

# A Call to Prayer & Action

“...if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

2 Chron 7:14

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## Dear Bridges for Peace worldwide staff, intercessors and friends:

This week I challenged our Israel team to a ten day fast starting Thursday, September 21 and finishing September 30. I would now like to ask you to join us in this prayer time. At the end of this memo, you will find a list of critically important prayer points for the challenging days in which we are living. Please become part of our global voice as we cry out to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

These ten days are a special time for the Jewish people. September 21 is *Rosh HaShanah* (Feast of Trumpets) and September 30 is *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement). In between are the Ten Days of Awe. Imagine, these are days when God Almighty asked His people to meet with Him (see Lev. 23).

### *Rosh HaShanah* (also called the Jewish New Year)

*Rosh HaShanah* is observed on the first and second day of *Tishrei*, the seventh month of the Hebrew year. Why is it called the Jewish New Year? In the *Mishnah* (first written recording of Jewish tradition) we read, “The first of *Tishrei* is the beginning of the year as regards [the calculation of] years, of the *shmitah* cycle (seventh year of allowing the earth to rest), the *yovel* (Jubilee) cycle, for planting [trees], and for produce” (*Rosh HaShanah* 1:1).

Arthur Waskow writes, “This is then the new year for learning how a human being can turn toward God. Perhaps it is the head of the year because the head is raised toward heaven, away from the earth—while *Pesach* (Passover) celebrates the more earthly liberation, the freedom of our bodies [from slavery in Egypt].”

The first of *Tishrei* is also the day that Ezra read the book of the Law of Moses to the people at the Water Gate. “Then Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, ‘**This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep.**’ For all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the Law. Then he said to them, ‘Go and eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; **for this day is holy to our LORD. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength**’” (Neh. 8:9–11 NASB).

From *Rosh HaShanah* through *Yom Kippur*, the liturgy is expanded to include additional prayers. One of them, the *Uv’chen* (and therefore), has a beautiful threefold emphasis. As described by Arthur Waskow, “universally human, communally Jewish, and individually personal.” Thanks to Waskow we share the following translation:

“And therefore, Lord our God, cause all that You created to remember fully all that You have done; cause all Your creatures to revere Your doings and to tremble in Your presence; cause them all to act as one to do Your will wholeheartedly. For we know, Lord our God, that the strength of Your hand, the power of Your right arm and the awesomeness of Your Name rule over all creation.

“And therefore, Lord, give honor to Your people, praise to those who revere You, hope to those who seek You, confidence to those who await You, joy to Your land and gladness to Your city, triumph to the horn of David Your servant and light to the lamp of Messiah, child of Jesse—speedily and in our own day.

“And therefore, the righteous will see and be glad, the upright rejoice, and the faithfully loving celebrate in song while evil is silenced and all wickedness vanishes like smoke—for You will erase the tyranny of arrogance from the earth.”

Surely, as Christian believers in the God of Israel, we can join with the Jewish people in praying this prayer. Waskow explains, “It was written by Rabbi Yochanan ben Nuri during the worst Roman repression of the Jewish people and of *Torah* [Gen.-Deut.]. The tyranny of arrogance whose removal from the earth they prophesy was indeed the Roman Empire. But in a broader sense, the prayer rejects the false unity that could be imposed upon the human race by any tyranny, and celebrates instead the unity of a free humankind in which every people and each person is ready to follow only God as King.”

Today, as in the ancient Roman Empire, we live in a time when tyranny is once again raising its ugly specter across the face of our world. Together the cry of our heart is lifted to our God in

repentance (the theme of *Rosh HaShanah* and the Ten Days of Awe), forgiveness (the Day of Atonement) and hope for the coming of our Messiah (The Feast of Tabernacles).

## The Ten Days of Awe

As Christians we believe that we can and should come to God in repentance any day of the year. The Jewish people also believe repentance is a year-long reality. However, they also believe that these ten days are very important and that each year on the Day of Atonement God is making decisions about whose name will be written in the Book of Life for the coming year.

Eliyahu Kitov writes, “Out of His great love for His people, God seeks to be merciful and would prefer that men would repent rather than perish so that He may grant him good in the end. He therefore awaits and anticipates the repentance of those who transgress. In His abundant mercy He granted us special days when He is closest to us so that our penitence might be immediately accepted.”

In Isaiah we read, “Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near” (Isa. 55:6).

James wrote about approaching God in repentance, saying, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up” (James 4:8–10).

Special prayers, called *slichot* prayers, are prayed during the Days of Awe. A ceremony called *Tashlich* (Hebrew from the verb to throw) in which breadcrumbs are cast into a body of water symbolizes how God casts our sins into the deepest sea. “He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea” (Mic. 7:19).

## Yom Kippur

“Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire to the LORD” (Lev. 23:27).

This is the most holy day on the biblical calendar. In Israel a holy hush comes over the land. The vast majority of the Jewish population takes it very seriously. The synagogues are full, as even people who rarely attend will come on this day. Statistics show that about 85% of Israel’s population fasts on *Yom Kippur* which is astonishing when you consider about 50% of the population call themselves secular. Fasting on *Yom Kippur* is a total abstention from all food and liquids. The Bible says that souls should be afflicted—interestingly it seems that *Yom Kippur* in Israel is almost always a very hot day. In Israel’s semi-arid climate, everyone feels afflicted after 25 hours without anything to drink or eat. Children from the age of 12 (for girls) and 13 (for boys) are included in the fast. There is virtually no traffic on the streets; we don’t hear the sounds of radios or television. As with all Jewish holidays, *Yom Kippur* begins at sundown on one day and continues until sundown on the following day.

The word *kippur* (כַּפּוּר) means covering. From the same root we have the word “*kippa*,” the small round head covering worn by observant Jewish men. The Hebrew word for mercy seat is also derived from this root.

There are many beautiful elements to the *Yom Kippur* services. Some Jewish people sleep overnight in the synagogue or stand watch through the night so that the service doesn’t end for the entire day (and night). Some recite the prayer of Chassidic Rebbe Levi Yitzchak of Berditshev, “Lord of the world, I stand before You and before my neighbors—pardoning, forgiving, struggling to be open to all who have hurt and angered me. Be this hurt of body or soul, of honor or property, whether they were forced to hurt me or did so willingly, whether by accident or intent, whether by word or deed—I forgive them because we are all human. May no

one feel guilty on my account. I am ready to take upon myself the commandment, ‘love your neighbor as yourself.’” I immediately think of Jesus/Yeshua, who, when asked the greatest commandment, told us to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

On *Yom Kippur* Isaiah 58 is read: “Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh? Then your light shall break forth like the morning, your healing shall spring forth speedily, and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard” (vv. 6–8).

Again I am reminded of the words of Jesus/Yeshua when He spoke of the judgment of the nations (Matt. 25). He said that He would judge according to how the least of His brethren were treated. How we relate to one another is intricately linked to our relationship to the Father.

## Call to Prayer

So we invite you to join with the Bridges for Peace team in a fast. Please ask the Lord how you should fast. Some will do a Daniel Fast (eating only plant based foods), others will fast from entertainment, some will fast one meal a day, and some may fast from food for several days (some may even fast the entire ten days). Please consider prayerfully fasting with us and the Jewish people on *Yom Kippur* (September 30). Let’s consecrate these 10 Days of Awe to prayer.

### How to Pray

- Pray earnestly – “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16b).
- Pray constantly – I Thess. 5:16-18
- Pray with faith and action – James 2:14-26

### Prayer Requests

- Pray for God’s protection for Israel. Her enemies roar from Gaza, Lebanon, Syria and Iran.
- Pray that as Christians and Jews seek God during these ten days, He will bless us with His revelation of Himself and His plans.
- Pray for rain to relieve the drought conditions in Israel.

### Pray for Bridges for Peace

- Our finances have been affected by various disasters, and financial problems particularly in the United States and Canada. In fact we are nearly 15% below our budget for the year. We need a financial miracle to keep blessing the people of Israel at the same levels.
- Pray for Bridges for Peace USA. Our US office is in Florida and was affected by Hurricane Irma, now Hurricane Maria threatens the same areas. Pray for protection, restoration, and peace.
- Pray for Bridges for Peace Canada which has suffered financial difficulties because of the financial downturn in Alberta.

### Action

The Jewish people always brought a gift to the Temple at these significant times of year. We ask you to send an extra offering to help us continue feeding, welcoming and caring for the Jewish people in Israel.

May God bless you out of Zion,  
Rebecca J. Brimmer  
International President and CEO