How dare you

Don't tell me what to do/ don't bother me

You'll do it my way!

I'll show her

They won't find out

It's his/her fault!

I can, but I won't!

There is something wrong with life

I'm a victim, these things always happen to me,

It's not fair,It's not my fault

