



RABBI DALIA MARX, PhD

From Time to Time *Journeys in the Jewish Calendar*

Study and Discussion Guide

by Audrey Honig
CCAR Press Rabbinic Intern



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Introduction

From Time to Time: Journeys in the Jewish Calendar is an invitation to step into Jewish time: not only to understand Jewish time, but to root ourselves in it.

In this book, Rabbi Dalia Marx, PhD, crafts a narrative of the Jewish year that is rich with history, liturgy, song, stories, and innovation. We encounter the rhythm of the Jewish holidays and the various ways they are observed and understood. In reading and discussing this book, learners will gain a deeper understanding of the flow of Jewish time and the various ways that Jews have connected with time across our history. Further, this English version of *From Time to Time* offers a meaningful opportunity for English-speaking readers to learn about Jewish time from an Israeli perspective.

This study and discussion guide can be used in numerous settings: book clubs, classes, *chavruta* (paired) learning, Rosh Chodesh groups, family learning, or individual reflection. This guide is meant to foster deep understanding of the text, as well as thematic conversations that go beyond the pages of the book. The guide was designed with the following learning objectives:

1. **Understanding:** Participants will deepen their knowledge about the Jewish year, Jewish history, and Jewish practice.
2. **Big Questions:** Participants will reflect on the major themes that Rabbi Marx presents, including family, love, and tradition.
3. **Israel:** Participants will explore how Jews in Israel and the Diaspora relate differently to Jewish time.
4. **Creativity:** Participants will actively engage with the teachings of this book through creative exercises and prompts.

In this guide, readers and teachers will find questions associated with each Hebrew month. Page references are provided for all questions that link with a passage in the text, even when they do not quote directly from the book; these numbers do not generally point to an answer to the question, but serve as a reference for teachers and learners. A smaller number of questions are related to general themes, and therefore do not correspond to a specific page. The creative entryways at the beginning of the study guide offer ways to encounter the text through various active modes, including journaling and music. These exercises can be used to connect with any chapter.

Jewish time is both ancient and constantly renewing. *From Time to Time* reflects this delightful complexity and invites us into its wonder. May the experience of deeply reading and robustly discussing *From Time to Time* foster connections with Judaism, time, and other learners.

Creative Entryways

The following ideas for creatively engaging with the text can be used for any month. They can be adapted either for individual practice or shared among a group.

1. **Opening:** You might choose to begin your discussion group with reflections about the nature of time in general. Why is time so important in Jewish tradition? Why do we humans seek to mark time at all? What emotions do you associate with the passing of time?
2. **Senses:** At the beginning of each chapter, Rabbi Marx opens with descriptive sentences about how each month tastes, smells, sounds, and looks. Write or share a few of your own sensory reflections for each Hebrew month. What tastes, smells, sounds, and sights do you remember experiencing this month?
3. **Stories:** Rabbi Marx enriches our understanding of the Hebrew calendar through personal stories and experiences. Try writing journal entries about your life during each month. How might it enrich your journaling to connect your stories with Jewish time?
4. **Music:** Listen to this playlist (<https://ccar.co/timeplaylist>) with many of the songs that are referenced in *From Time to Time*. This can be paired with a discussion group or enjoyed while reading.
5. **Calendar:** One tangible way to connect with Jewish time is to add the Jewish date to your cell phone or paper calendar. The [Reform Luach](#) is a Jewish calendar app from CCAR Press for Apple and Android. How might this action enrich your experience of learning about Jewish time and living Jewishly?
6. **Hebrew:** Reading *From Time to Time* can be a great way to connect with the Hebrew language. Using the glossary as a starting point, you might make a goal to learn one unfamiliar Hebrew term per month. Learn the word's Hebrew root and other words that share the same root. (Much of this information can be found through an internet search.) How do these connections deepen your understanding of the Hebrew language and the words you are learning?

TISHREI

Human Time, Cosmic Time

- The words of the *Amidah* that mention rain starting on Sh'mini Atzeret and dew starting on Passover mark the changing seasons in the Jewish calendar. How might those of us living outside of Israel connect with these words differently than the buoyant excitement that Rabbi Marx describes in Israeli synagogues? *See pages 8, 44.*
- Reflect on markers of the seasons in your home. Are there changes in the seasons that you greet with such enthusiasm?

Un'taneh Tokef

- *Un'taneh Tokef* is a central *piyut* in the High Holy Day liturgy. It expresses our uncertainty through disquieting lines that wonder “who will live and who will die” (10) in the coming year. Following the Yom Kippur War, Yair Rosenblum composed music for a modified version of the text to express his anxiety as an Israeli at the time. Looking at the words of *Un'taneh Tokef*, how do uncertainty, comfort, and empowerment interact in the text? *See page 10.*
- The origin of *Un'taneh Tokef* is mythologized in the gruesome story of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz, while its historical origin dates back much earlier. How does the story of Rabbi Amnon change your relationship to this *piyut*? *See page 10.*
- Listen to the three musical interpretations of *Un'taneh Tokef* that Rabbi Marx describes (Yair Rosenblum, traditional *nusach*, Leonard Cohen’s “Who by Fire”). What emotions or questions does each of these settings bring up for you as you listen? *See page 9.*
- Which of these tunes would you most like to hear in a synagogue on Rosh HaShanah? Would you listen to any of the settings outside of a synagogue?

Forgiveness

- We learn in *Mishnah Yoma* 8:9 that for transgressions carried out against another person, we must seek out forgiveness from them, as Yom Kippur rituals alone do not affect forgiveness. Have you had an impactful experience with forgiveness that you would like to reflect upon? *See page 15.*
- What prevents us from asking for forgiveness? What prevents us from granting it? Do you resonate with the model for forgiveness described in this *iyun*? *See page 15.*

Kol Nidrei

- Rabbi Marx explores the possible connections between the incantation bowls found in the Babylonian city of Nippur and the legal text of *Kol Nidrei* that we use in our liturgy. How does this connection impact your intellectual and emotional understanding of the text? How do the legal language and “magical thinking” of the bowls interact? Might they complement each other? *See page 19.*

- Why do you think the Rabbis were so wary of people making vows? Do you share this hesitation about making promises or vows? *See page 19.*

Sukkot

- Rabbi Marx shares several impacts of dwelling in a *Sukkah*, including creating community, changing one's routine, and connecting with nature. Does one of these resonate with you the most? Are there others you've noticed? *See page 23.*
- How does sitting in a sukkah support the act of remembering, both personally and communally? What should we remember in the sukkah? *See pages 23, 40.*

Simchat Torah

- Rabbi Marx teaches: "Simchat Torah is a holiday that reminds us that the Torah belongs to all, to anyone who chooses to love it, study it, and make it into the light that illuminates our path and slakes our thirst for knowledge" (30). In what settings or times do you feel that the Torah belongs to you? Have you ever experienced exclusion from Torah or the Jewish community?
- How can we create a Jewish community where everyone feels a sense of ownership of the Torah?

Simanim—Symbolic Foods

- Rabbi Marx introduces the symbolic food items on the Rosh HaShanah table that represent blessings and curses for the year to come. What is the significance of eating something as an act of wishing (or even praying)? Why is food such a salient symbol in so many cultures, including Judaism? *See page 31.*
- Rabbi Marx writes: "And what wish shall we make at a Rosh HaShanah meal over shepherd's pie, pasta, lemon mousse, or chocolate cake? The possibilities are endless! The dinner table on Rosh HaShanah (and other holidays as well, of course) can become a creative workshop for children and adults, where smiles and heartfelt good wishes are all part of the experience" (34). What food items would you want to add to your Rosh HaShanah table? If you are learning in a group, you might invite each person to write or say their own creative blessing to pair with these foods.

Vidui—Confessional Prayers

- Why do you think that we use fixed texts for *Vidui*, our confessional prayer? What is the impact of confessing each sin in the plural tense? Would you connect more with a spontaneous confession, or do you resonate with the fixedness of *Vidui*? *See page 35.*
- Rabbi Marx showcases a series of new *Vidui* prayers. Do you connect with one of these creative texts in particular? *See pages 37–39.*
- One category of new *Vidui* prayers empowers us to confess the good we have done along with the bad. Why do you think there is a trend to add more balance or positivity to these prayers? Do you agree with this impulse? *See page 38.*

MARCHESHVAN

The Blessing of Routine

- Rabbi Marx teaches that because Marcheshvan is a month with no *chagim* (holidays), we can appreciate the blessing of routine. In what ways is routine a blessing? What is your favorite part of your routine? *See page 53.*

Praying for Rain

- What may water symbolize in Jewish culture? What may rain represent in Israel, a land that often suffers from drought? *See page 44.*
- The day when Jews begin requesting rain in the *Amidah* was carefully selected so that all those who had a long pilgrimage to Jerusalem for Sukkot could return home before the rain began. What does this choice teach us about the nature of petition in prayer? *See page 53.*
- What role, if any, does petition play in your relationship to prayer?

Yitzchak Rabin Memorial Day

- On the twelfth of Marcheshvan, Israelis remember the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin, *z"l*, in 1995. Rabbi Marx suggests, “I believe that it would be better not to focus the day’s events on the victim’s personality alone; instead, we would be wise to lift our sights and use this difficult day to ask questions of principle related to our very existence—as people created in the divine image, and as Jews in the State of Israel” (59). Do you agree with Rabbi Marx’s idea that a memorial day for a specific individual (such as Martin Luther King Jr. Day) should lift up major themes of the nation as a whole, or do you think it should it mostly focus on the person who is being honored?
- What is the place of individual memory during a collective memorial day?

Jeroboam’s Innovation

- Rabbi Marx describes King Jeroboam’s creation of a new holiday that did not become canonized into our tradition. What was Jeroboam, the first king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (tenth-century BCE), protesting against through the creation of his new holiday? What was considered subversive or problematic about this holiday? *See page 60.*
- Are there certain qualities that make an innovation like this “stick” over time? When might it be helpful to add a new holiday to our canon, and when is it better to find new meaning within a day that is already marked?

Sigd

- What is the Sigd, and what are its major rituals and themes? How does it relate to Yom Kippur? *See page 63.*
- Rabbi Marx describes the lively atmosphere of Sigd in Jerusalem, in which efforts are made to include non-Ethiopians in the holiday through education. What do you think the impacts of this open approach are for Ethiopian Jews as they celebrate, and for interested visitors as they join in? *See page 65.*

KISLEV

The Temple

- Worship at the Temple and longing for it after its destruction have played central roles in Jewish tradition. What was the role of the Jerusalem Temple? What are the possible advantages and disadvantages of having a centralized place of worship? *See page 80.*
- Rabbi Marx traces her evolving relationship with remembering the Temple, from aversion to connection. How do you relate to the memory of the Jerusalem Temple? *See page 80.*
- Since its beginning in the United States, Reform liturgy has not included petitions to rebuild the Temple or reinstitute the sacrificial service. Why do you think this choice was made? Would you make a different choice?

Chanukah

- In the Midrashic story of Adam (the first human being), Chanukah is presented as Adam's fearful response to the lengthening of winter days (Babylonian Talmud *Avodah Zarah* 8a). While we know that the holiday of Chanukah is actually based on the Maccabean Revolt, why do you think there is an impulse to trace this holiday to the first human? *See page 76.*
- How is Chanukah similar to other wintertime festivals? How is it unique? What can we learn from both these similarities and differences? *See page 78.*
- The schools of Hillel and Shammai held two opposite opinions about how to light a *chanukiyah* (Chanukah candelabra). What are these approaches, and what do they help us see about these schools' worldviews? Which one resonates most with you? *See page 82.*
- A challenge: This Chanukah, try out both Hillel and Shammai's approaches to lighting Chanukah lights, as Rabbi Marx does with her family. What does this bring up for you? *See page 83.*

The "December Dilemma"

- An American reading about the "December Dilemma" might have a very different perspective than an Israeli writing about it. How do you define the "December Dilemma"? What stories or experiences from your own life can you share about this topic? *See page 84.*
- In what ways is your experience of Chanukah informed by your local culture? Do you experience your Jewish identity differently during December?

Prayer of the Month: *Chanukat HaBayit* (Dedication of a Home)

- There is a traditional blessing recited when one enters a new home. However, Rabbi Marx suggests that a home can be dedicated during times other than just “moving in.” For example, even reorganizing a junk drawer can bring a new dedication to one’s home. Is there a semi-ordinary task that might help you rededicate a feeling of *home* within your home? Which of the prayers offered in this *iyun* would you use for this occasion? Would you like to create your own? See page 91.

TEVET

Id Al-banaat—Festival of Women

- Id Al-banaat is a festival, particularly in North African Jewish communities, that celebrates Jewish women. Do we still need a festival focused on Jewish women? If so, how should it be celebrated and what should it celebrate? *See page 100.*
- Who is a woman that you would like to celebrate? How can you honor her this month?
- Choose one of the women whose stories are described in this chapter (Jephthah's daughter, Judith, Matityahu's daughter) and dedicate more time to reading her story in the sources provided. (Yiftach's daughter: [Judges II](#); Judith: [Book of Judith](#); Matityahu's Daughter, Chanah: [Midrash Maaseh Chanukah](#)). *See pages 101–4.*
- How do these characters work within the gender system of their time, and how do they challenge it? *See pages 101–4.*

Fast Days of Tevet

- What is the reason given for the fast on the tenth of Tevet, as well as the fast days that are no longer practiced on the eighth and ninth of Tevet? How do these three days form a group? *See page 108.*
- Why do you think some historical events leave a lasting impact on our calendar, while others fade away into history? Which events would you commemorate on the Jewish calendar? *See page 108.*
- Rabbi Marx discusses the curious dynamics of translating the Torah into Greek that led to the (no longer practiced) fast day on the eighth of Tevet. Why was this translation seen as a tragic event? Do you agree? What are the pros and cons of translating a sacred text into another language? *See page 109.*

Hebrew Language Day

- Hebrew Language Day is on the twenty-first of Tevet, celebrating the revival of Hebrew as a spoken language. What is your connection to the different layers of Hebrew (Biblical, liturgical, spoken)?
- What was the special role of the Hebrew language for the Jewish people before political Zionism? When and how did Jews encounter it and how did it serve to maintain a sense of peoplehood? *See page III.*
- Why was the Hebrew language so important in the development of Zionism? Why did its renewal create objection? *See page III.*
- The development of and emphasis on Hebrew as a modern language has led to other Jewish languages, such as Yiddish, Ladino, and Judeo-Arabic to be downplayed,

ignored, or nearly lost. Should efforts be made to maintain a variety of Jewish languages, or should Hebrew be embraced as the primary language of the Jewish people today? *See page 113.*

Bedtime *Sh'ma*

- What feelings or vulnerabilities does the liturgy of *Sh'ma* before bed seek to address? Have you had experiences of saying *Sh'ma* before going to bed? *See page 115.*
- What helps you to feel at peace before going to sleep? If you have children, what helps them feel at peace before going to sleep?

SH'VAT

Tu BiSh'vat

- Tu BiSh'vat has changed significantly throughout its development—both in the way it is observed and the values it celebrates. Its lack of halachic (Jewish legal) requirements allowed for it to acquire new meanings and forms of celebration. How might you title each of the six “stops” in the development of Tu BiSh'vat that Rabbi Marx offers? *See pages 123–27.*
- Which of these different versions of Tu BiSh'vat are you drawn to? Is there a central message in Tu BiSh'vat that unites these developments?
- Compare the “Ecological Confessional” by Rabbi Moti Rotem (126) to the traditional and innovative *Vidui* prayers in Tishrei (37–39). How does it feel to confess these environmental transgressions in the plural, compared to the transgressions listed in the traditional *Vidui* prayer? How might this environmental *Vidui* be used in our High Holy Day liturgy?
- Tu BiSh'vat is based on the climate and seasons of the land of Israel. How does it feel to celebrate Tu BiSh'vat where you live, when the growing season may not match with Israel's? Does it feel obvious or challenging to celebrate trees at this point in the year?
- Rabbi Marx teaches that the Tu BiSh'vat seder can be a powerful setting for personal transformation, in which different types of fruits represent personal challenges many of us face. What does each of these types of fruit represent? Do one of these three categories resonate with you as an area where you might commit to growth? *See page 127.*

Shabbat Shirah

- Why is there a need for a special Shabbat to celebrate song? What are the social, cultural, and emotional features of song and singing? *See page 133.*
- Which traditional songs are centered in Shabbat Shirah? How are these songs connected to each other? *See page 133.*
- What songs connect you with certain times of year, or with times in your life?
- Rabbi Marx describes the complex dynamics between secular and liturgical music in contemporary Israel. Why do you think there is a blurring between these categories in Israel? Do you see a similar dynamic in the music common in your community? In your opinion, what elements make a song “liturgical” or “secular”? *See page 136.*

Family Day

- In North America, we celebrate Mother's Day and Father's Day, while Israelis now celebrate Family Day. What do these two approaches teach us about different understandings of "family"? What does "family" mean to you? *See pages 138–39.*
- Are there blessings or prayers for your family that you share regularly or on special occasions? You are invited to share one of the prayers in this chapter, or even write your own, with your family. *See page 141.*

ADAR

Joy

- In Adar, we are said to “increase joy” (Babylonian Talmud, *Taanit* 29a). What does joy mean to you? *See page 148.*
- What can you do to increase your joy in the coming days? What can you do to increase the joy of somebody else?
- Do you agree with the premise of increasing joy during a certain time? How might this be helpful to us? How might it be challenging? *See page 149.*

Exile

- The story of Purim features exile as a central topic. Rabbi Marx presents two views on exile: one, the traditional definition that exile is living outside of the land of Israel; the other, that exile is an existential state of alienation and displacement regardless of physical place. Which definition do you think is more aptly applied to the story of Purim? How do you define and experience exile? *See page 151.*

Adar Bet

- What is the challenge of the Jewish year that the institution of Adar Bet seeks to address? *See page 156.*
- The Rabbis in ancient times often had disagreements about the timing of events and holidays, and whether the calendar should include leap years. Why do you think the calendar was so central for Jews throughout the generations? *See page 157.*
- Adar Bet adjusts the Jewish calendar to function in both lunar and solar time. What different systems of time are influential in your life (such as Jewish, Gregorian, professional, academic, personal)? How do you negotiate between these different calendars? In what ways might Adar Bet serve as an example for us as we live in relationship to time?

Costumes

- Purim is a holiday full of creativity about gender. Some central characters in *M’gillat Esther* do not conform to traditional gender roles, and gender-crossing costumes have been worn on Purim for hundreds of years. Why do you think several halachic authorities who lived in traditional cultural contexts generally not supportive of gender-crossing clothing permitted this practice on Purim? *See pages 160–62.*
- How do you use clothing to express yourself? How does dressing up in costumes change how we feel beneath the surface?

- If you're learning in a group, invite everyone to bring a picture of themselves in their favorite costume, either from childhood or more recently. Why is this costume important to you?

Purim Sheini

- What does Purim Sheini honor? What themes of Purim itself are centered in these commemorations? *See page 163.*
- Rabbi Marx suggests: "Perhaps the concept of a Second Purim can be broadened even further. . . . In this manner, the general national holiday sends out a sort of secret internal hint or message to individuals, families, and communities to personalize the holiday and give meaning to important events in their history" (165). What holidays can you imagine that would honor your community, family, or personal journey?

NISAN

Another Beginning?

- In the Torah and in ancient Israel, Nisan is the first month of the Hebrew calendar: “This month shall mark for you the beginning of the months; it shall be the first of the months of the year for you” (Exodus 12:2). How might the calendar feel different if we thought of this time of year as our beginning? *See page 172.*

Redemption

- Nisan is considered central for Jewish redemption both past and future. Rabbi Y’hoshua says: “In Nisan they were redeemed; In Nisan they will again be redeemed” (Babylonian Talmud, *Rosh HaShanah* 11a). What does redemption mean to you? *See page 177.*

Jewish Peoplehood and the Ten Lost Tribes

- Rabbi Marx describes the encounter in which Eldad HaDani claimed to have identified the ten lost tribes, reporting to the Jews of Kairouan. What emotions do you imagine this Jewish community might have felt while hearing Eldad HaDani speak? *See page 181.*
- What feelings or questions does it bring up for you to think about lost tribes or groups of people who might share common roots to the Jewish community?
- What does it mean to be part of a “people?” What divides us, and how can we begin to heal those divides?

Women and Gender on Passover

- Passover is the festival of freedom. How do the stories and rituals of Passover uplift women’s freedom? How are some elements of Passover limited in regard to gender? *See page 184.*

Mimouna

- What are the primary customs of Mimouna? What are the different possible origins of this practice? What do these origin stories help us understand about this holiday in general? *See page 189.*
- Rabbi Marx introduces the challenge of whether Mimouna should be a public holiday enjoyed by all Israelis or centered in the Moroccan Jewish community. What are the effects of these two approaches? Which approach would you follow? *See page 192.*

Holocaust Memorial Day

- Rabbi Marx mentions that fewer prayers were composed to commemorate the Holocaust compared with other disasters for the Jewish people. Why do you think this is the case? *See page 194.*
- What prayers, readings, or ways of gathering do you think are most fitting to commemorate the Holocaust?

***S'firat HaOmer*—Counting of the Omer**

- *S'firat HaOmer* counts the days between Passover and Shavuot, marking a period that stands between redemption (Passover) and revelation (Shavuot). What experiences do you have of counting down or counting up to something important? *See page 198.*
- How does it feel to be “in between” two major moments in Jewish time? In your life?
- Several cycles of Torah study are described in this chapter that can enrich one’s personal experience of counting the Omer, including study of the Kabbalistic *s'firot*, diving deep into the letters of “The Menorah Psalm” (Psalm 67), or studying from *Pirkei Avot*. Did one of the practices in this chapter call to you? If so, how might you incorporate this study into the period of the Omer? *See page 200.*

IYAR

Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzma-ut

- Rabbi Marx describes the complex transition between Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzma-ut in Israeli society: “According to Israeli law, Yom HaAtzma-ut begins at 8:00 p.m. At that time, the mourning nation sighs, lifts up its head, and bursts out in celebration all at once. But the joy is not disconnected from the sadness. To a great extent, the two days define and shape one another” (214). Why do you think Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzma-ut are placed next to one another in the Israeli calendar?
- What impact might it have on the emotional state of the nation and on individuals to quickly transition between these two contrasting days? *See page 214.*
- Do you think that Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzma-ut should be observed by non-Israeli Jews? If so, how?
- This is a fitting time of year to reflect on our connections to Israel. How do you connect with Israel? What makes you proud? What challenges you?

IDF *Yizkor* Prayer

- There has been ongoing disagreement about the military *Yizkor* prayer in Israel regarding who should be asked to remember the fallen soldiers: God or the people of Israel. What are the dynamics of this challenge? How would you suggest this challenge be approached? *See page 216.*

Yavneh

- Rabbi Marx shares the story of the establishment of Yavneh as a new center of Jewish life and learning in the wake of Jerusalem’s fall. She suggests that the Jewish community should long not only for “Jerusalem” but also for “Yavneh.” What is represented by Yavneh that we might long for today? Do you share her opinion? *See page 224.*
- What forms of Jewish learning are available to you? Do you feel any longing for additional styles of Jewish learning?

Lag BaOmer

- Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai’s birth, wedding, and *yahrzeit* are commemorated on Lag BaOmer in a joyful tone, as is the case with *yahrzeits* of other righteous people. What effect might this have on the way we view this figure? Do you think it makes sense to “celebrate” the *yahrzeit* of a great figure like this, or would a solemn day be more fitting? *See page 232.*
- Rabbi Marx speaks about three dimensions of Lag BaOmer—Jewish mysticism, Jewish nationality, and the connection to non-Jewish summer festivals, such as May Day. What do each of these dimensions represent? Which one of these approaches most appeals to you? *See pages 232–35.*

SIVAN

***Bikurim* —First Fruits**

- Rabbi Marx describes the declaration that is to accompany the bringing of *bikurim* from Deuteronomy 26. She writes: “The people’s entire history is directed toward the foundational moment when the farmer brings the first produce of the land” (251). What parts of Israelite history are emphasized in this script and which are left out? What might you amend for a modern “*Bikurim* Declaration” about Jewish identity today?
- The poem “*Bikurim*” by Rabbi Tamar Duvdevani challenges us to take stock of ourselves to see what has ripened in our lives. What has bloomed for you recently? What do you hope to see blooming? *See page 245.*

Kashrut—Kosher Food

- Do you connect with your Jewish identity through food? Is keeping kosher part of this practice for you? If so, how do you define kashrut?
- Rabbi Marx suggests ten innovative guidelines to determine the kashrut of food, including enjoyment, concern for animals, and gratitude. How do these matters relate to each other? How are they in tension? Are there other guidelines that you would add? *See page 257.*
- Create a meal that responds in some way to each of these ten rules. Which of these additional rules are the most challenging? The most rewarding? *See page 257.*

Book of Ruth

- The Book of Ruth features Ruth’s story of choosing to join the Jewish people. What are some of the challenges that Jews-by-choice face in Israeli society today? In your community? What are some of the efforts to make the Jewish community more open to Jews-by-choice? *See page 259.*
- The Talmudic story of Hillel and Shammai’s response to a person who wanted to convert reveals two conflicting attitudes towards conversion to Judaism (Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbat* 31a). How would you describe their differences? What is the assumption behind the convert’s request of them? How would you respond to Hillel and Shammai? *See page 258.*
- If you are a Jew-by-choice, what did reading this *iyun* evoke for you? What advice would you give to your home community and to Israelis about creating a welcoming environment for all Jews?

Torah and Children

- Shavuot has historically been a popular time for children's initiation ceremonies into Torah study, as well as modern confirmation ceremonies. What do these ceremonies set out to do? *See page 262.*
- Confirmation ceremonies are common to many liberal Jewish communities today. In what ways are Jewish confirmation ceremonies influenced by other cultures, and how are they made uniquely Jewish? *See page 264.*
- Design a ceremony to welcome children to Jewish learning and living. What might it include? At what age do you think this is most impactful?

TAMMUZ

Fast of the Seventeenth of Tammuz

- What are the five tragic events that are associated with the Seventeenth of Tammuz according to *Mishnah Taanit 4:6*? How do these events form a group? *See page 277.*
- Rabbi Marx offers a meditation of *tikkun* (repair) for each of these five tragedies. Does one of these offerings stand out to you as the most exciting or crucial? *See page 277.*

Vacations and Rest

- During the Hebrew month of Tammuz, Israeli schoolchildren begin their summer vacations. What might you add to Beit Tefilah Israeli's prayer for students and teachers as they embark on their summer breaks? *See page 295.*
- What does Shabbat look like for you? What brings you joy, and what challenges you, about Shabbat? *See page 282.*
- What is the relationship between Shabbat and *Sh'mitah* (a year of rest for the land that comes every seven years)? What lessons might we learn from letting our land lie still for a year and releasing debts? Are there debts in our society that we should consider releasing? *See page 284.*
- Rabbi Marx describes two categories of rest: passive rest and active rest. In passive rest, we turn to distractions, such as social media. In active rest, we find ways to be truly present in the moment. Have you had meaningful experiences with active rest? Why is it difficult at times to actively rest, and what strategies can help us? *See page 283.*

Tammuz and Inanna

- The Babylonian god Tammuz made an impact on Jewish tradition through the name of this month and a curious reference in Ezekiel. What was your reaction to reading an ancient Babylonian myth in a book about Jewish time? *See page 288.*
- In the resolution to the story, Tammuz and Inanna are destined to spend only part of the year together, spending the rest of the time apart. What can we learn from this story about cycles, relationships, and nature? *See page 290.*

Protest Movements

- Tammuz is associated with the start of the Israeli "cottage cheese protests" in 2011. Rabbi Marx explores the Jewish ethos and value of protest. Have you ever taken part in a protest? Do you experience protest as a uniquely Jewish action? *See page 291.*

- Rabbi Marx describes creation as the first protest. How is this so? Do you believe that protest is an act of creation? *See page 291.*
- Rabbi Marx writes: “. . . the scope of the protests in 2011 pale in comparison to the protests of 2023” (291). In response to Prime Minister Netanyahu’s changes to the judicial system, Israelis protested weekly and sometimes daily throughout the country over the course many months. Are there issues in your country that you can imagine would elicit this level of response?

AV

Tishah B'Av

- Several historic tragedies of the Jewish people are acknowledged and mourned on Tishah B'Av, both ancient and recent. What are the possible effects of honoring multiple tragedies on the same day? *See page 305.*
- Rabbi Marx notes the contrast of decreasing intensity in personal mourning customs and increasing intensity in our national mourning customs between the Seventeenth of Tammuz and Tishah B'Av. She offers some suggestions of why this may be the case. Why do you think these two approaches are used for personal and national mourning? *See page 305.*
- There are examples of Jewish leaders throughout the generations who have wondered whether it will always be necessary to mourn and fast on Tishah B'Av (Zecharia, Rabbi Y'hudah HaNasi, Rav Papa, as well as some contemporary leaders). Do you think that fasting on Tishah B'Av is still relevant? If not, in what ways should Jewish national tragedies be marked? *See page 307.*
- Some classical Reform rabbis advocated for honoring Tishah B'Av as a joyous day, celebrating the transition from sacrificial worship to a religion of ethics. This was later rejected by the Reform Movement. What is your response to this approach? What feelings do you think are fitting for Tishah B'Av today? *See page 308.*

The Temple

- Rabbi Marx lists several practices that have been seen as replacing Temple worship in its absence, including Torah study, prayer, and *t'shuvah*. How do these actions parallel Temple worship? How are they different? Does one of these actions feel the most resonant in your life? *See page 313.*

Tu B'Av

- Tu B'Av is an ancient holiday that is being reimagined in contemporary Israel. What themes or rituals do you think should be included in a Jewish holiday that celebrates love? *See page 321.*
- What is the connection between Tu B'Av and Yom Kippur, according to Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel? Why are these considered the happiest two days of the year? *See page 321.*
- In the ancient celebrations of Tu B'Av, all young women borrowed clothing from one another so as to not embarrass those women who had fewer resources. In what ways does your community emulate this value? How might your community make further efforts to support and respect those with greater need for material resources? *See page 322.*

ELUL

- Three suggestions of a deeper meaning behind the name “Elul” are offered in this chapter. What core themes of Elul are expressed in each of these creative readings of the month’s name? Can you come up with reimagined acronyms for other months in the Jewish year that would express your experiences of them? *See page 332.*

Psalm 27

- Why is Psalm 27 associated with Elul? What is surprising about this pairing? *See page 335.*
- Spend some time diving into the text of Psalm 27. Are there words that resonate with your own process of preparing for the High Holy Days? *See page 334.*
- Have you ever adopted a practice of saying particular words every day, through prayer, meditation, or affirmations? How did this practice impact you? Was it challenging to maintain a daily practice?

S’lichot

- Rabbi Marx highlights the different ways and times that Ashkenazim and Sephardim begin to recite *S’lichot*. What are the benefits and challenges of having a multitude of customs among the Jewish people? *See page 338.*
- Rabbi Marx shares her experience of feeling like an “outsider” while attending *S’lichot* as a child, and later built a community of belonging around this practice. What helps you feel at home in the Jewish community? Does anything cause you to feel like a “visitor?” How might you make your community a more welcoming space for newcomers? *See page 338.*
- Some of the spiritual power of *S’lichot* comes from their recitation in the late night or early morning. What makes these times of day fit for a religious practice like *S’lichot*? Do you know of other such practices in different religions or cultures? Do you have any habits or practices that take place during these times of day? *See page 339.*

Shofar

- Rabbi Marx explains the ten reasons Rav Saadyah Gaon thought we hear the shofar every day in Elul. Some of these reasons explain how hearing the shofar affects us as listeners, and some correspond with how the shofar can influence God’s judgments of us. Why do you think we hear the shofar? What emotions arise for you when you hear the shofar’s call? *See page 343.*

New Year for Animals

- According to *Mishnah Rosh HaShanah* 1:1, Rosh Chodesh Elul is considered a new year for the tithing of animals. In recent years, some Jewish leaders have suggested celebrating animals more broadly on Rosh Chodesh Elul. In what ways does this approach continue the practice described in the Mishnah? In what ways do these two approaches contrast with one another? *See page 346.*
- What are your relationships with animals? What practices or key themes do you think should be included in a Jewish celebration of animals?