

Walking
Meditation
for
Rosh Hashana



Rosh Hashana this year will be . . . different. No shule, no big family meals, no gathering together. And since none of the things that usually make this holiday meaningful will be available to us, we have to adapt and find new ways to connect to this moment.

Enter... the walking meditation!

This idea of this meditation practice is simple. While we can't currently access holy spaces like synagogues, we can still access one of the holiest spaces of all - the great outdoors. Many people find it easier to connect to something higher when they are surrounded by the glory of tall trees, the beauty of colourful flowers, the fresh scent of grass, and the melodious notes of singing birds.

So print out the following meditation, put on your mask, map out a route to your neighbourhood park, and prepare to take a relaxing, meandering walk while immersing yourself in deep, meditative reflections on the past year and your hopes for 5782.

Adapted from Ma'yan: The Jewish Women's Project via MyJewishLearning.





*>>Begin by standing in mountain pose. So, make sure that:
Your feet are about shoulder-width apart
Your feet are pressing evenly into the floor
Your knees are relaxed
Your shoulders are loose and that your arms are dangling by your sides
Your facial muscles are softened
Your spine makes a straight line from your stomach to your neck, pulling up to a point above your head
Your arms are stretched straight by your sides*

Stand in Mountain Pose as you read the following paragraphs.

Take a deep breath in through your nose and out through your mouth to secure this position. With each breath afterwards, see if you can notice tiny adjustments you can make to deepen the posture.

In these next breaths, begin to imagine roots growing from all different parts of your feet, reaching deep into the ground. Imagine that these roots are pulling your feet down flat into the soil, supporting you — see if you can feel them from your toes, your heels, your arches, and the ball of your feet. Relax your arms, straighten your spine and breathe. Remain in this “rooted” position for several breaths.

Now that we’re in a relaxed position, start to think back through this past year. Let images enter and exit your mind—small moments, meaningful moments, smells, pictures and faces. Think back now to last Elul (the month preceding Rosh Hashanah), last September: where were you at the last High Holiday cycle? What promises had you made? What goals did you have for the coming year?





Now imagine the roots slowly loosening, lifting, coming free and releasing you from the ground. Imagine your body rising gently and slowly like a balloon, light and almost weightless.

>>Begin to walk. Take 10-15 slow, deliberate steps. Try to actively notice in each step:

The lifting of one foot;

The moving of the foot forward of where you're standing;

The placing of the foot on the floor, heel first;

The shifting of the weight of the body onto the forward leg as the back heel lifts, while the toes of that foot remain touching the floor or the ground.

Then the cycle continues, as you:

Lift your back foot totally off the ground;

Observe the back foot as it swings forward and lowers;

Observe the back foot as it makes contact with the ground, heel first;

Feel the weight shift onto that foot as the body moves forward.

Come to a stop (make sure you're not in anyone's way!) and relax your body. Remain with that feeling of "lightness" if you can.

Move your thoughts now into late September and October, the Hebrew month of Tishrei; the holiday of Sukkot and the time for harvesting. What kinds of benefits did you reap this year? Financial? Educational? Experiential? See if you can recall them now.

>>Walk 10-15 steps slowly and meditatively. As you walk, try to focus your attention on one or more sensations that you would normally take for granted, such as your breath coming in and out of your body; the movement of your feet and legs, or their contact with the ground or floor; your head balanced on your neck and shoulders; sounds





nearby or those caused by the movement of your body; or whatever your eyes take in as they focus on the world in front of you.

Think now about last November, around the Hebrew month of Heshvan. Think now about changes that you made in your life this year. What patterns did you break? What new work did you take on?

>>Walk 10-15 steps slowly and meditatively as you reflect on these questions. Notice any particularly tall or beautiful trees around you.

Move slowly from November into December, the Hebrew month of Kislev, the month that holds Hanukkah, the holiday of lights and miracles. In what ways did you bring light or goodness into the world this year? What miracles happened in your life this year?

>>Walk 10-15 steps slowly and meditatively as you reflect on these questions. Notice the sunlight on your skin or making patterns on the ground.

Now think back to last January and February; first, the Hebrew month of Tevet, the conclusion of Hanukkah. What did the beginning of your Gregorian year look like? What dreams did you have, what promises did you make?

>>Walk 10-15 steps slowly and meditatively as you reflect on these questions. Notice the shape of the clouds and the colour of the sky.

Now, the month of Shevat, the month that contains Tu B'shevat, the festival of the trees, a time for planting. Think about new projects that you started this year, new plans that you made, "seeds" that you planted for your or your family's future.

>>Walk 10-15 steps slowly and meditatively as you reflect on these questions. Notice shoots of grass and flowers around your feet.





Move from late February into March, the Hebrew month of Adar. During Adar, we celebrate Purim, a festival of fun and revelry. Think about the joy that came into your life this year. In what ways were you silly? Can you think of moments when you laughed?

>>Walk 10-15 steps slowly and meditatively as you reflect on these questions. Notice the cheerful sounds of birds calling and singing around you.

From March to April, from Adar to Nisan, the month of spring. The time we celebrate Pesach [Passover] and think about renewal, rebirth, and newfound freedom. What struggles concluded in your life this year? Were there issues or difficulties in your life that you were able to overcome?

>>Walk 10-15 steps slowly and meditatively as you reflect on these questions. Notice the shape and colour of rocks and stones on your path.

Next, think back to last May, the Hebrew month of Iyar. Think about endings that occurred in your life this year. What issues, relationships, situations came to a close during the past 12 months?

>>Walk 10-15 steps slowly and meditatively as you reflect on these questions. Notice the sounds of other people around you, talking, laughing, playing.

Move from May into June and into the month of Sivan, the month that holds the holiday of Shavuot, the holiday that celebrates our receiving of the Torah. Think about learning that you did during the year. What new things did you learn this year, and what effect did they have on you?





>>Walk 10-15 steps slowly and meditatively as you reflect on these questions. Notice the feel of the breeze or the air moving against your body.

From June into July and August; through the Hebrew months of Tammuz and Av; cooler weather, slowing of activity and some time for rest; in the Hebrew calendar, these months are a time to think about history and loss; think about losses in your life this past year. In what ways did you grieve?

>>Walk 10-15 steps slowly and meditatively as you reflect on these questions. Breathe in deeply and notice the scents of flowers, trees and plants around you.

And now feel yourself arrive at this moment, entering the new year, making new promises and setting new goals. Take a few moments and deep breaths to appreciate the journey of the past year before turning your thoughts to the new year. What do you want to achieve in 5782?

What projects will you begin?

>>Take 10-15 slow steps as you reflect on this question.

What relationships will you strengthen or end?

>>Take 10-15 slow steps as you reflect on this question.

What habits will you break?

>>Take 10-15 slow steps as you reflect on this question.

What obstacles before you do you hope to overcome?





>>Take 10-15 slow steps as you reflect on this question.

What connections do you want to make?

>>Take 10-15 slow steps as you reflect on this question.

Where do you want to be next Rosh Hashana?

>>Come to a slow stop. You have completed this meditative walk. Close the cycle by letting your feet become rerooted in the ground. Imagine the roots are pulling your feet down flat into the soil, supporting you. Relax your arms, straighten your spine and breathe. Connect to all of your senses actively tuning into the world around you and fully experience the moment. Remain in this “rooted” position for several breaths.

Now release your breath, release your stance, and allow the ground to release your feet. Take a moment to say “thank you” to your soul for engaging with this exploration of yourself. Go into the New Year feeling cleansed, light, free and ready for the journey.

Shana Tova u’Metukah - wishing you a good and sweet new year!

