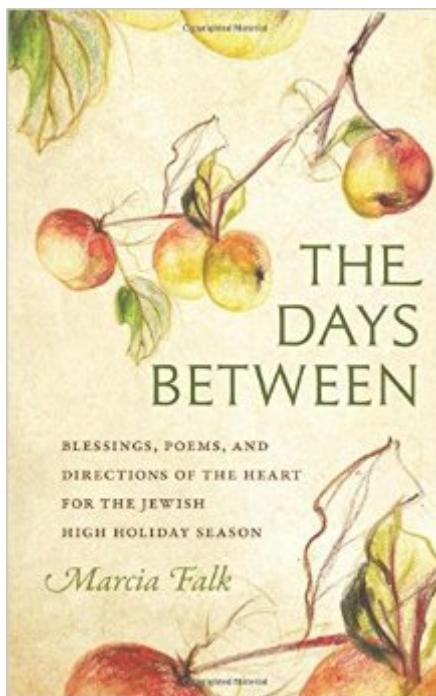


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# The Days Between: Blessings, Poems, And Directions Of The Heart For The Jewish High Holiday Season (HBI Series On Jewish Women)



## **Synopsis**

The Jewish High Holidaysâ "the ten days beginning with the New Year Festival of Rosh Hashanah and culminating with Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonementâ "constitute the most sacred period of the Jewish year. During this season, religious as well as nonaffiliated Jews attend synagogue services in unparalleled numbers. Yet much of what they find there can be unwelcoming in its patriarchal imagery, leaving many worshipers unsatisfied. For those seeking to connect more deeply with their Judaism, and for all readers in search of a contemplative approach to the themes of the fall season, poet and scholar Marcia Falk re-creates the holidaysâ ™ key prayers and rituals from an inclusive perspective. Among the offerings in *The Days Between* are Hebrew and English blessings for festive meals, prayers for synagogue services, and poems and meditations for quiet reflection. Emphasizing introspection as well as relationship to others, Falk evokes her vision of the High Holidays as â œten days of striving to keep the heart open to change.â •Accessible and welcoming to modern readers, *The Days Between* is steeped in traditional sources and grounded in liturgical and biblical scholarship. It will serve as a meaningful alternative or supplement to the traditional liturgy for individuals, families, synagogues, and communities small and largeâ "that is, for all who seek fresh meaning in the High Holidays.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

In *The Days Between* Marcia Falk of the Book of Blessings siddur fame provides a High Holiday machzor in her own unique style, expressing her own take on the liturgy of Rosh Hashanah, the

Days of Awe, and Yom Kippur. For those looking for a traditional machzor, Falk's work is not for you. She makes a point of not only failing to anthropomorphize God, but even mentioning an entity called God at all. Rather, Falk tries to evoke a sense of sacredness in everyday items, things, ideas, and in the process, give the person using her machzor a sense of an all-encompassing divinity not confined to one time, one place, one notion, or one angle of belief. Even, in a deep sense, trying to destroy the idea that something called 'God' and the 'World' and its seemingly multifarious 'objects' are separate at all. This is a tall order, and this book sometimes succeeds in this grand mission and sometimes fails. The Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur prayer books are filled with majestic images, invocations on the fleeting nature of life and the inevitability of death, all presided over by an all-powerful King God who judges the world. Like it or not, something about those themes pulls many non-religious Jews into temple on the High Holidays (and to be fair, keeps many away!) Falk's work is a brave attempt, but it falls short of the show stopping opulence which most Jewish people expect at the High Holidays. Although I agree with the ideology behind her work, I don't think she quite reaches the mark she sets for herself, or that is expected during the High Holidays. But if the book is a failure, it is a wonderful failure. *The Days Between* certainly stands as a powerful counterpoint to Jewish traditions at this time of year, departing from well-worn tracks in liturgy and theology, while retaining a broadly defined Jewish sense.

*The Days Between* by Dr. Marcia Falk is thought provoking even if one disagrees with what the author writes. She presents an inward, contemplative approach to the High Holiday services. Her versions of the principle traditional holiday prayers omit all references to God, and offer a non-patriarchal theology that focuses on the well-being and improvement of people. She is an acclaimed translator and commentator of the Bible and prayer books and is the author of nine volumes, including *The Song of Songs: Love Lyrics from the Bible*. This book is divided into an extensive introduction followed by five parts. The first focuses on the New Year Holiday, Rosh Hashanah. It includes many innovative prayers such as for lighting holiday candles, blessing children, washing hands, blessings before and after the meal, and new versions for *Unetaneh Tokef*, *Shofarit*, *Zikhronot*, *Malkhuyot*, *Tahlickh*, and over a dozen other items, including introductions to *Unetaneh Tokef* and to *Shofarot*, *Zikhronot*, *Malkhuyot*, and to *Tashlikh*. Her innovated versions are designed to prompt readers to think and act rather than feel they are involved in a ceremony that will somehow change them. Her prayer for washing hands before eating, for example, is: *Washing the hands, we call to mind the holiness of body*. Part two focuses on the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. It has an introduction and

prayers for each of the ten days. These ten days are called in Hebrew Aseret Yâqâbâymey Tâqâshuvah, which is customarily translated “Ten Days of Repentance,” but which Dr. Falk calls “ten days of meeting oneself face to face, opening the heart to change.” She devotes five pages to the concept of “repentance” where she points out that the word is not very informative or helpful. It is related to the word “penitentiary,” a place of punishment, and suggests instead that we translate it “turning (inward)” or “returning (to one’s self),” which is more informative. Part three deals with the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur. Among much else, there is an introduction to the problematic Kol Nidre and a new version of it, an introduction to the memorial service, Yizkor, which turns the prayer into a meaningful personal act of memory and rededication, and Falk’s version of Kaddish and Nâqâlah. The Yizkor prayer of 15 lines begins: I call her/him to mind and heart, the texture of her/his life, its presence in mine. Images rise up and fall away, moments in the current of time “tender, harsh, extraordinary, mundane.” Part four contains a forty page alternative to the traditional synagogue service for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Some of the elements are indicated as appropriate for both days and some for just one of the two holidays. Part five has a twelve page discussion on the prayer Untaneh Tokef, containing an overview of its structure, content, and theology. The traditional version of this prayer was originally composed in Israel during the Byzantine period for Rosh Hashanah, but it became so popular and so meaningful to people that it was later introduced into the Yom Kippur liturgy as well. The following are some other short samples: In lighting Rosh Hashanah candles, one says: May our hearts be lightened, our spirits born anew as we light the holiday candles and greet the newborn year. To bless children: Be who you are, and may you be blessed in all that you are. Kol Nidre: All vows and promises and pledges “that we have made to ourselves and that no longer serve for the good” “may their grip be loosened that we be present of mind and heart to the urgency of the hour.

As a devoted ‘davener’ I have always felt a jarring disconnect and letdown between the intensity of our most holy days and the back to my daily schedule of the time in between. Although the traditional prayers are familiar and comforting, as a woman I have to work hard to find my place in the liturgy. This beautiful supplement gives me a voice and brings me seamlessly through the season. Thank you, Marcia Falk.

A magnificent work. Marcia Falk has created prayers and meditations that do not require one to

abdicate reason or intelligence but penetrate the heart and soul. I reprinted one of her meditations ("May It Be So") in my congregational bulletin because it expressed so well what we should be striving for in a new year.

Wow -- it was worth the wait!!A beautiful book to read and ponder on Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and the days in between.Heartfelt, imaginative, soulful. Yasher Kochaych Marcia Falk, we are truly indebted to you and humbled by your gifts!!

Interesting interpretation. I will use it for sure.

Very beautiful spiritual work and poetry.

Marcia Falk has a mastery of spiritual expression and of Hebrew that truly enriches the experience of the High Holydays for me!

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