

Deep (Musical) (Teen) Worship

Naomi Less

SESSION SUMMARY

Music is an integral part of worship, often viewed as an “accessory” or “engagement tool.” But it’s much deeper as a value to worship. Naomi Less, a founding ritual leader at Lab/Shul and an artist/musician-in-residence in countless synagogues across America, can help you develop an understanding of the role of musical experiences in worship. She will also help you develop the tools needed to approach worship where music is not looked at as an accessory but as part of the fabric of crafting intentional worship experiences.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Naomi Less tours communities leading Jewish artistic literacy programs and Jewish rock band programs (Jewish Chicks Rock/Jewish Kids Rock). She is dedicated to Lab/Shul, NYC’s everybody-friendly artist-driven Jewish community, where she serves as a Founding Ritual Leader, Associate Director, and Director of Storahelling. Naomi helps lead Uprooted: A Jewish Response to Fertility Journeys and is an activist for causes that promote the safety and empowerment of young girls worldwide.

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WHAT IS WORSHIP?

Prayer = Play (action)

- From me or from me, to me as well (i.e., praying for something)

Liturgy = Script

- Fixed words in a siddur that one could use for prayer

Worship = Theatre (goal/place one attains when one prays)

- Directionally devoted towards a God (deity?)
- Is it a noun? A verb?

Worship is a way of seeing the world in the light of God.

-Abraham Joshua Heschel

*If God were a **theory**, the study of **theology** would be the way to understand Him. But God is **alive** and in need of **love and worship**. This is why thinking of God is related to our worship. In an **analogy of artistic understanding**, we sing to (God) before we are able to understand (God). We **have to love in order to know**. Unless we learn how to sing, unless we know how to love, we will never learn how to understand Him.*

-Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God in Search of Man* (p. 281)

Without love, all worship is a burden, all dancing is a chore, all music is mere noise.

- Rumi

A POSSIBLE FRAME

Experience a concept musically

- Motif/Mode of music
- Instrumentation
- Invitation in

Conceptual Meaning-Making and Empowerment

- Titles/Frames
- Translation
- Analogies/Modern connections
- Space and time to allow for digestion
- Activity/Experience

Sharing and witnessing (reflection of a different sort)

Circle back to the musical experience

Other opportunities to plant seeds for deep exploration in (teen) worship

- Translation activities
- Nonverbal creative visual reactions
- Songwriting on a particular prayer concept (full song, or melody that invokes spirit)
 - Naomi Less Examples:
 - Hayom T'amtzeinu, Ptach Lanu Sha'ar* (Visit www.soundcloud.com/naomiless)
- Walking (or sitting) meditation
- Witness circles

START FROM WHO YOU ARE EXACTLY WHO YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO BE...

Drum beat heart beat tune to *Lev Tahor (niggun)*

- Pure and simple

Add breath and add the words "*Lev Tahor*" on the beat

Find your natural pulse drumbeat and pulse it on your chest

Body-check

Breath-check

Meditation in...finding your core essence ●

- Scrape away the layers
 - Dirt from the air
 - Labels from the clothes
 - Voices from the circles of influence (friends, family, media, leaders, foes)
 - Deep deep down in the gut of your gut there is a word that exists that captures who you are the quality -- that shines out in the world -- that quality is the holy essence of what makes you you. That's where you start from -- that's the pure, whole you.

Circle back and add music and words

<p><i>Lev Tahor</i> לב טהור</p>	<p>לב טהור ברא-לי אלהים; ורוח נכון חדש בקרבי</p> <p>אל-תשליכני מלפניך; ורוח קדשך אל-תקח ממני</p>	<p><i>Lev tahor, b'ra li</i> <i>Elohim;</i> <i>v'ruach nachon</i> <i>chadesh b'qirbi.</i> <i>Al tashlicheni</i> <i>milfanecha;</i> <i>v'ruach qodsh'cha al</i> <i>tiqach mimeni</i></p>	<p>**I was lovingly created with a pure heart; may the will to serve goodness be renewed in me again. Let me not grow distant from my true self; May the spirit of the Divine always breathe in my soul.</p>
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REFLECTION: THE ELEMENTS OF THE EXPERIENCE

<p>What: (what happened?)</p>	<p>So What: (How did it move you? What were the connections you made and why do you think you connected?)</p>
<p>Now What (for participants -- any motivations for doing, thinking, being, acting, post this experience) (for educators -- how would you help encourage participants to take this to the next place whatever that might be?)</p>	

NO DAY BUT TODAY...

What have you got to lose?

This is an intention practice before the liturgy.

Play the song twice first time they can sing along, the second time, just listen and read.)

There's only us, there's only this
 Forget, regret, or life is yours to miss
 No other path, no other way
 No day but today

There's only now, there's only here
 Give in to love or live in fear
 No other path, No other way
 No day but today

There's only us, only tonight
 We must let go to know what's right
 No other road, No other way
 No day but today

There's only us, There's only this
 Forget, regret, or life is your's to miss
 No other road, no other way
 No day but today

I can't control my destiny
 I trust my soul, my only goal
 Is just to be

(from the Musical RENT)

Explore and share with spiritual witness partners

(Witnesses: see a moment happen, they receive the information and can attest and testify.)

- How do we want to live?
- What does our best self actually look like?
- What do we see in the world that we can't stand, and secretly are concerned that we're starting to show those inclinations in ourselves -- and want to curb them.

After Spiritual Witnesses -- then go into one of the prayers below.

<p><i>Zochreinu</i> זְכַרְנוּ</p>	<p>זְכַרְנוּ לַחַיִּים רוּחַ חַפְצֵי בַחַיִּים וְכַתְּבֵנוּ בְּסֵפֶר הַחַיִּים לְמַעַן אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים</p>	<p><i>Zoch'renu l'chayim, ruach chafets bachayim, v'chat'venu b'sefer hachayim, l'ma'ancha Elohim chayim.</i></p>	<p>May we be remembered in the Book of Life, Let our lives be a blessing to others. May we live each day to its fullest, for the sake of All That is Life.</p>
<p><i>Besefer Chayim</i> בְּסֵפֶר חַיִּים</p>	<p>בְּסֵפֶר חַיִּים בְּרָכָה וְשָׁלוֹם וּפְרֻנְסָה טוֹבָה נִזְכָּר וְנִכְתָּב לְפָנֶיךָ אֲנַחְנוּ וְכָל עַמְּךָ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל לַחַיִּים טוֹבִים וְלְשָׁלוֹם</p>	<p><i>B'seifer chayim b'rachah v'shalom ufarnasah tovah nizacheir v'nikateiv l'fanecha anachnu v'chol am'cha beit Yisra-eil l'chayim tovim ul'shalom</i></p>	<p>Let the Book of Life and Blessing, Prosperity and Love, be opened wide. May the people of Israel, and all of creation, be inscribed for a good and peaceful year. In the Presence of the Infinite we plead: let there be Peace.</p>
<p><i>B'rosh HaShana</i> בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה</p>	<p>בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה יִכְתְּבוּ וּבְיוֹם צוֹם כִּפּוּר יִחַתְּמוּ כַּמָּה יַעֲבִירוּ וְכַמָּה יִבְרָאוּ: מִי יִחַיֶּה וּמִי יָמוּת: מִי בִקְצוֹ וּמִי לֹא בִקְצוֹ מִי בְּאֵשׁ וּמִי בַּמַּיִם מִי בַחֲרֵב וּמִי בַחַיָּה</p>	<p><i>B'rosh Ha'Shana yikateivun uv'yom tzom kipur yeichateimun</i> <i>kamah ya-avrun, v'chamah yibareion: mi yichyeh, umi yamut</i> <i>Mi v'kitzo, umi lo v'kitzo Mi vaeish, umi</i></p>	<p>On Rosh HaShanah we write our intentions, and on Yom Kippur we release control; How many among us will exhale their last breath, and how many new lives will inhale their first? Who will live, and who will die? Who in old age and who young, who in fire and who in water,</p>

<p>מי ברעב ומי בצמא</p>	<p>vamaylm Mi vacherev, umi vachayah Mi vara-a v, umi vatzama</p>	<p>who by man and who by animal, who without food and who without water?</p>
<p>בראש השנה יכתוב אביון צום פפוד יחתימן</p>	<p>B'yosh Ha'Shana yikateivun uv'yom tzom kipur yelchateimun</p>	<p>On Rosh HaShanah we write our intentions, and on Yom Kippur we release control;</p>
<p>מי ברעש, ומי בצנקה מי בחניקה, ומי בסקילה מי יגת, ומי ינוע מי ישקם, ומי יסרף</p>	<p>Mi vara-ash, umi vamagelfah Mi vachanikah, umi vaskifah Mi ya-un-ach, umi yanu-a Mi yishakelt, umi yifareif</p>	<p>Who by disaster and who by sickness, who not breathing and who executed, who will rest and who will be restless, who will find serenity and who feel troubled?</p>
<p>מי ישלו ומי יתסור מי יעני ומי יקשר מי ישפל ומי ירום</p>	<p>Mi yishaleiv, umi yityasar mi yel-aní, umi yel-ashelr mi yishafell, umi yarum</p>	<p>Who will be comforted and who tormented, who will have less and who will have more, who will fall and who will rise?</p>
<p>בראש השנה יכתוב אביון צום פפוד יחתימן</p>	<p>B'yosh Ha'Shana yikateivun uv'yom tzom kipur yelchateimun</p>	<p>On Rosh HaShanah we write our intentions, and on Yom Kippur we release control;</p>
<p>חשובה ותפלה עניקה מצבירין את רע העובה</p>	<p>Ut'shuvah ut'mah utz'dakah malavirin et roa hag'zevrah</p>	<p>But return and recovery, prayer and mindfulness, caring for others with kindness, will bring balance, bliss and blessed being.</p>
<p>בראש השנה יכתוב אביון צום פפוד יחתימן</p>	<p>B'yosh Ha'Shana yikateivun uv'yom tzom kipur yelchateimun</p>	<p>On Rosh HaShanah we write our intentions, and on Yom Kippur we release control;</p>
<p>כי קשמך בן מהלתך קשה לטעום ונח לקצות: כי לא תחפור ב'מות</p>	<p>Ki k'shimcha kein l'hlatecha kasheh l'chos v'hoach litzot: ki lo tachpotz b'mot</p>	<p>The Soul of the Universe is patient and forgiving. Life yearns for us to live, despite our failures, hoping that we return back to life,</p>

	<p>הַמֵּת כִּי אִם בְּשׁוּבוֹ מִדַּרְכּוֹ וְיָסֵד וְעַד יוֹם מוֹתוֹ תִּחְיֶה לוֹ</p> <p>אִם יֵשֵׁב מִיַּד תִּקְבְּלוּ אֶמֶת כִּי אַתֶּם הֵא יִצְרָם וְאַתֶּם יִדְעוּ יִצְרָם כִּי הֵם בְּקֶשֶׁר נָנִים</p> <p>אָדָם יִסְדּוּ לְעֶשֶׂר וְסוֹפוֹ לְעֶשֶׂר: בְּנִפְטוֹ יָבִיא לְחֶסֶד: קִשְׁוֹל כְּתֹמֵם הַנֶּשֶׁבֶר כְּמַעֲדֵר יָבֵט וּבְצִיץ טוֹבֵל כְּצֵל עוֹבֵר</p> <p>וּבְקֶשֶׁן כְּלֵה וּבְרֵחַ וְלִשְׁכַּת וּבְכֶאֱבֵק פּוֹרַח וְכַחֲלוֹם יִעָרֵף וְאַתֶּם הֵא קִלְךְ אֵל נֵר וְקִים</p> <p>בְּרֹאשׁ הַיְּשׁוּנָה יִתְבַּחַן וּבְיוֹם צוֹם כִּפּוּר יִתְבַּחַן</p>	<p>hamet ki im b'shuvo midarko v'chayah V'ad yom moto t'chakeh lo</p> <p>im yashuv miyad t'kab lo Emet ki afah hu yotz'ram v'atah yodei yitzram ki helm basar vadam</p> <p>Adam y'sodo mel-afar v'sofu le-afar b'natsho yavi tachmo mashul k'cheres hanishbar, k'chatzir yavelsh, uch'tzitz novell, k'tzell ovel</p> <p>Uch'tanan kalah, un'hu-ach noshavet, uch'avak porei-ach, v'chacholom ya-ur v'atah hu melech eil chal v'kayam</p> <p>B'rosh Ha'Shana yikatelvun uv'yom tzom kipur yelchafelmun</p>	<p>recover and change. The Soul of the Universe is patient, waiting until our final day for our return.</p> <p>The Source of Creation is welcoming whenever we return, despite our weaknesses, despite being mere flesh and blood.</p> <p>Our origin is dust and our end is dust. At the hazard of our life we earn our bread. We are fragile vessels: grass that withers, flowers that fade, shadows that pass, clouds that vanish, winds that blow, dust that flies away, dreams that disappear. But the Source of Life is Infinite and Everlasting.</p> <p>On Rosh HaShanah we write our intentions, and on Yom Kippur we release control;</p>
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CHESHBON HANEFESH (SPIRITUAL/BODY CHECKLIST MOMENT:

(PreTorah Service, During Amidah, or other moment)

Background:

“The method of *cheshbon hanefesh* was first laid out in a book called, naturally enough, *Cheshbon haNefesh*, written by Rabbi Menachem Mendel Leffin and published in Lvov, Ukraine, in 1812. This book provides a refreshing experience for the modern reader because it offers a practical, step-by-step method of introspection and self-understanding that is much more like a self-help manual than a rabbinic treatise.” (Alan Morinis)

One could review at the 13 qualities of God listed in the *Torah* (*Exodus* 34: 67) that, when the *Torah* comes out, are chanted out loud and compare that to your own life...

13 Qualities/Attributes

1. God of mercy (in general)
2. God of mercy (after a someone has done something wrong)
3. Master of the universe, Sets nature and humanity in motion
4. Loving sympathy for those who suffer and for how fragile humanity is
5. Helping to heal the ill in all of the ways one can heal and raising up the oppressed
6. Slow to anger, ie.e., Patient
7. Full of love, kindness, goodness
8. Truthful
9. Long-term memory of kindness of those before you for a thousand generations
10. Deals with the fact that humanity fails (often)
11. Also understands that sometimes failings can seem like a direct affront to God on purpose
12. Gets that humanity also misses the mark without any malice
13. Has a long memory for those who demonstrate intentional evil -- they will get theirs in time even if it takes a few generations.

Simple *Cheshbon HaNefesh* Checklist (meditation)

- Health check
- Creativity/Putting energy into the world check
- Being loving or present to others check
- Activating justice muscles check

<p><i>Elohai Nitzor</i> אלהי נצור</p>	<p>אלהי נצור לשוני מרע ושקטני מדבר מרקה ולמקללי נפשי תדם ונפשי כעקר לכל תקה</p> <p>פתח לבי בתורתך ובמצותיך תרדוף נפשי</p>	<p><i>Elohai n'tsor P'shoni mera us'fatai midaber mimmah Vellmqal'lai nafshi bidom v'nafshi ke'afar lakol d'hyeh</i></p> <p><i>P'tach lbi b'toratecha uv'mitsvatecha tirdof nafshi</i></p>	<p>My Deepest Source: tie my tongue from evil and seal my lips from lies. Even when others curse me, Let my mouth stay silent and my soul remain humble, like the dust of the earth.</p> <p>Let my heart be opened by the wisdom of Torah. Let my soul not tire from the pursuit of justice.</p>
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	<p>יהי לכבוד אמרי פי והגיון לבי לפניך יהיה צדקי וגאלי</p>	<p>Yih'yu Pratson Imrey # v'hegyon libi P'fanecha. Adonal tsuri v'go'al</p>	<p>May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart search for their Source, land on their Rock, find their Redemption.</p>
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THE FOCUS OF HIGH HOLY DAY PRAYER -- GOD OPTIONAL*?

In a god-optional, god-questioning, god-wrestling world, how do we understand, participate in, feel comfort or resonate with the deep and heavy focus of surrendering, supplicating, and requesting to an extremely anthropomorphic sense of God in the YK and RH liturgy?

(*God-optional is a term coined and used by the spiritual leadership of Lab/Shul, NYC)

<p><i>Avinu Malkenu</i> אבינו מלכנו</p>	<p>אבינו מלכנו סתמנו בספר חיים טובים אבינו מלכנו חפש צלינו שנה טובה</p>	<p><i>Avinu malkenu chatmenu b'sefer chayim tovim Avinu malkenu chadesh aleynu shanah tovah</i></p>	<p>Our Parent, Our Creator: Let our names be written for a good life. Our Power, Our Source: Let us be renewed for a good year.</p>
	<p>אבינו מלכנו סגנו וענונו כי אין בנו מעשים עשה עמנו צדקה וחסד והושיענו</p>	<p><i>Avinu malkenu chonenu va'anenu, ki eyn banu ma'asim, aseh lmanu ts'dakah vachesed v'hoshi'enu</i></p>	<p>Our Parent, Our Creator, Our Power, Our Source: Respond to these prayers with compassion - for we have come broken, bereft of good deeds. May we be worthy of kindness, justice, and redemption.</p>

<p><i>Ki anu amecha</i> כי אנחנו עמך</p>	<p>כי אנחנו עמך ואתה אלהינו אנו בניך ואתה אבינו</p>	<p><i>Ki anu amecha, v'atah Eloheinu Anu va'necha v'atah avinu</i></p>	<p>For we are Your people, and You are our Source. We are Your children, and You are our Parent.</p>
	<p>אנו עבדיך ואתה אדוננו</p>	<p><i>Anu avadecha, v'atah adoneinu</i></p>	<p>We are Your servants, and You are our Master.</p>
	<p>אנו קהלך ואתה חלקנו אנו נחלתך ואתה</p>	<p><i>Anu k'halecha, v'atah chelkeinu Anu nachalatecha, v'atah goraleinu</i></p>	<p>We are Your congregation, and You are our Heritage.</p>

גורלנו		We are Your possession, and You are our Destiny.
אנו צאנך ואתה רוענו	Anu tzonecha, v'atah roel-nu	We are Your flock, and You are our Shepherd.
אנו כרמך ואתה נוסרנו	Anu karmecha, v'atah not'reinu	We are Your vineyard, and You are our Light.
אנו קטלתך ואתה יוצרתנו	Anu f'ulatecha, v'atah yotz'reinu	We are Your creatures, and You are our Creator.
אנו רעיתך ואתה דודנו	Anu rayatecha, v'atah dodelnu	We are Your faithful, and You are our Beloved.
אנו סגולתך ואתה אלהינו	Anu s'gulatecha, v'atah Eloheinu	We are Your treasure, and You are our Protector.
אנו עשך ואתה מלכנו אנו מאמיריך ואתה מאמירנו	Anu amecha, v'ata malkeinu Anu ma-amirecha, v'atah ma-amireinu	We are Your subjects, and You are our Ruler. We are one of Your chosen, and You are our Chosen One.
אנו עזי פנים ואתה רחום וחנון אנו קשי ערף ואתה ארך אפים	Anu azel fanim, v'atah rachum v'chanun; Anu k'sheu oref v'atah erech apayim	We are arrogant, but You are merciful. We are obstinate, but You are patient.
אנו מלאי עון ואתה קלא רחמים אנו ימינו כצל עובר ואתה הוא ושנותיך לא	Anu m'lei-el avon, v'atah malei rachamim anu yameinu k'tzell oveir, v'atah hu ush'notecha lo yitamu	We are burdened with faults, but Compassion is Eternal. We are a passing shadow, but Our Source is Infinite.

**The original poetic liturgical translations in this ritual are a continual work in process, reflecting our sincere love for the ancient Hebrew poetry as well as our commitment to a more modern, mindful, gender-neutral, and abstract understanding of prayer. Our translations challenge the hierarchical “art thou” directional relationship between us and the Divine, embracing what Judith Plaskow calls a relationship that “is with us instead of over us, a partner in dialogue who ever and again summons us to responsible action.” This 2016 version of liturgical translations was co-created by Lab/Shul’s Liturgy Task Force, led by Amichai LauLavie and Ezra Bookman, along with Shira Kline, Naomi Less, and Rabbi David Kline.

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