

FROM ROSH HASHANA TO YOM KIPPUR

SUGGESTED PROGRAMS:

1. "READ BY THE RIVER": A Literacy Fair
(Tufts University – Hillel's Program Exchange)
2. Fast Action Campaign for Yom Kippur: Donate meal points from your dining services on campus during the fast to MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger. (www.tzedekhillel.org)
3. Yom Kippur Nature/Environmental Exploration
(Brown University – Hillel's Program Exchange)
4. People of the Book - A Year of Literacy Activism → CASE It!



When the ram's horn sounds its notes on Rosh Hashanah, it is as if we are being awakened from our slumber of the past year. The ten days between the Jewish New Year and Yom Kippur are known as Yamim Nora'im, the Days of Awe, or the Days of Repentance. This period is built into the Jewish calendar to give us time to realize our shortcomings, reconcile personal relationships that may have gone wrong, and repent. On the tenth of Tishri (the first month in the Jewish calendar) this period of introspection culminates in Yom Kippur, known as the Day of Atonement. When the shofar blows one last time during Ne'ilah, Yom Kippur's concluding service, we are again awakened to the fact that we can make important transformations in our lives, not only during the Yamim Nora'im, but also throughout the coming year.

Wake Up!

Taking place around the beginning of the school year, the Yamim Nora'im provide an opportunity to kick off your Hillel's involvement in a Wake-Up Campaign. This could be a year-long awareness campaign for an issue that is important in your community.

- Pick an issue.
- Pick a local organization with which you will partner.
- Raise awareness of the issue by educating students through speakers, seminars, panels, activities, etc.
- Plan monthly events in conjunction with the partner organization.
- At the end of the year, conclude your Wake-Up Campaign with a celebration honoring the participants and thanking the partner organization for its help.

Issue: Literacy

CASE It: People of the Book - A Year of Literacy Activism

This year from Rosh Hashana to Yom Kippur, being organizing a yearlong literacy campaign on your campus. Explain to fellow students the importance of books in Jewish tradition and the continuation of learning from one generation to the next. Initiate a Wake-Up Campaign that will focus on literacy and will promote the mitzvah of teaching others.

Community partners:

- Literacy Volunteers of America (www.literacyvolunteers.org)
- National Jewish Coalition for Literacy (www.njcl.org)
- School of Education
- Local elementary schools

Advocate/Awareness:

- Organize a Literacy Awareness Day on your campus.
 - ◆ Write letters to government officials regarding issues in the education system:
 - Student/teacher ratios
 - Digital divide in school systems (computers and access to the web)
 - Adult literacy
 - Improvement of early literacy skills for pre-school children and reading literacy skills for children in kindergarten through third grade
 - Outdated textbooks
 - These are just some issues...look on Web sites for up-to-date information!
- Fast Facts: According to the National Institute for Literacy Web site:
 - ◆ Over 20% of adults are reading at or below a fifth-grade level.
 - ◆ Among people with the lowest literacy skills, 17% receive food stamps, 43% live in poverty, and 70% have either a part-time job or no job.

Service:

- Read to children at local libraries on a monthly basis.
- Record books on tape for people learning to read or the blind.
- Organize a used book drive for a local elementary school.
- Tutor a child one on one.
- Collect school supplies at the end of the semester.

Educate:

- Did you know?
 - ◆ In Jewish tradition, books are buried instead of being thrown away; this shows the depth of respect that Jews have for books.
 - ◆ According to Jewish belief, books play a prominent role in God's activity during Rosh Hashanah and the Yamim Nora'im. On Rosh Hashanah God writes our names in books, specifying who will live and die in the coming year; on Yom Kippur the books are sealed. Establishing a new commitment to charity is a way many Jews try to ensure that their name will be inscribed in the book of life for the year to come.
- Quotable quotes:
 - ◆ Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi would say: Take note of things and you will not commit wrongdoing: know what is above you—a seeing eye, a hearing ear, and, above all, your deeds are written down in the Book. –*Pirkei Avot* 2:1
→ *What are you doing about the injustices you see and hear?*
 - ◆ If you drop gold and books, pick up first the books and then the gold. –Yehudah He-Hasid (1150-1217), *Sefer Hasidim*
→ *Can you put a price on your ability to read? How has it benefited you so far?*
 - ◆ Make your books your companions; let your cases and shelves be your pleasure-grounds and orchards. Bask in their paradise, gather their fruit, pluck their roses, take their spices. –Judah Ibn Tibbon (c.1120-c.1190, Hebrew translator from Spain), *Tzavaah*
→ *Do you have a mentor? Who looks to you for mentorship? How does a mentoring relationship enrich your life?*
- Try this:
 - ◆ Blow the shofar to bring in your new project. A translation for the word shofar is 'a mouthpiece.' As you kick off your Wake-Up Campaign, consider how you can speak up and be a vocal advocate for literacy or any other issue.

Resources:

Literacy Volunteers of America: www.literacyvolunteers.org

National Jewish Coalition for Literacy: www.njcl.net

Student Coalition for Action in Literacy and Education (SCALE):

www.readwriteact.org

National Institute of Literacy: www.nifl.gov

Educate the Children: www.educatethechildren.org