

Understanding Musaf

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Musaf ("addition") is an extra Amidah prayer that we say on Shabbat, Rosh Hodesh, and other holidays.

The central blessing of every Musaf prayer talks a little about its special day and quotes a handful of *pesukim* about it, too. The Musaf of Rosh Hashanah is different, though. It talks A LOT about Rosh Hashanah! If you look in your Mahzor and Siddur, you will notice that this Musaf is way longer than any other. This is because the centerpiece of Musaf for Rosh Hashanah is made of three long sections, each with its own blessing.

תלמוד בבלי ראש השנה עז. Talmud Bavli Rosh Hashanah 16a

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This is the source for the three central sections of the Rosh Hashanah Musaf:

מַלְכֻיּוֹת - Malkhuyot
(God's Kingship)

זִכְרוֹנוֹת - Zikhronot
(God remembering us)

שׁוֹפָרוֹת - Shofarot
(the blasting of the *shofar*)

וְאָמְרוּ לִפְנֵי בְּרַאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה
מַלְכֻיּוֹת זִכְרוֹנוֹת וְשׁוֹפָרוֹת.

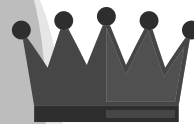
And recite before Me on Rosh Hashanah verses that mention kingships, remembrances, and *shofarot*.

מַלְכֻיּוֹת – כִּדִּי נִשְׁתַּמְּלִיכוּנִי עֲלֵיכֶם.
Kingships—so that you will crown Me as King over you.

זִכְרוֹנוֹת – כִּדִּי שִׁיעֲלָה זִכְרוֹנִיכֶם לִפְנֵי לְטוֹבָה.
Remembrances—so that your remembrance will rise before Me for the good.

וּבִמְהָ – בְּשׁוֹפָר.

With what can you create the remembering for the good? With the *shofar*.



★ What is it like to think about God as a King? What kind of relationship does that describe?

★ What makes Rosh Hashanah a good day to crown God as Ruler of the world? Why is the beginning of the new year a good time to think about God as a King?

★ The Talmud says that it's our role to crown God as King. Why does God need us to do that? How can we do that?



Why is it important for God to remember us on Rosh Hashanah?

What can we learn from the idea that our remembrance rises before God for the good?

What have you done in the past year that you want God, yourself, or others to remember?

Try it out! Look at the Torah readings and haftarot on the two days of Rosh Hashanah. How do they connect to God remembering?

- ★ How does the *shofar* cause our remembrance to rise up before God?
- ★ How does the *shofar* help that remembering be for the good?
- ★ What do you think about or remember when you hear the *shofar*?

The Mishnah gives instructions
about what each section should include:

משנה ראש השנה ו:ד

אין פוחתין מעשרה מלכיות,
מעשרה זכרונות, מעשרה שופרות.

רבי יוחנן בן נורי אומר, אם אמר
שלוש שלש מכלן, יצא.

אין מזכירין זכרון מלכות ושופר של
פירענות. מתחיל בתורה ומשלים
בנביא.

רבי יוסי אומר, אם השלים בתורה,
יצא:

Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 4:6

They do not recite less than ten kingship *pesukim* (verses), ten remembrance *pesukim*, and ten shofar *pesukim*.

R. Yohanan ben Nuri says: If a person said three from each set they have fulfilled their obligation.

They do not mention kingship, remembrance, or shofar *pesukim* of punishment. A person begins with *pesukim* from the Torah and ends with *pesukim* from the Prophets.

R. Yose says: If a person ends with a *pasuk* from the Torah they have fulfilled their obligation.

This *mishnah* teaches us:

- ★ Each section of the Rosh Hashanah Musaf has to include *pesukim* on its topic. The first opinion is that we need at least ten *pesukim* for each theme. R. Yohanan ben Nuri says it can be just three.
- ★ The *pesukim* should not be about punishment.
- ★ The *pesukim* should come from all parts of the Tanakh (Bible), starting with Torah, continuing with Ketuvim (Writings), and ending with Nevi'im (Prophets). R. Yose says it's also okay to end with *pesukim* from the Torah.

Try it out!

Look at Musaf in your Mahzor.

- ★ Can you find where the *pesukim* begin in each section?
- ★ Do they follow the instructions in this *mishnah*?
- ★ How many times can you find words related to מלך (*melekh*, king), זכר (*zeikher*, memory), and שופר (*shofar*)?
- ★ Do any of the *pesukim* seem familiar to you?
- ★ Are there any other *pesukim* you can think of that might have fit?

