

# 10 EMBODIED PRACTICES FOR CULTIVATING AWE DURING THE HIGH HOLIDAYS

וַיִּרְא וַיֹּאמֶר מֵהַנּוֹרָא הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה  
:אֵין זֶה כִּי אִם־בַּיִת אֱלֹהִים וְזֶה שַׁעַר הַשָּׁמַיִם:  
Vayira vayomar: "Mah nora hamakom hazeh —  
ein zeh ki im beit Elohim v'zeh shaar hashamayim."

*Shaken, he [Yaakov] said, "What awe is in this place! This is none other than the abode of God, and that is the gateway to heaven."  
Genesis 28:17*

It's a complicated experience, Awe. Inside it we may feel both big and small, connected both to the expansive infinite universe beyond, and to the still, small voice inside. In Hebrew, the root of *Nora*, the word for Awe, expresses both wonder and fear. Perhaps that's the nature of awe — a suspended moment in time straddling the thin edge between peril and possibility.

What is our own experience of awe? Is it an experience of wonder? Or of suspense? Or of fear? For many, it's a full-body experience — we might feel it in the quickening of our heartbeat, or a compulsion to hold our breath, paused at the top of a quick inhale; a tingling of the fingertips or standing up of the hairs at the back of our neck. Why do we describe some experiences as awesome, and others as awful? Is there a just-right amount of awe held in the delicate balance between some awe and full awe?

As we turn in our spiral of time into a new year and new *shmita* cycle, we stand at just such a moment in the world. What fear should we hold at all that might unfold? But also what wonder at the immense possibility of what could still be?

We couldn't hope to have full answers to those questions. But what we *can* offer are *some* ways to reach deeper into the experience of awe over the first ten days of this new year from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur, collectively known as the Days of Awe. As does our entry into this world, our guide begins with breath — and ends with an exhale, as does our ultimate exit. We invite you to try out the simple practices that follow: to explore and cultivate your own experience of awe, both to deepen our own ability to recognize its nuances, and come to better recognize how it may manifest in the world around us.

May we all be blessed with a sweet and good new year — full of just the right amounts of awe in all the right places.



# DAYS 1-2

## DAY 1: AWARENESS OF BREATH

In Genesis, we read that the divine brought life to the newly created human through *nishmat chayyim*, the breath of life. As we begin the year anew, we likewise start our inner cultivation of awe through breath — the experience of the inhale, the fullness of breath, and a pause within that fullness.

For today's practice, explore different deep breaths (quick, sustained, chest, belly) and holding the fullness for varied amounts of time. Which inhale and pause feels the most like Awe to you?

## DAY 2: AWARENESS OF BODY

For many, hearing the shofar during this time awakens us in body and spirit — compelling our attention and presence in space and time from the outside in. So too can we compel our presence from within the body. Today, explore the vibrations of the hum as akin to a shofar from within. Feel how the different "blasts" vibrate and resonate in the body, both alone and in the three set combinations. How does the hum travel in and through the space of the body?

The traditional shofar blows:

*tekiah* - single long blast

*shevarim* - three short sounds

*teruah* - nine short staccato

*tekiah gedolah* - one extended blast

All combined:

*tekiah-shevarim-teruah-tekiah*

*tekiah-shevarim-tekiah*

*tekiah-teruah-tekiah*



# DAYS 3-5

## DAY 3: AWARENESS OF OTHERS / CONNECTION TO OTHERS

As you move through the world today, tap into your baby-like sense of awe that other beings exist in this world as though you're encountering them for the very first time. Notice what is interesting, surprising, unique, and beautiful about others. How are you similar and different to those around you?

## DAY 4: AWARENESS OF SELF IN RELATION TO OTHERS

As you encounter other people throughout the day, notice what you sense in your body. With some people, you might immediately feel comfort and fullness in their presence. With others, a tightness or constriction, or others a sense of being drawn closer, or intellectual curiosity. Notice how these feelings manifest in actions you take — initiating conversation, looking more closely, crossing your arms. When do you follow and when do you push against your body's instincts?

## DAY 5: AWARENESS OF TIME AND MEMORY

As you move through your day, map out the people in your life and the key memories you associate with them. This includes both people you see everyday (family, friends, colleagues) and those you see for the first time (pedestrians, store employees, public service workers). Notice what aspects of time and place help you to create the memory of these experiences — for example, the smells around you, the time of day and quality of the light around you, the visual and aural sensations — as well as the interactions themselves.

You might also continue into a further imaginary space and expand to include those you've never seen but can envision — those who grew your food, built your phone, and packaged your clothes. See if you can go further and travel through time, to the people who lived in your area before you, those who first tended to the land you live on, your ancestors who traveled and had maps and memories of their own. Notice whether you primarily imagine through sight, or sound, or smell. How might you bring all of your senses into this sense of imagination through time and space?



## DAYS 6-7

### DAY 6: ATTUNEMENT TO THE SELF

A common Rosh Hashanah tradition is to embody a sweet new year through eating sweet foods, whether that be baked desserts, candies, fruit, or delicious drinks. As you do this, try to feel and sense the digestive process happening inside of you. Where does the food come from and how does it travel through you? Can you slow down your chewing and feel the food break down in your mouth? What is the texture and consistency of the food? How well are you able to ingest, digest, and process different types of foods?

This may be a moment to show appreciation for all that your body does to absorb nutrients, break down food, and excrete toxins. Perhaps you have or know someone with an allergy, colostomy bag, or insulin pump — how do those affect your view of your body and the different supports and technologies that enable us to take in and process the nutrients we need for our bodies, minds, and spirits?

### DAY 7: ATTUNEMENT TO THE PASSAGE OF TIME

On this day, bring your attention to rhythm and flow in the passing of time. What rhythms do you notice throughout your day? What are rhythms of nature, or of human creation? Which are intentional and which simply happen? What rhythms do you feel in and through your own body?

If you're listening to the shofar blasts this year, bring your attention to how your body feels during each of the different calls — the tempo and rhythm, the quality, the length. Where do you feel resonance in your body? How does your body react to each shofar blow?

In all these rhythms, notice how they might affect your experience of time. Notice when you feel time pass slowly or quickly, what syncs or doesn't sync well, and where your body finds comfort or pleasure.



# DAYS 8-10

## DAY 8: REPAIR OF THE PAST AND PRESENT

Find a place free of external distraction in which you have time and space to be present in your body. Return to a moment in the past where you experienced a sense of teshuva — often translated as repentance, or a return to your core self. Continue to remember all of the aspects of that teshuva experience and notice:

*What did teshuva feel like in your body?*

Perhaps it affected your breath, muscle tension, heart rate, or body temperature. Where do you sense that impact in your body? Allow yourself abundant time, as possible, to dwell in this remembered sensation.

Then, spend some time reflecting on where in your life today you may need to give or receive teshuva. Envision moving through that process and again notice where you feel sensation in the body — perhaps similar, perhaps different from your prior memory of teshuva. Throughout your day, week, year, keep holding these sensations and use them as guides for a continued journey of teshuva.

## DAY 9: RELEASE OF THE PAST AND PRESENT

On day one, we found Awe through the pause within the full inhale. Tashlich — the symbolic act of casting off sins into bodies of water — can be experienced through the complete exhale of breath from our own physical body (which is itself mostly a body of water) into the air. Practice inhaling deeply, pausing, fully exhaling, and pausing in the release of the exhale. Play with this stillness at the bottom of the breath before finding your next inhale. As you continue, notice how these cycles of suspension and release affect your mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual states. Where does teshuva fit in your breath cycle?

## DAY 10: FULL PRESENCE IN THE BODY

On Yom Kippur, the boundaries between this world and the next thin. We realize that not everyone will live until next year and remember the value of connection and community. Whether you choose to fast or refrain from fasting, bring awareness to all the sensations of the day in your body, and just notice your experience. Over the course of this final Day of Awe, continue returning to a sense of presence in this earthly body of flesh and bone.



# GRATITUDE

This guide was written and designed by the team at Mitsui Collective  
— particularly Ariana Starkman and Yoshi Silverstein.

We are ourselves full of awe (in the good way) at all the love and  
support we continue to feel in and through our community.

With gratitude, we thank our teachers, elders, mentors, beloved family  
and friends, and all the members of our communities near and far  
whose work and support have helped to sustain us and enabled us to  
reach this point.

May we all begin this new *shmita* cycle with strength, love, and  
resilience — and feel anew the call to continue our work of building a  
better world for all.

