

High Holy Days Guide

Tishrei 5786 – September-October 2025

וּבַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּאַתֶּד לַחֹדֶשׁ מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם כָּל־מִלְאכָת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ יוֹם תְּרוּעָה יִהְיֶה לָכֶם:

In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a day of solemn rest, a memorial proclaimed with blast of trumpets, a holy convocation.

--Leviticus 23:24

Welcome from Rabbi Daniel Stein

A story is told of the Rabbi Mordechai of Nadvirna, a Hassidic master of the nineteenth century. On the eve of Rosh Hashanah, he sat for hours offering a discourse to his disciples. He noticed, though, that one of his students became increasingly nervous as the hours went on. Finally, Rabbi Mordechai paused and asked the man what was troubling him.

"Rebbe," he said, "you know that I am to serve as the hazzan for our community this year. Might I be excused so that I could look into the mahzor—the prayer book—and put my prayers in order?"

"The mahzor is the same as it was last year," Rabbi Mordechai replied, "but you are different. Better you should look into your deeds and actions and put yourself into order!"

It is hard to believe that we are, again, approaching another new year. We find ourselves engaged in similar rituals—planning and preparing holiday meals, sending new year's greetings to family and friends, purchasing new clothes for the new year. Here at the synagogue, we've also begun familiar rituals as we get ready to welcome our community for the holidays.

So often, though, while busily preparing for the holiday, we forget to take the time we need to look into ourselves. The rituals may be the same, but we are different! The last several years have taken such a physical and psychological toll on us—perhaps we enter into this holiday season weighed down in ways we have not been in the past.

This time of year provides us with much needed space for introspection: our time at *shul* allows us the opportunity to look inward and explore how we can improve our lives and the lives of those around us. It allows us to set goals and reflect on ways we can grow in the year to come. And, most importantly, it makes us receptive to saying and hearing the words "I am sorry."

It is my hope that our holiday offerings this year provide a haven and a sanctuary from the world around us, and provide us the opportunity to learn, pray, and grow together as a community. We are so excited to welcome the new year with you all—may it be a year of health and blessing for us all!

Sincerely,

Rabbi Daniel Stein

Description of Services & Observances

As we dip into the sweet customs and traditions of the New Year, Congregation B'nai Shalom invites you to find inspiration and meaning throughout the High Holy Days. We are pleased to offer a variety of services to meet the spiritual needs of our community. Below is a summary of each of our offerings.

Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur Observances

Traditional Service

Held in the Rothenberg Sanctuary and streamed online across our platforms, the Traditional Service combines the joy of celebrating the New Year with the sacred work of introspection that leads to growth and renewal. **Rabbi Daniel Stein** and **Hazzan Sandy Bernstein** officiate, guiding us with inspiring words and melodies. Together with participation from members of our community, this service offers a moving, uplifting experience for the Days of Awe.

Our traditional service begins at **9:00am on the first and second days of Rosh Hashanah and on Yom Kippur.**

Evening services begin **at 8:00pm on Erev Rosh Hashanah and 6:15 for Kol Nidre.**

Alternative High Holy Day Service

As in past years, we are delighted to offer our Alternative Service as a complement to the offerings in the Rothenberg Sanctuary. This service provides inspiration and meaning through highlights of the High Holy Day liturgy, woven together with beautiful melodies. In a more informal setting, the use of musical instruments enhances the prayer experience, creating a sense of openness and connection. The service will be led by **Hazzan Michael Stein and Gastón Bernstein**, who bring creativity, energy, and spirit to the Days of Awe. **Hazzan Michael Stein** is a celebrated cantor, musician, and composer whose career spans synagogue leadership, Broadway, and performance alongside some of the world's greatest artists. He brings deep spirituality and warmth to his cantorial work, weaving together tradition and creativity to uplift prayer and community. **Gastón Bernstein** is a gifted musician, composer, and song leader who adds heart and soulful energy.

Our alternative service meets at **10:00am on the first day of Rosh Hashanah and on Yom Kippur** in the Social Hall.

Youth & Family Services

While the High Holy Days are a sacred time of reflection and introspection for adults, we also want our children to celebrate and connect with our rituals in ways that are joyful and age-appropriate. We are pleased to offer special services for families with children from preschool through seventh grade. **Dena Stein and the school staff** will guide our youngest children through songs, movement, and hands-on exploration of the holidays and their symbols. For grades K-2 and 3-7, **our Religious School staff** will lead interactive services designed to engage children and their families in meaningful prayer and learning.

The Youth & Family Services run from **9:15 to 10:15am on the first day of Rosh Hashanah and on Yom Kippur.**

Youth Programming

Our High Holy Day Youth Programming offers age-appropriate activities for children in grades K-6 to explore the themes of the season in meaningful and engaging ways. Guided by **Pam McGill**, our Director of Education, children will participate in a mix of *tefillah*, music, movement, and creative projects, creating an immersive experience that brings the spirit of the High Holy Days to life.

Youth Programming runs from **10:00am to 12:30pm on both days of Rosh Hashanah and on Yom Kippur.**

Babysitting is available from 8:45am to 1:00pm on both days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, as well as on Kol Nidre evening.

Oneg

On **Erev Rosh Hashanah**, following services, we invite you to join us in the main courtyard for a festive oneg sponsored by the Women of B'nai Shalom. On **Rosh Hashanah morning**, after services, we will continue the celebration of the New Year with the sweet tradition of sharing apples and honey.

Other Services & Observances

***S'lihot* with new traditions**

This moving service of penitential prayers, the traditional beginning of the High Holy Day season, will take place on **Saturday, September 13**, beginning with Havdalah at 8:00pm. This year we continue our beloved new custom, inviting members of the community to take part in the sacred ritual of changing the Torah vestments in preparation for the High Holy Days. We are also thrilled to debut our new intergenerational choir, which will enhance the service with music, song, and instrumental accompaniment.

Reverse Tashlikh

Congregation B'nai Shalom is proud to participate in **Reverse Tashlikh**, an innovative environmental practice that reimagines the traditional Jewish ritual to address the modern challenge of pollution. While the traditional Tashlikh custom involves symbolically casting sins into a body of water as a way to seek forgiveness and renewal, Reverse Tashlikh invites participants to take action by removing plastic and other debris from waterways, fostering a sense of environmental responsibility and stewardship.

We will join our friends from Temple Isaish at a location in Oakland to comb the shores, collect plastic waste, and remove debris that threaten marine life and ecosystems. This meaningful practice combines the spiritual reflection and renewal of Tashlikh with the tangible act of protecting and preserving our environment.

Tashlikh

Tashlikh ("cast away") helps us prepare for Yom Kippur as we reflect on and repent for the sins of the past year. Together as a congregation, we recite verses of prayer and then symbolically cast our sins into a body of water, embracing renewal and spiritual cleansing.

Prior to Tashlikh, **Rabbi Stein** will lead a mini family **Rosh Hashanah Seder**, where participants will taste and explore the meaning of the holiday's symbolic foods. The Seder begins **Tuesday, September 23, at 4:30pm at Civic Park in Walnut Creek**, followed by the Tashlikh service at **5:00pm**. We will provide materials for casting into the water, as well as apples, honey, and light refreshments to celebrate the New Year together.

Shabbat Shuvah

The Lord! The Lord! A God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, rich in steadfast kindness, extending kindness to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; yet God does not remit all punishment...

Exodus 34:6-7

The Shabbat that falls between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is known as *Shabbat Shuvah*, the Shabbat of Return, and continues the themes of repentance and forgiveness central to the High Holy Days. Congregation B'nai Shalom invites you to join us for Shabbat Shuvah services on Friday evening, September 26, at 6:15pm, and Saturday morning,

Yamim Noraim 5786 – The Days of Awe 2025

September 27, at 9:30am, as we gather to reflect, pray, and prepare our hearts during these Days of Awe.

Kever Avot

Kever Avot ("Grave of the Ancestors") is the cherished custom of visiting the graves of parents or close relatives. The prayers recited honor the departed, asking for their peaceful eternal rest, while also invoking God's aid for the living in recognition of the righteous deeds of those who have passed. This year, services will be held at **Oakmont Memorial Park** and **Gan Shalom Cemetery**. **Rabbi Daniel Stein** will lead services at Oakmont, and **Hazzan Sandy Bernstein** will lead at Gan Shalom, with both beginning at **1:30pm on Sunday, September 28**.

Community October 7 Memorial

A Service of Hope & Remembrance will be held on **Sunday evening, October 5** at Temple Isaiah in Lafayette, offering a reflective space to honor loved ones and find comfort within our community. Special guest musicians and practitioners of healing arts, as well as community leaders, will join clergy members from Congregation B'nai Shalom, Temple Isaiah, Congregation B'nai Tikvah, and Beth Chaim Congregation.

Yom Kippur Services

Kol Nidre

Kol Nidre ("all vows") is chanted on the eve of **Yom Kippur**, the Day of Atonement, on **Wednesday, October 1, at 6:15pm sharp**. As our community gathers in the synagogue, the Torah scrolls are removed from the Ark, and **Hazzan Sandy Bernstein** chants the solemn Aramaic prayer of *Kol Nidre*, which annuls all vows, obligations, and oaths made by each member of the community, marking the sacred opening of this holiest day. Our intergenerational choir, accompanied by piano, will lift our prayers with beautiful harmonies that enhance the spirit of the service. Their voices help create an atmosphere of inspiration and connection.

Please note that it is our community's custom to keep the sanctuary doors closed during the chanting of Kol Nidre. Those outside of the sanctuary during Kol Nidre are invited to listen to the service in the conference room, where a video and audio feed of the service will be set up. Once the greeters reopen the doors for the remainder of the evening service, all are welcome to enter.

Yom Kippur Services

Our Yom Kippur morning services on **Thursday, October 2**, mirror the schedule and variety of those on Rosh Hashanah. Join us in the ways that are most meaningful to you at our **Traditional Services** in the Rothenberg Sanctuary starting at 9:00am; our **Children & Family Services** starting at 9:15am; **Youth Programming** starting at 10:00am; our **Alternative Service** starting at 10:00am; **Babysitting** is available as early as 8:45am. Please see the sections above for more specific descriptions of each.

Yamim Noraim 5786 – The Days of Awe 2025

The synagogue campus will remain open all day for personal meditation and reflections. Food and drink is available all day in the library for those in need of sustenance on the fast day.

Learning, Yizkor, and Minhah

As we transition from the morning services and personal introspection into the afternoon and evening, **Rabbi Emeritus Gordon Freeman** leads a session of learning, exploration, and discussion at **3:00pm**, helping us connect the meanings of the Days of Awe to texts and teachings from our tradition.

The **Yizkor Service** at **4:15 pm** offers a sacred time to remember departed relatives. Together as a congregation, we also recite Yizkor for all those who have given their lives defending Judaism throughout the ages. During the service, a **Yahrzeit Book** is placed in the **Aron HaKodesh (Holy Ark)**. Names already in the synagogue database or memorial section of our directory will automatically be included. If you are unsure whether you have submitted names, or if you have new names to add, please complete **Insert #3: Yahrzeit Book for Yizkor Service** and send it to the B'nai Shalom office.

It is customary to honor our deceased loved ones by pledging **tzedakah (charity)**, so that the good deeds of the living help elevate the souls of those who have passed.

N'ilah, Ma'ariv, Havdalah, and Final Sounding of the Shofar

We conclude Yom Kippur with N'ilah, the dusk service filled with the powerful imagery of the gates of repentance closing, as we offer our final prayers and pleas. The service is followed by Havdalah, led by the youth of Congregation B'nai Shalom, and the sounding of the shofar, marking the holy day's conclusion. All are welcome to bring their *shofarot* to join in the final *t'kiah gedolah*. Following the service, we invite everyone to gather on the patio to share fellowship and reflection as the day comes to a close. The community break-the-fast features our new tradition of fruit smoothies and is sponsored by the CBS Men's Club.

The Next Holidays

Sukkot

Following quickly on the heels of the High Holy Days comes the joyful harvest festival of **Sukkot**. At Congregation B'nai Shalom, we erect a large **community sukkah** and keep it bustling all week long with services, meals, and programming. **Sukkot begins on the evening of Monday, October 6.**

Our **new, larger, and more beautiful sukkah** will be erected on the social hall patio on Sunday, October 5 starting at 9:00am. Everyone is welcome to help and to decorate. We also encourage you to welcome this holiday by building your own sukkah and celebrating with your **Lulav and Etrog**. Sets are available through the synagogue, each including a **lulav (palm branch) with holder, hadassim (myrtle branches), arovot (willow**

branches), and an Israeli *etro*

To purchase a Lulav set via CBS, please place your order with the office using the included order form insert or by contacting **Samanatha in the office**. All orders and payments must be received by **Monday, September 15**. Lulav sets may be picked up at the **B'nai Shalom Office** immediately before Yom Kippur or after.

Mensch Shabbat

On **Saturday, October 11**, the intermediate Shabbat of Sukkot, Congregation B'nai Shalom continues our innovative new tradition by honoring our **outstanding volunteers as Mensch of the Year**. This special Shabbat celebration recognizes the contributions of new honorees while welcoming all previous mensches, creating a meaningful and festive community gathering during the holiday season.

Hoshanah Rabbah

The seventh day of Sukkot is steeped in poetry, prayer, and processions around the sanctuary, culminating in a ritual of striking willow branches on the ground to remove the last vestiges of transgressions from us. Join us for a special morning service at **7:45am on Monday, October 13**.

Sh'mini Atzeret

Immediately following Sukkot is the one-day festival of *Sh'mini Atzeret*. This is a time to highlight the change of seasons and remember our loved ones with Yizkor. Services will be held at **9:30am on Tuesday, October 14**.

Simhat Torah

Following Sh'mini Atzeret comes the one-day holiday of *Simhat Torah* (Rejoicing with the Torah). This festival celebrates the conclusion of our annual cycle of Torah reading the end of *Devarim* (Deuteronomy) and beginning again in *Bereshit* (Genesis). This year, we will also be holding a special dedication on the Sanctuary patio commemorating the victims and heroes of the attacks of 2023. On this most joyous occasion, we dance and sing with the Torah scrolls with live music. Everyone is welcome to hold the Torah scrolls and come up for an *aliyah*! You will not want to miss this experience; we will celebrate on campus on **Wednesday evening, October 14 at 6:00pm**.

Attending High Holy Days Services at B'nai Shalom

The High Holy Days are the highlight of our Jewish calendar, and you will notice a strong feeling of community as we celebrate the holidays together throughout the Ten Days of Awe. During the High Holy Days, a dedicated team of volunteer greeters will help maintain our sacred space for prayer and meditation. They will be present at all services at each location and will be available to assist you.

*A note about our practice: As a Conservative synagogue, it is our custom that all **men wear kippot (head coverings)** during services, and women are encouraged to wear them as well. **Kippot and tallitot (prayer shawls)** are available at the entrances to both the sanctuary and social hall. For those coming to the **bimah** for an honor, please wear a head covering. If you are coming up for an **aliyah** (to recite the blessings before and after the Torah reading) or to chant from the Torah, please wear both a head covering and a tallit. We thank you for helping maintain the sanctity of our worship spaces and for honoring these meaningful customs.*

Tickets

High Holy Day **tickets are sent to all members**. Building on the success of last year's specially printed name tags, and in keeping with our goal of fostering a strong community and meaningful connections, we ask that **everyone wear their name tag** when attending services. Name tags will be mailed and come in sleeves; **lanyards** will be available when you check in. Your **name tag serves as your ticket**—no separate ticket is needed.

Additional tickets may be purchased for family members and guests of synagogue members using **Insert #2: Additional Ticket Request Form**. For more information about guest tickets or tickets for community members, please contact the synagogue office.

Cell Phones

To maintain our focus on spiritual values and sacred reflection, personal use of electronic devices, including cell phones, smartphones, cameras, tablets, and similar devices, is not permitted at CBS on Shabbat and Festivals. Devices needed to assist those with hearing or visual impairments are allowed. Exceptions are made for *pikuah nefesh* (saving a life), such as for medical or security personnel, and for approved synagogue functions (e.g., streaming services). Electronic devices can interfere with our sound system and internet webcasting, even when in "silent" or "vibrate" mode. Please keep devices powered off while on synagogue grounds. Greeters, board members, and security staff will have phones available for immediate use in case of emergency.

Childcare

Congregation B'nai Shalom is pleased to offer childcare for our community on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, Tuesday September 23; second day of Rosh Hashanah Wednesday, September 24; Kol Nidre, Wednesday evening, October 1; and Yom Kippur, Thursday

Yamim Noraim 5786 – The Days of Awe 2025

October 2. Please fill out the registration form for Childcare, insert #6 and return it to the office as quickly as possible. Space is limited and available on a first-come first-served basis.

Our childcare program serves children from infants through age 6 (2nd grade). Please prepare to send diapers, wipes, water bottles, sunscreen, and other personal care items with your child. Let us know about any allergies or special circumstances. Check with the office for further details.

All children must be checked in by childcare staff upon arrival and checked out by the parent or guardian. Childcare is available during morning services from 8:45am to 1:00pm, and on Kol Nidre from 6:15pm through the end of the service.

Childcare costs \$25 per child with a \$50 maximum per family. Please contact the office for more details.

Health & Wellness

Congregation B'nai Shalom strongly believes in our communal efforts to keep everyone safe and healthy in line with the Jewish principle of *pekuah nefesh*, the preservation of life.

First and foremost, if you are feeling ill, displaying symptoms of influenza, COVID, or any other illness, or have a positive test for COVID, please stay at home. We wish you a *refuah shleimah*, a full and speedy recovery, and hope you will find meaningful participation from home. And let us know if there is anything we can do for you while you are ill.

Congregation B'nai Shalom welcomes all members of our community to wear high-quality, well-fitting masks acting in the best interest of you and your family members. Various styles of masks are available in the synagogue lobby.

Should you have any questions, please contact Executive Director Stuart Kirsch at skirsch@bshalom.org or 925-934-9446. We thank you for your efforts to keep our entire community safe.

Medical Emergencies

If you or someone around you needs emergency assistance, please contact a greeter, board member, or security guard. They have direct numbers for local police, the fire department, and ambulance service, and can get you help immediately. We have several emergency supply kits, as well as an automatic electronic defibrillator. We will also have food and drink available for those who may need emergency sustenance.

Parking

Parking is limited. To facilitate traffic and parking, we ask for your cooperation in the following ways:

- Please carpool as much as possible.
- The fire lanes must be kept clear. Cars parked in the fire lanes will likely be cited and/or towed.
- Do not park at red curbs along the streets. You may be tagged or towed by the city of Walnut Creek.
- Please be considerate of our neighbors; please be careful not to park on any lawns or block any streets or driveways.
- Please do not park beyond the end of Eckley Lane. At the bend, the street becomes a private road. Cars parked there will be subject to citation and/or towing.

Upon your arrival, please pay attention to signs about specifics or restrictions to parking in the church lot across the street belonging to our friends from Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church. When using these parking lots, please vacate them as soon as possible after services.

Accessible Parking

Individuals with official, valid Disabled Person Vehicle Placards or valid Disabled Vehicle License Plates may **RESERVE** a parking space in our main parking lot. Please see Insert #4: *Accommodations for Accessible Parking*.

Accessible Seating

For information about accessible seating, please see Insert #4: *Accommodations for Accessible Seating*.

Seating and Decorum

The High Holy Days are a time of deep reflection and meditation. Please honor this atmosphere during services and as you enter and leave each worship space. If you are saving a seat for a family member, greeters have been instructed to fill any available seats one hour after the start of the service or at the beginning of the Torah service.

Voices carry easily from outside into the sanctuary; if you need to have a private conversation, please step away from the sanctuary and foyer areas. As on Shabbat, writing and photography, including cell phone use, are not permitted on synagogue grounds. Congregation B'nai Shalom is a completely non-smoking campus.

IMPORTANT: During the chanting of *Kol Nidre* and *Hineni*, as well as during Torah processions, greeters will keep the sanctuary doors closed to maintain a respectful mood inside. If you need to leave the sanctuary during one of those occasions, you may exit from the side vestibules. If you are not already inside the sanctuary at those times, you will be able to enjoy the service from the conference room, which will be set up with an audio and video feed. You may then enter the sanctuary once the greeters re-open the doors.

Security

Security is a communal responsibility that requires everyone's participation. **If you see something** that looks out of the ordinary, please **say something** to a greeter, board member, staff member, or security guard. Security guards will be present for our protection.

Please note that backpacks, bags, and packages may be subject to inspection upon entering the campus.



Yamim Noraim 5786 – The Days of Awe 2025

High Holy Days and Observances at a Glance

Saturday, September 13	S'lihot
Monday, September 22	Erev Rosh Hashanah
Tuesday, September 23	Rosh Hashanah Day 1
Tuesday, September 23	Family Seder & Tashlikh
Wednesday, September 24	Rosh Hashanah Day 2
Friday/Saturday, September 26/27	Shabbat Shuvah
Sunday, September 28	Kever Avot
Sunday, September 28	Reverse Tashlikh
Wednesday, October 1	Kol Nidre
Thursday, October 2	Yom Kippur
Sunday, October 5	Community October 7 Service
Monday, October 6	Erev Sukkot
Tuesday, October 7	Sukkot Day 1
Wednesday, October 8	Sukkot Day 2
Saturday, October 11	Mensch Shabbat
Monday, October 13	Hoshana Rabbah
Tuesday, October 14	Sh'mini Atzeret with Yizkor
Tuesday, October 14	Erev Simhat Torah
Wednesday, October 15	Simhat Torah

***The Clergy, Board of Directors, and Staff
Wish You a Happy, Healthy, and Sweet 5786!
Come Celebrate the High Holy Days with Us!***

Congregation B'nai Shalom 74 Eckley Lane Walnut Creek, CA 94596
925-934-9446 office@bshalom.org