

them. Protestants in the 17th century began to cut back on all that genuflecting; they downplayed eating the bread and wine in worship (it didn't have to happen every week, and anyway it was only a symbol). As Jews westernized, they aped their neighbors by minimizing physical aspects of religion. Head covering? Not really necessary. Prayer shawl? Okay, but let's make it a tasteful little scarf, not one of those big cloak things. Leather boxes and straps? Surely you jest. The rabbi at our children's preschool explained that in the synagogue he attended as a child, there was only one *lulav* on Sukkot. It was displayed on a table in the front of the sanctuary; you could view it, but no one ever touched it. (Years later, shortly after his ordination, he consulted *The Jewish Catalogue* to learn how to shake a *lulav*.)

One of the most important developments for Judaism in the last three decades has been the reversal of this trend. Large *tallitot*, often custom-woven, have become common. *Teffilin*, *sukkot*, and even *tohorat hamishpacha* (a whole-body ritual) are now observed. Many Jews are no longer embarrassed by ritual. The rabbi who told the story about his childhood synagogue did so to suggest that his audience might want to embrace the *lulav* ritual (and also, I suspect, to convey the idea that there's nothing wrong with an adult looking at a basic reference book to learn how). We've begun to understand that the body can be a vehicle for holiness and that words are only part of communicating with God. Jews in North America have begun to reclaim ritual — which is to say, to reclaim the body, which is to say, to reclaim Judaism itself. 🕯

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### “Vi'avitah Tehillah” “You Desire Praise”

*“Your awe is upon the angels, who are mighty and exalted, who dwell in beautiful heights. And You desire praise from those stained with sin, passing shadows who dwell below — and that is Your praise.”*

The human is a combination of godly spirit and dirt (Genesis 2:7); the highest and the lowest. In infinite irony, what God-the-Highest truly desires is the praise of the lowest — humans; and not from our Divine image identity but from our sinful, fleeting, creaturely selves. Precisely on Yom Kippur, the day on which we are most prone to feeling like sullied failures, do we have the most potential, precisely from our lowness, to meaningfully praise the Highest. —Hyim Shafner

## Yom ha-Kippurim and Tisha b'Av: The Commonality of Opposites

SHAUL MAGID

Many Jews equate Yom Kippur with Tisha b'Av. The reasons are obvious enough. These are the only two days of the year when we fast from sunset to the following night (25 hours) and abide by the five Torah-derived types of affliction specific to Yom ha-Kippurim. Yet the days seem to represent two opposite states of mind. Atonement, the centerpiece of Yom ha-Kippurim is an act of grace (*chesed*) that should be experienced as a state of enjoyment or *oneg*; Tisha b'Av is a day focused on exile, suffering, and mourning.

The similarities ostensibly have textual as well as ritualistic support. In his *Mishneh Torah*, “Laws of Mourning” 5:7, Maimonides writes, “Tisha b'Av night is like the day [regarding fast-

ing and the five afflictions]. One can eat when it is still day. Dusk [between sunset and darkness] one must refrain from eating *like Yom ha-Kippurim*. We do not eat meat or drink wine in the meal preceding the fast [of Tisha b'Av].” Curiously, while the similarity to Yom ha-Kippurim is clear, Maimonides undermines the similarity when he describes the meal that precedes the two fasts. In the meal before Yom ha-Kippurim we specifically eat meat and drink wine as this is a festive meal and not a meal of mourning like Tisha b'Av. The similarity between Yom ha-Kippurim and Tisha b'Av exemplified in the fast, suggests that there is a connection between these days through their opposition.

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