



## VIDUI: REMEMBERING YOU'RE HUMAN

*“Everyone can look inside their soul and decide what they can do to make a world at peace, to end this fighting that goes on every day around the world.”*  
— Ruth Gruber, Jewish Author

During the High Holidays, we reflect on ourselves and the year we've had. In doing so, we often analyze our actions and behavior, which can result in a labeling of who we are as people.

For example, if someone gave a lot of charity, they might call themselves a "kind" person. If someone volunteered a great deal, they might say they are a "giving" person. Or, if someone just helped a friend out, they might call themselves a "thoughtful" person. But not everyone is lucky enough to have such a positive reflective experience. For many people suffering from mental illness, their experience with themselves can be overwhelmingly negative, leading them to define themselves in less positive terms such as "selfish," "arrogant," "self-involved," etc. Or, they might define themselves by their illness: "I'm depressed," "I'm suicidal."





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This kind of self-flagellation can most easily come to a head in the recitation of the "**Vidui**" prayer, said most often during the High Holidays. Vidui is a confessional prayer consisting of a list of misdeeds that we confess to doing, even if we don't remember committing those sins ourselves. The prayer's formulation highlights the idea that we aren't always aware of our misdeeds, and this prayer is a catch-all for any misdeeds we may have done unwittingly. But, while people can recognize that they aren't truly guilty of all of these sins, **Vidui** has the potential to exacerbate feelings of low self-worth and self-hatred in someone who is already suffering from those feelings.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, the first Ashkenazi chief rabbi of the modern land of Israel, wrote that during the High Holidays, it is just as important to recall our good deeds and mitzvot as it is to recall our sins and misdeeds. To that end, there have been a plethora of new Vidui-style prayers written in the last few decades listing good deeds and mitzvot. One such prayer was written by Rabbi Avi Weiss, founder of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah and Yeshivat Maharat.

We need to be mindful of the complexity of human life and its ups and downs, and that we are far more than any one label, misdeed or illness. Just as the Vidui serves as a catch-all for misdeeds we might have done that we might not even have been aware of, we should recognize there are plenty of good deeds we performed as well without realizing it. **We are not our sins, we are not our mistakes, we are not our diagnosis. We are human and created:**



**B'tzelem Elohim - בצלם אלוהים**

*"In God's Image"*

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## Traditional Vidui

We have abused,	אֲשָׁמְנוּ,
We have betrayed,	בִּגְדָנוּ,
We have been cruel,	גִּזְלָנוּ,
We have destroyed	דִּבְרָנוּ
and embittered other people's	דָּפִי,
lives,	הֶעֱוִינוּ,
We were false to ourselves,	וְהִרְשַׁעְנוּ,
We have gossiped about	זָדָנוּ,
others and hated them,	חִמְסָנוּ,
We have insulted and jeered,	טָפְלָנוּ
We have killed,	שָׁקַר,
We have lied,	יַעֲצֵנוּ רָע,
We have misled others	כִּזְבָּנוּ,
and neglected them,	לִצְנוּ,
We were obstinate,	מִרְדָּנוּ,
We have perverted	נִאֲצָנוּ,
and quarreled,	סָרְרָנוּ,
We have robbed	עֵוִינוּ,
and stolen,	פָּשַׁעְנוּ,
We have transgressed through	צָרְרָנוּ,
unkindness,	קִשְׁינוּ
We have been both violent	עֲרָף,
and weak,	רִשְׁעָנוּ,
We have practiced extortion,	שַׁחְתָּנוּ,
We have yielded to wrong	תַּעֲבָנוּ,
desires, and misplaced our	תַּעִינוּ,
zeal.	תַּעֲתַעְנוּ.

## Good Deeds Vidui

We have loved,	אֶהְבָּנוּ,
We have blessed,	בֵּרַכְנוּ,
We have grown,	גִּדְלָנוּ,
We have spoken positively.	דִּבְרָנוּ
We have raised up,	יָפִי,
We have shown compassion,	הֶעֱלִינוּ,
We have acted	וְחִסָּנוּ,
enthusiastically,	זִרְזָנוּ,
We have been empathetic,	חֶמְלָנוּ,
We have cultivated truth,	טַפְחָנוּ
We have given good advice,	אָמַת,
We have respected,	יַעֲצָנוּ
We have learned,	טוֹב,
We have forgiven,	כִּפְדָּנוּ,
We have comforted,	לִמְדָנוּ,
We have been creative,	מִחֻלָּנוּ,
We have stirred,	נִחְמָנוּ,
We have been spiritual	סִלְלָנוּ,
activists,	עוֹרְרָנוּ,
We have been just,	פְּעֻלָּנוּ,
We have longed for the Land	צְדָקָנוּ,
[of Israel],	קוִינֵנוּ
We have been merciful,	לְאָרֶץ,
We have given full effort,	רַחֲמָנוּ,
We have supported,	שָׂקְדָנוּ,
We have contributed,	תְּמַכָּנוּ,
We have repaired.	תְּרַמְנוּ,
	תִּקְנוּ.



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## *Writing Your Own Prayer*

Above we have provided the traditional Vidui text. Now, make your own prayer by writing down your own good deeds. Before the High Holidays, we recommend you print out this piece of paper and bring it with you to High Holiday services, reading both the traditional prayer and your newly crafted, personal prayer.

***Rabbi Simcha Bunim of Parshischo said every person should have two slips of paper in his pocket. On one should be written: "The world was created for me." On the other should be written: "I am but dust and ashes." The trick is to have the wisdom to know which slip of paper to read at the right time.***

We should always be thoughtful about the mistakes we have made, but we also need to remember the goodness we add to the world every day.

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