

Guidelines for the Nusach of the High Holy Days
Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur
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(Comments in italics by Rabbi David Lilienthal)

The Eve of Rosh Hashanah and Eve of Yom Kippur

Preliminary Services

In some Liberal and Reform traditions, introductory prayers are said before the Ma'ariv service of Rosh Hashanah. These usually include an introduction by the rabbi and the declaration of the year (5769 for this coming year). (See "Inleidend gebed" after Ma Tovv in the machzor)

A psalm is sung by the cantor and the congregation. In many congregations the psalm is Esa Einai el Heharim (psalm 121). This should be sung in a solemn melody. Highly recommended is the melody found in the Ephros Anthology, vol. 1. (*Not done in the Netherlands*)

The introductory service for Yom Kippur is the Kol Nidrei. Halachically it is not part of the Evening Service (Maariv) but a separate service. The service contains the following parts.

(NB see these comments for the customs in the Liberal communities in The Netherlands):

- Or Zarua for the processional of the Torah scrolls. There is a traditional Nusach melody for this. The melody is repeated 7 times each time in variation. (*Not done in the Netherlands*)
- Bishiva 'shel maalah (in some Reform congregations this is omitted) either declared by the rabbi or sung by the Hazzan in a traditional chant (1 or 3 times according the local custom). (*In NL included in the Rabbi's introductory prayer, at least as I do it, DL*)
- Kol Nidrei must be sung according to the Ashkenazi traditional melody, which is considered (of course erroneously) Mi-Sinai (given to Moses on Sinai *later in this document called Missinai*). There are many variations to this melody. The recommended one is Lewandowski's version, but if you know another version, it is also good provided that it has all the ingredients of the melody.
- Venislach, again the recommended melody is that of Lewandowski. It continues with S'lach Na and Vayomer Adonai .
- Shehecheyanu. Should be sung according to the traditional melody that is used for the Shofar service and (quite interestingly) also for the reading of the Megilla on Purim (*and the beracha for Hallel*).
- If the Eve of Rosh Hashanah or the Eve of Yom Kippur fall on Friday, additional prayers are inserted in the evening service. In some communities (especially Hasidic), the service starts with singing L'cha Dodi according to the regular Shabbat melodies. In most Ashkenazi congregations, however, L'cha Dodi is not sung, but Mizmor Shir L'yom Hashabbat and Adonai Malach (Psalms 92-93) are sung according to the regular Shabbat melodies.

Maariv Service

From Bar' chu to the end of Chatzi Kaddish on both Eves of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the Nusach is the traditional Missinai melody in major, with a few deviations on the 7th degree of the scale. In many congregations Hashkivenu is solemnly sung by cantor and choir. Most of the melodies for this prayer are and should be in minor. However, at the end, the Chazzan must return to the Nusach in major.

On Shabbat, we insert V'sham'ru. This should be sung to a Shabbat melody, but not to a jumpy one. One can digress 'for this purpose to the minor mode, but one must return to the major mode for the Chatzi Kaddish.

The Amida in the Maariv service is silent. On Rosh Hashanah, the Maariv is followed by a Kiddush. Traditionally, at home, this should be chanted according to the Kiddush melody that is sung during the Three Festivals. This can be done in the synagogue as well. But various beautiful composition were written to glorify the Kiddush on Rosh Hashanah Eve, some of them contain chants from the earlier part of the service and some are beautiful and could be used in the synagogue, before Aleinu (*see the Tucker melody on the website and the CD. The traditional melody there is also good*).

Needless to say there is no Kiddush on Yom Kippur Eve. On the Eve of RH and YK the Aleinu is not chanted according to the Grand Melody (*geen Grote Alenoe*), but to the simple Shabbat melody. The Grand Melody is reserved for the Malchuyot section of the Morning Service.

On Yom Kippur Eve, the Amida is followed by a S'lichot service with Piyutim (poems) such as Yaaleh etc. These have various melodies and one is free to choose a melody according to his/her taste and according to the tradition of the congregation. One should pay attention to the melody of the Confessional prayer Ashamnu and Al Chet.

Shacharit of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur

Although some congregations use special chants for the Birchot Hashachar, it is preferable to begin the service in the same way as Shacharit of Shabbat.

The musical Nusach for the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur begins with the work HAMELECH, which is usually printed in big letters in the Machzorim. The chant of Hamelech is considered Missinai and is used for all prayers until the end of Tzur Yisrael. The very ending of each of the B'rachot (the Chatima) is the typical chant which is also used for the Amida.

As to the Amida itself:

- The first berachot of the Amida (Avot & Gevurot) are sung according to another sacred melody, but here there are great differences between Eastern and Central and Western Europe. The Central European Nusach is the one that is found in Lewandowski's Kol Rinah Ut'fillah and is found on your recordings.
- K'dusha can be sung according to the Shabbat chant. But the K'dusha of Naaritzcha (in Mussaf) has some special melody for K'vodo and Mim'komo.
- Special chants are to be used for the rest of the Amida, especially for the parts that start with the word Uv'chen. Most important are the ending of the B'rachot of the Amida, they have a characteristic short musical formula that makes the High Holy Days different from any other time of the year.

The Torah service is also quite distinct. The beginning can be done in the Shabbat chants, but when the Torah is taken out of the Ark, Sh'ma as well as Echad Eloheynu must be chanted to the melody of the HHD. The B'rachot for the Torah have a special melody (?) and so has the Torah reading itself. The Haftara, however, is in the regular Trope.

Returning the Torah to the Ark, one can use Shabbat melodies, but if the HHD is on a weekday, one must remember that the Psalm of the processional is L'david Mizmor Ladonay Haaretz Um'loah (*Psalm 24, see the regular siddur p. 100*). The recommended melody for this is the one by Louis J. Klein (*Zamru Lo*, vol. 3, pp. 80-81).

The Shofar Service of Rosh Hashana has a distinct melody for the B'rachot (similar to the ones for the Megilla reading). The Shofar blower (Ba'al Tokea) is helped by the prompter (Matkia) who calls out the names of the Shofar blasts. This should also be done with a simple chant (*or by imitating the sound of the shofar tone to be blown next*).

Unlike any other day of the year, the blessing of the day (K'dushat Hayom, *the 4th beracha of the Amida*) is divided into three sections called Malchuyot, Zichronot and Shofarot (some pronounce the last as Shofrot).

- Malchuyot is about the majesty and supreme reign of God, therefore the chants should be in the major, or Adonai Malach mode. Zichronot is about God remembering His people, it is soft and therefore is chanted in the minor. A most important part of
- Zichronot is the text Zacharti Lach, the recommended composition for this is Lewandowski's V'al y'dei avadecha.
- Shofarot is about revelation of God as associated with the Shofar on Mount Sinai and the hope for the arrival of the Messianic times. Therefore the music is again in major and is associated with shofar and trumpet calls.

The above does not mean that we can not occasionally digress from the mentioned scales or modes. But we should always return to them. However, the end of these three sections is always a Chatima (ending of a b'rachah) and this should always be chanted in the HHD chant in minor.

On Yom Kippur, the center of the Mussaf service is the Seder HaAvodah, which describes the Temple service on the Holy Day. A Missinai melody is attached to the words V'hakohanim in preparation for prostrating. This melody should be studied. There are two variants for this melody: Central European and Eastern European. We shall follow the Central European one.

Mincha of Yom Kippur

The Mincha service of Yom Kippur has elements from the Shabbat service, such as the Torah service. The Torah is then read in regular, not HHD Trope. But the Amida should be sung according to the HHD Nusach and there are melodies for the Piyutim (poems) of Minchah.

Yizkor Service. The traditional time for Yizkor is during the Shacharit service after the Torah reading (*before returning the Torah to the Ark*). However, in many Reform, Liberal and Conservative congregations this service was moved to after Mincha in order to assure that people will come for the Neila service at the end of Yom Kippur day. The central prayer is El Male Rachamim for which one must learn a chant. The other texts differ from one prayer book to another, but it is good to follow the Lewandowski music whenever possible.

Neilah Service. One of course must know the Portuguese melody for El Nora Alila. The Kaddish of N'eila and the first (*and the second*) b'racha of the Amida of Neila have a chant that is Missinai, but completely different from all the other chants of the HHD Amida. One must learn this melody.

There are some other inserts during the Amida that need our attention and have small melodic formulae (*Ya Shimcha*, "*Amsterdam Kedusha*", *Petach lanu sha'ar* and other smaller ones), . However, the rest of the Amida is exactly in the same melody as the other Amida prayers during the HHD.

At the end of the Neila, there is the grand declaration of the Sh'ma (*Sjeimes*).

In many congregations this is done to the same melody as used in the HHD Torah service.