# 1. The Jewish Year

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### (1) The Year

The Jewish calendar is a lunar calendar, based on the cycle of the moon around the earth. This cycle takes twenty-nine and a half days, so the months are alternately twenty-nine or thirty days, except for Cheshvan and Kislev, which can be either twenty-nine or thirty days.¹ There are twelve months in a regular year and thirteen months in a leap year.

The Torah requires that the Jewish festivals fall not only on the

<sup>1.</sup> The exact length of each month is 29 days, 12 hours, and 44 minutes. Thus, the months are alternately 29 or 30 days.

same date each year but also at the same season. Thus, the lunar cycle needs to be maintained in line with the solar cycle, which determines the seasons. However, the solar year of 365 days is eleven days longer than twelve lunar cycles. Accordingly, an extra month, Adar II, is added to the year, making a leap year seven times every nineteen years. In this way, the co-incidence between the two cycles is maintained.<sup>2</sup>

### (2) The Week

The days of the week are called *yom rishon*, *yom sheini*, *yom sheishi*, *yom revi'i*, *yom chamishi*, *yom shishi*, and *Shabbos Kodesh*. Thus, the days of the week lead up to and revolve around Shabbos.<sup>3</sup>

### (3) The Day

The day begins at *alos hashachar*, when the first rays of light appear on the horizon in the morning. This is followed by *neitz hachamah*, the moment when the crescent of the sun appears on the horizon. The sun moves up from the horizon and when the sun reaches halfway across the sky it is called *chatzos hayom*, or midday. The sun continues to move across the sky, eventually setting in the west. The moment the sun has entirely submerged below the horizon is called *shekias hachamah*, or "sunset." As the sun continues to sink further below the horizon, the sky continues to darken and it becomes night, the start of a new halachic day.

### Sha'os Zemaniyos

The period of daytime is divided into twelve equal parts, called *sha'os zemaniyos* (seasonal hours). During the summer months, when daylight lasts for more than twelve hours, a "seasonal hour" will be more than one actual hour. During the winter months, when daylight lasts less than twelve hours, a "seasonal hour" will be less

<sup>2.</sup> In each nineteen year cycle, the leap years are the 3rd, 6th, 8th, 11th, 14th, 17th, and 19th year.

<sup>3.</sup> We count each day of the week in the *Shir Shel Yom* at the end of *Shacharis* every day, leading up to Shabbos Kodesh.

than one actual hour.4

According to the Vilna Gaon<sup>5</sup> the period of the day is calculated between *neitz hachamah* and *shekias hachamah*. However, according to the Magen Avraham,<sup>6</sup> the period of day is calculated between *alos hashachar* and *tzeis hakochavim* (when three small stars can be seen in the night sky).

See chart: The Jewish Day, page 154.

### (4) The Halachic Times of Day and Year

- » Alos hashachar "the coming up of the morning." Also called amud hashachar — "the pillar of the morning," dawn or daybreak.
- » Techilas zeman tzitzis, tefillin, v'kerias Shema "the earliest time to put on tzitzis and tefillin with a berachah and to say Shema in the morning." Also called the "Distinguishing Consistency of Light."
- » *Neitz hachamah ("neitz")* "sunrise." The moment the crescent of the sun appears on the horizon in the morning. This time follows *alos hashachar* by about 85 minutes, depending on place and time of year.<sup>7</sup>
- » Sof zeman kerias Shema shel shacharis "the latest time for saying Shema in the morning," which is at the end of three

<sup>4.</sup> Thus, if *neitz hachamah* is at 6:00 A.M., and *shekias hachamah* is at 6:00 P.M., daylight will last for 12 hours, and a seasonal hour will also be one hour long.

If *neitz* is at 8:00 A.M. and *shekiah* at 4:00 P.M., daylight will last for 8 hours, and thus one seasonal hour will be 40 minutes long.

If *neitz* is at 4:00 A.M. and *shekiah* is at 8:00 P.M., daylight will last for 16 hours, making one seasonal hour 80 minutes long.

<sup>5.</sup> The Vilna Gaon, Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilna. Biography p. 185.

<sup>6.</sup> The Magen Avraham, Rabbi Avraham Gombiner. Biography p. 184.

<sup>7.</sup> *Neitz* is the moment when the crescent of the sun first appears on the horizon in the morning. According to a second opinion, *neitz* is the moment when, from where one is situated, one can first see the crescent of the sun. This second opinion of *neitz* is called *neitz hachamah hanireh* (the sun's crescent which is seen) and may give a different time for *neitz* if, for example, one is in a valley or on top of a mountain.

seasonal hours, or one-quarter of the day.8

- » *Sof zeman tefillah* "the latest time for davening the morning Shemoneh Esrei," which is at the end of four seasonal hours, or one-third of the day.<sup>9</sup>
- » *Chatzos hayom v'halailah* "midday" or "midnight." This is six seasonal hours or "halfway through the day or night."
- » *Minchah gedolah* This is half an hour after *chatzos hayom*, which is six and a half seasonal hours into the day. *Minchah gedolah* is the earliest time to daven *Minchah* in the afternoon.
- » *Minchah ketanah* This is nine and a half seasonal hours into the day, after which is the preferred time to daven *Minchah*.
- » *Plag haminchah* "half way through that time of *Minchah*." *Plag haminchah* is halfway between the time of *Minchah ketanah* and *shekias hachamah*, that is, 10¾ seasonal hours into the day. This is the earliest time to bring in Shabbos on Friday afternoon.
- » Shekias hachamah "sunset." This is the moment the entire sun has disappeared below the horizon in the evening. The period from shekias hachamah until night is called bein hashmashos — "between the suns" or twilight.
- » Zeman hadlakas haneiros b'erev Shabbos Kodesh "the time for candle lighting erev Shabbos." Although Shabbos begins at shekias hachamah, we do not wait until this time before refraining from weekday activities. Rather, we add a period to the start of Shabbos, called tosefos Shabbos, which sets the time for lighting the Shabbos candles and the latest time for melachos before Shabbos. The period of tosefos Shabbos varies from place to place and can be up to forty minutes before shekias hachamah.

<sup>8.</sup> Thus, if *neitz hachamah* is at 8:00 A.M. and *shekias hachamah* at 4:00 P.M., a seasonal hour will be 40 minutes, and *sof zeman kerias Shema* will be at 10:00 A.M.

<sup>9.</sup> Thus, if *neitz hachamah* is at 8:00 A.M. and *shekias hachamah* at 4:00 P.M., a seasonal hour will be 40 minutes, and *sof zeman tefillah* will be at 10:40 A.M.

- » Zeman ma'ariv u'zeman motza'ei Shabbos Kodesh "the time for davening Maariv on a weekday and the time for davening Maariv after Shabbos." The earliest time for davening Maariv on a weekday is normally at least twenty-five minutes after shekias hachamah, when three small stars appear in the night sky (tzeis hakochavim). However, after Shabbos we wait an additional period after shekias hachamah before davening Maariv so that Maariv after Shabbos will be about ten minutes later than Maariv on a weekday. According to Rabbeinu Tam, 10 Maariv is davened on motza'ei Shabbos even later, seventy-two minutes after shekias hachamah. 11
- » **Zeman molad halevanah** "the birth of the new moon." The moon renews itself every twenty-nine days, twelve hours, and forty-four minutes. The specific time of the "*molad*" is announced on the Shabbos morning preceding Rosh Chodesh. <sup>12</sup>
- » Sof zeman kiddush levanah "the latest time to sanctify the new moon." The latest time to sanctify the new moon is halfway through the month, after which time the moon begins to wane.
- » *Tekufos* "seasons." The cycle of the earth around the sun is divided into four parts called "*tekufos*" or "seasons": autumn, winter, spring, and summer. Certain changes in *tefillah* depend on the season. <sup>13</sup>

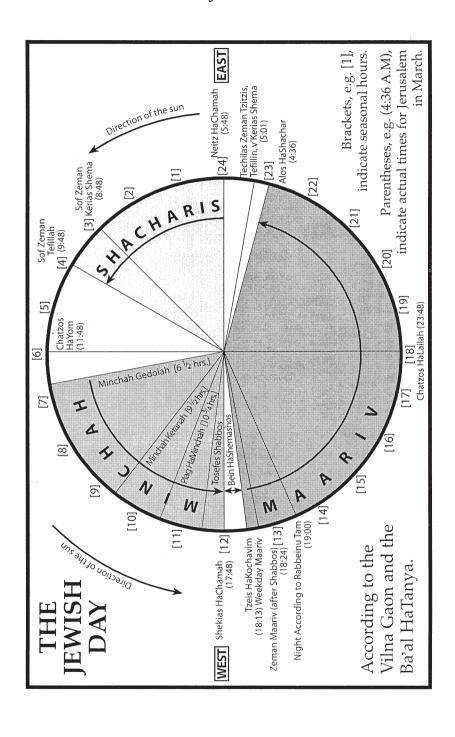
The halachic times of day which are most required in practice are alos hashachar; neitz hachamah; sof zeman kerias Shema; sof zeman tefillah; chatzos hayom; shekias hachamah; and zeman ma'ariv u'zeman motza'ei Shabbos kodesh.

<sup>10.</sup> Rabbi Yaakov ben Meir, "Rabbeinu Tam." Biography p. 177.

<sup>11.</sup> Although the time for davening *Maariv* continues until *alos hashachar* (daybreak), it is preferred to daven before *chatzos halailah* (midnight).

<sup>12.</sup> This announcement is followed by the announcement of the actual day of the week on which Rosh Chodesh falls.

<sup>13.</sup> For example, the prayer for rain in the Shemoneh Esrei ("tal u'matar") is recited from the sixtieth day of the autumn *tekufah* until Pesach.



Outline of the Jewish Year									
Month	Yom Tov	Other Important Days	Special Shabbosos	Other Fast Days (Other than Yom Kippur)					
Tishrei - תשרי 30 days	•Rosh HaShanah •Yom Kippur •Sukkos •Shemini Atzeres	•Aseres Yemei Teshuvah— the 10 days of Repentance	•Shabbos Shuvah	•Tzom Gedalyah 3 Tishrei					
		•Chol HaMoed Sukkos/ •Hoshana Rabbah	•Shabbos Chol Ha Moed Sukkos						
Cheshvan - מרחשון (מרחשון (Marcheshvan- 29 or 30 days									
Kislev - כטלו 29 or 30 days	•Chanukah		•Shabbos Chanukah						
Teves - טבת 29 days				•Asarah B'Teves 10 Teves					
Shevat - שבת 30 days		•Tu B'Shevat (15 Shevat)	•Shabbos Shirah •Shabbos Shekalim						
Adar - אדר 29 days	•Purim		•Shabbos Zachor •Shabbos Parah •Shabbos HaChodesh	•Taanis Esther (Fast of Esther) 13 Adar					
Nissan - ניסן 30 days	•Pesach	•Chol HaMoed Pesach	•Shabbos HaGadol •Shabbos Chol HaMoed Pesach						
lyar - אייר 29 days		•Pesach Sheini •Lag BaOmer							
Sivan - סיון 30 days	•Shavuos								
Tammuz - תמוז 29 days				•Shivah Asar B'Tammuz 17 Tammuz					
Av - אב (Menachem Av) (מנחם אב) 30 days		•Tu B'Av: (15 Av)	•Shabbos Chazon •Shabbos Nachamu	•Tishah B'Av 9 Av					
Ellul - אלול 29 days		•Selichos		·					

## The Jewish Year

The notes which follow refer to the chart "The Jewish Year" found at the end of the book.

- 1. *Tishrei Tishrei* is the first month of the year in the counting of the years; with the beginning of *Tishrei* we start each new year. However, in the cycle of the months, *Nissan* is the first month, *Iyar* the second, and so on (Talmud: *Rosh HaShanah* 2a).
- 2. Rosh HaShanah The first and second of *Tishrei*. Rosh HaShanah is *Yom HaDin*, the Day of Judgment, when each Jew is judged. For many, judgment is not sealed until Yom Kippur. Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur are known together as the *Yamim Noraim*, the "Days of Awe." The period between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur is called the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, the "Ten Days of Repentance."
- 3. *Tzom Gedalyah* The Fast of Gedalyah, third of *Tishrei*. This fast marks the murder of Gedalyah, son of Achikam, governor of the Land of Israel appointed by Nevuchadnetzar, King of Babylon, after the destruction of the First Beis HaMikdash. With the murder of Gedalyah, any possibility of renewed Jewish life in the Land of Israel came to an end.
- 4. Shabbos Shuvah Shabbos Shuvah is the Shabbos between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, so called because of the first word of the haftarah for that week: Shuvah Yisrael ad Hashem Elokeichah ("Return, Israel, to Hashem your God") (Hoshea 14:2).
- Yom Kippur The Day of Atonement, tenth of *Tishrei*, the holiest day in the Jewish year. Judgment not sealed on Rosh Hashanah is sealed on Yom Kippur. On Yom Kippur, in addition to the prohibition on eating and drinking, it is forbidden to wash oneself, to anoint oneself, or to wear leather shoes (Talmud: *Yoma* 73b).
- 6. Sukkos In the Land of Israel, Sukkos (Tabernacles) falls from 15–21 Tishrei one day of Yom Tov followed by six days of Chol HaMoed, which are days of semi-Yom Tov. The last day of Chol HaMoed is called Hoshana Rabbah, on which we recite extra prayers and supplications. Shemini Atzeres is a separate Yom Tov, which falls on 22 Tishrei, immediately following Sukkos. In the Land of Israel, Simchas Torah, which is a joyous siyum (conclusion) of the cyclical reading of the Torah each year, is celebrated on the same day as Shemini Atzeres.
- 7. Sukkos Outside of the Land of Israel, Sukkos falls from 15–21 *Tishrei*—two days of Yom Tov followed by five days of *Chol HaMoed*. The last day of *Chol HaMoed* is *Hoshana Rabbah*. Immediately following Sukkos is *Shemini Atzeres*, a two day Yom Tov falling on 22 and 23 Tishrei. *Simchas Torah* is celebrated on the second day of *Shemini Atzeres*.
- 8. Isru Chag Isru Chag is the day after Sukkos, Pesach, and Shavuos, a type of extension of the Yom Tov. Its name is derived from the verse, Isru chag ba'avosim ("Bind the festival-offering with cords") (Tehilim 118:27). On Isru Chag we do not say tachanun, and it is the custom to celebrate it to some extent with special food.
- 9. Cheshvan Cheshvan is the second month in the year, also known as Marcheshvan, mar meaning bitter, because no festivals occur during it. Another reason it is called Marcheshvan is because the rainy season begins during it, mar meaning a drop of water.

- 10. Chanukah Chanukah marks the miracles in the victory over the Greeks in the Land of Israel during the period of the Second Beis HaMikdash, over 2,000 years ago. When Kislev is 30 days long, Chanukah ends on 2 Teves. When Kislev is 29 days long, Chanukah ends on 3 Teves. The eighth and final day of Chanukah is referred to as Zos Chanukah ("This is Chanukah"), the Torah reading for that day concluding with Zos chanukas haMizbe 'ach, referring to the inauguration of the Mizbe 'ach (Altar) of the Mishkan (Bamidbar 7:84).
- 11. Asarah b'Teves The fast of the Tenth of Teves. This fast marks the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem by Nevuchadnetzar, king of Babylon, which eventually led to the destruction of the First Beis HaMikdash. This is the only fast in the Jewish year that can fall on a Friday.
- 12. *Shabbos Shirah* "Shabbos of Song." This is the Shabbos of *Parshas Beshalach*, which includes the "Song at the Sea" (*Shemos* 15:1–19).
- 13. Tu b'Shevat The fifteenth of Shevat. This is the new year for trees, meaning that it is the "cut-off point" for taking tithes from produce of the tree. Produce which blossomed before Tu b'Shevat is grouped together as pertaining to the previous year; produce which blossomed after Tu b'Shevat is grouped together as pertaining to the following year (Talmud: Rosh HaShanah 2a). On Tu b'Shevat there is a custom to eat different types of fruit, especially the seven species for which the Torah praises the Land of Israel (Devarim 8:8).
- 14. Shabbos Shekalim This is the Shabbos before or on Rosh Chodesh Adar, when a special reading from the Torah is made for maftir, concerning the donation of half-shekels to the Beis HaMikdash (Shemos 30:11–16). This donation was used to pay for the communal offerings of the Beis HaMikdash. At the time of the Beis HaMikdash, the announcement to make this donation was made at the beginning of Adar; thus, we read this portion at this time.
  - Shabbos Shekalim is the first of four special Shabboso Shabbos Shekalim, Shabbos Zachor, Shabbos Parah and Shabbos HaChodesh—the first two falling before Purim and the last two after Purim, on each of which, in addition to the usual weekly parshah, a special Torah portion is read as maftir.
- 15. Adar In a leap year, which occurs seven times every nineteen years, an extra month is added to the year so that there are two months of Adar: Adar I and Adar II. In such a case, the special days of Adar fall in Adar II, and Shabbos Shekalim will be the Shabbos before or on Rosh Chodesh Adar II.
- 16. Shabbos Zachor Zachor means "remember." This is the Shabbos before Purim when we remember what Amalek did to Am Yisrael after we came out of Egypt. The reading of this special portion (Devarim 25:17–19) for maftir falls on the Shabbos before Purim, because on Purim the enemy was Haman, who was a descendant of Amalek.
- 17. Taanis Esther The Fast of Esther. This fast falls on 13 Adar, the day before Purim, and commemorates the fast of three days called by Esther before going to King Achashveirosh to ask for favor to save the Jewish People. Originally, at the time of the events of Purim, it was called for 14–16 Nissan, during Pesach 3404, after Haman's decree became

- known. However, since this fast could not be permanently fixed for *Nissan*, as fasting is not normally permitted during *Nissan*, it was fixed for 13 *Adar*, which was a fast day eleven months later, in 3405, when the Jews gathered to wage war against their enemies.
- 18. Purim 14 Adar. Purim marks the victory of the Jews of Persia in the year 3405, over 2,300 years ago, through Mordechai and Esther. In cities that were walled at the time of Yehoshua, son of Nun, Purim falls on 15 Adar and is called Shushan Purim. In a leap year, Purim falls on 14 Adar II, and 14 Adar I is called "Purim Katan," on which tachanun is not said.
- 19. Shabbos Parah This is the Shabbos before Shabbos HaChodesh when, in addition to the weekly parshah, a special Torah reading is made for maftir concerning the Parah Adumah, the Red Heifer (Bamidbar 19:1–22). The ashes of the Parah Adumah were mixed with spring water and used to purify a person who was tamei meis (impure through contact with a corpse) before he could offer the Korban Pesach in the Beis HaMikdash. Although at present, we are not able to bring the Korban Pesach, we read this portion, zecher l'mikdash, in remembrance of the time of the Beis HaMikdash.
- 20. Shabbos HaChodesh This is the Shabbos before or on Rosh Chodesh Nissan, when a special reading is made for maftir, proclaiming Nissan as the first month of the year and alerting people to prepare for Pesach (Shemos 12:1-20). Shabbos HaChodesh is the last of the four special Shabbosos Shabbos Shekalim, Shabbos Zachor, Shabbos Parah and Shabbos HaChodesh.
- 21. Shabbos HaGadol This is the Shabbos before Pesach, so called because of the miracle that happened on it: Four days before the Exodus from Egypt, which was a Shabbos, the Children of Israel took a lamb in order to slaughter it as the Korban Pesach. The lamb was a holy animal to the Egyptians, and it was a miracle that they were able to take it and slaughter it.
- 22. Pesach In the Land of Israel, Pesach (Passover) falls from 15–21 Nissan one day of Yom Tov, followed by five days of Chol HaMoed, and then one further day of Yom Tov. Outside the Land of Israel, Pesach falls from 15–22 Nissan two days of Yom Tov followed by four days of Chol HaMoed, and then two days of Yom Tov. The prohibition of eating and owning chametz begins during the morning of the day before, on 14 Nissan.
- 23. Sefiras HaOmer The Counting of the Omer. During the seven weeks from Pesach to Shavuos we count the Omer each day, to fulfill the mitzvah that from the second day of Pesach the day the Omer offering of the new barley crop was brought in the Beis HaMikdash fortynine days are to be counted until Shavuos (Vayikra 23:15). The Sefirah period became a period of semi-mourning because of different tragedies that occurred during it. However, the thirty-third day of the Omer is a day of rejoicing, called Lag b'Omer, the Hebrew word Lag (2"7) having the numerical value of thirty-three. Lag b'Omer always falls on 18 Iyar. The three days before Shavuos are called the Shloshes Yemei Hagbalah ("Three Days of Demarcation"), the preparatory days before Matan Torah.

- 24. Pesach Sheini "The Second Pesach." Pesach Sheini falls on 14 Iyar, exactly one month after the Korban Pesach was brought in the Beis HaMikdash. At the time of the Beis HaMikdash, a person who was unable to bring the Korban Pesach on 14 Nissan could bring it on Pesach Sheini. There is a common custom to eat matzah on Pesach Sheini.
- 25. Shavuos Shavuos (Pentecost) is the Yom Tov which marks the giving of the Torah, called *Zeman Matan Toraseinu*, "The Time of the Giving of the Torah." In the Land of Israel, Shavuos falls on 6 *Sivan*; outside the Land of Israel it falls on 6 and 7 *Sivan*. We do not commence the *Maariv* prayer at the onset of Shavuos until it is definitely night, in order to have completed seven full weeks since the beginning of the *Omer* count.
- 26. Shivah Asar b'Tammuz The fast of the Seventeenth of Tammuz. This fast marks several events, particularly the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem by the Romans, leading to the destruction of the Second Beis HaMikdash. With the fast of Shivah Asar b'Tammuz we begin a period of mourning called "The Three Weeks," which ends on Tishah b'Av, the day of the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash.
- 27. Shabbos Chazon This is the Shabbos before Tishah b'Av, so called after the first word of the haftarah, Chazon Yeshayahu ben Amotz ("The vision of Isaiah, son of Amoz") (Yeshayah 1:1).
- 28. *Tishah b'Av* The fast of the Ninth of Av, the day of the destruction of the First and Second Beis HaMikdash. On *Tishah b'Av*, in addition to the prohibition of eating and drinking, it is prohibited to wash oneself, to anoint oneself, and to wear leather shoes. *Tishah b'Av* and Yom Kippur are the only fasts in the Jewish year that last from nightfall to nightfall, the other fasts being from day-break until nightfall. The month of *Av* is also called *Menachem Av*, *menachem* meaning "consoler," in anticipation of the consolation we hope for after the tragedies of this month.
- 29. Shabbos Nachamu This is the Shabbos after Tishah b'Av, so called after the first words of the haftarah, Nachamu, nachamu ami ("Comfort, comfort My people") (Yeshayah 40:1).

  The haftarah of Shabbos Nachamu is the first of seven haftaros, called Shiva d'Nechemta the "Seven of Consolation" which are read during the seven weeks between Tishah b'Av and Rosh HaShanah, all from the book of Yeshayah (Isaiah).
- 30. *Tu b'Av* The fifteenth of Av. This is the day when the cutting of the wood for the Beis HaMikdash was completed each year. It was also the day of forgiveness for the generation of the *Midbar* (Wilderness), and a time of rejoicing for *Am Yisrael*.
- 31. Ellul Ellul is the last month of the year, before Rosh HaShanah. It is an auspicious time for teshuvah (repentance), for although Hashem is close to His people at all times, during Ellul He is particularly close. This is hinted at in the words: Ani l'dodi v'dodi li אני לדודי ודודי לי ("I am to My beloved and My beloved is to Me") (Shir HaShirim 6:3), the first letters of which spell Ellul (אלול)).

# The Jewish Year

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Ellul אלול 🕲	אע אב (מנחם אב)	Tammuz תמוז	Sivan סיון	lyar אייר	Nissan ניסן	Adar אדר 🚯	Shevat שבט	Teves טבת	Kislev בסלו	Cheshvan חשון ₪ מרחשון)	Tishrei תשרי 🗨	
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### Weekday Shemoneh Esrei showing additions and changes during the year **First Berachos: During the Ten Days of Repentance** Avos/Patriachs add "Zachreinu l'Chaim..." **During the Ten Days of Repentance** Mashiv HaRuach Gevuros/Hashem's Might add "Mi Chamocha..." u'Morid HaGeshem/ Morid HaTal **During the Ten Days of Repentance** Kedushas Hashem/ 3 conclude instead Holiness of Hashem's Name "HaMelech HaKadosh" Middle Berachos: Atah Chonantanu Binah/Insight Teshuvah/Repentance 6 Selichah/Forgiveness **Geulah/Redemption** Refuah/Health and Healing v'Sein Berachah/ 9 Birkas HaShanim/Year of Prosperity v'Sein Tal u'Matar Livrachah 10 Kibbutz Galuyos/Ingathering of the Exiles **During the Ten Days of Repentance** 11 Din/Restoration of Justice conclude instead "HaMelech HaMishpat" 12 Birkas HaMinim/Against Heretics 13 Tzaddikim/For the Righteous Nachem Hashem Binyan Yerushalayim/ Elokeinu Rebuilding of Jerusalem Malchus Beis Dovid/ 15 Restoration of the Davidic Line Kabbalas Tefillah/Acceptance of Prayer Aneinu 16 **Final Berachos:** 17 Pa'aleh v'Yavo Avodah/Restoration of Temple Service **During the Ten Days of Repentance** Al HaNisim 18 Hoda'ah/Thanksgiving add "u'Chsov I'Chaim" **During the Ten Days of Repentance** 19 Shalom/Peace add "b'Sefer Chaim..." (1) Elokai N'tzor (1) Yehi Ratzon