

# Big Questions in Jewish Spirituality

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UNIT 1



## UNIT 1

# What is Spirituality?

## Unit Objectives

### Students will be able to:

- Share a definition of spirituality, recognizing that achieving it requires a mindset that can be cultivated and adapted.
- Discuss Jewish spirituality including its core place in Jewish tradition.
- Describe how there are different layers of interpretation within Jewish texts and practices, sometimes represented by the acronym PaRDeS (*Pshat, Remez, Drash, Sod*).
- Explain how multiple interpretations can coexist, contributing to a richer understanding of Jewish texts and practices.
- Share the spiritual reasons for some Jewish rituals, traditions, and commandments (specific examples depend on teacher choice).
- Reflect on their personal spiritual experiences and thoughts in a personal journal.

**NOTES:**

- In this unit we will introduce students to the tradition of Jewish spirituality. It is important that students understand that it addresses the *why* behind our traditions, in addition to the *what* and *how*, allowing students to find more personal significance in their religious life. They should know that spiritual exploration can help us understand God's will for the world and how God interacts with it, inspiring us to improve and grow by focusing on the impact of our actions.
- While this unit will explore the idea of spirituality—how to attain spirituality will be discussed in other units.
- It is important for students to remember that not all Jewish spirituality comes from the Kabbala and that the Kabbala deals with more than just spirituality.



## Introductory Essay

*This essay, for the teacher, is meant to provide some context and walk the teacher through the main ideas in this unit.*

Spirituality can add depth and meaning to our lives. Spirituality is not only about beliefs—it is a way of thinking, or a mindset that we can achieve that will help us connect to God. As educators, we know that mindsets can be learned and developed. By helping our students cultivate a spiritual mindset, we can guide them towards a deeper connection with God and a greater appreciation for the wisdom within the Jewish tradition. At its core, the Jewish spiritual tradition encourages us to look beyond the surface of the *mitzvot*, to understand their deeper significance and how they connect us to God, to others, and to our inner selves.

Since the receiving of the Torah, Jewish tradition has maintained multiple and parallel understandings and interpretations of our texts and practices. The Talmud regularly presents differing and even contradictory interpretations. It famously states (quoting God):

### אלו ואלו דברי אלוקים חיים

meaning that multiple (parallel) ideas can hold truth in our tradition at the same time. For example, we are taught that the reason for the celebration of Shabbat is because God rested *and* to remember the exodus from Egypt *and* to welcome our mystical *neshama yetera* (additional soul). The acronym PaRDeS (which also means orchard) has been used to express this idea of multiple layers of meaning and interpretation in the Torah all operating at once, but on different levels. This acronym stands for *Pshat, Remez, Drash, Sod*.

*Sod* (meaning secret) is the deepest level of interpretation that often deals with God and the universe in ways that are sometimes considered beyond the scope of our daily lives, such as *Maaseh Bereshit* (literally, work of creation) and *Maaseh Merkava* (literally, work of the chariot, meaning esoteric ideas around the Divine). For that reason, most of what one learns in school remains at the levels of *pshat* and *drash*. (*Remez*, or the "hinted" or symbolic layer of the text, is likewise not as commonly learned, although some *remez* level interpretations through *gematria*, or numerical value of Hebrew letters, is taught.)

The ancient tradition that centers on *sod* in Judaism is called Kabbala, which literally means "received," and has historically been kept to a select few. It was passed down from teachers to students who were deemed willing and worthy. These ideas were incorporated in day-to-day practice (e.g. the siddur\*), but most of the community was unaware of the origin because Kabbalistic study was limited to a select group. Over time, elements of Kabbala inspired movements within Judaism including *Hasidut*, the *Mussar* movement, and others, making its teachings more accessible to wider audiences.



## Key Ideas

*These are the key ideas of the unit. This list can be used to ensure that all the key ideas are covered over the course of the lessons.*

- In general, spirituality can add depth and meaning to our actions. In specific, Jewish spirituality encourages us to look beyond the surface of our rituals, traditions, and commandments to understand their deeper significance so we can connect to God.
- Mindsets can grow and be learned. Acquiring a new mindset requires active work.
- Spirituality can be defined as a connection to the Divine, a way of sharing His consciousness. It is not only about *learning* about God, but about attempting to behave Godly in order to connect to the Divine “frequency.”
- Judaism has parallel traditions of interpretation for its rules and practices. The deepest level of interpretation called *sod* (lit., secret) deals with an exploration of the Divine.
- Kabbala is the name of the Jewish mystical tradition, which historically was taught to a select few scholars, but has a widespread influence on Jewish daily life. Over time, elements of Kabbala inspired entire movements within Judaism including Hasidut, the Mussar movement, and others.
- The study of the Jewish spiritual tradition can help us better understand God’s will, improve our understanding of how God interacts with the world, and how the world represents His will. This in turn can inspire us to improve and grow by focusing on the impact of our own actions.

## Important Terms

*These are terms that may come up in classroom discussions. It is important to have definitions on hand and to make sure that the teacher and students are talking about the same thing.*

- **Spirituality** – has multiple definitions in different contexts. For the purposes of this curriculum, spirituality is defined as connecting to God through a shared consciousness. By learning, thinking, and behaving in a Godly way, we can generate a mindset that is attuned to the Divine.
- **Kabbala** – literally means “received,” this is the mystical tradition within Judaism which has been passed down from generation to generation.
- **Pshat** – the contextual or literal, straightforward meaning of the text (not always the most simple understanding).
- **Remez** – the allegorical or hinted layer of the text, often suggesting a symbolic deeper meaning beyond the literal.
- **Drash** – the interpretive meaning of a text. Often includes moral and philosophical lessons derived from the Torah. This level of understanding is often used to draw out broader applications and relevance from the text.
- **Sod** – the mystical (or secret) layer of the text, associated with Kabbala. Often dealing with esoteric ideas about God, the soul, and the universe.
- **PaRDeS** – literally, orchard. An acronym that stands for *Pshat*, *Remez*, *Drash*, and *Sod*, representing the four levels of interpretation of the Torah. It illustrates the idea that the Torah contains multiple layers of meaning, each providing a different depth of understanding.



## Classroom Activities

*In order to get the most out of this unit, and to help students understand the key ideas, we suggest that teachers complete the classroom activities (unless otherwise indicated) in the order that they appear.*

### **Trigger Activity - Question Generation**

*To encourage students to consider what they already know, think about what questions they have, and share their ideas about spirituality, units in this course begin with an exercise in which students—individually or in groups—formulate questions related to the unit topic. Oftentimes, students are unwilling to participate in classroom discussions or reluctant to ask questions and end up being passive learners. By building question generation into the course from the beginning, it is our hope that students become active participants in the course, widening of perspectives, reflection, and in-depth learning.*

Write “Spirituality” on the board, and then give students a few minutes to generate their questions. Make sure to explain that you will not necessarily answer all of the questions in this unit.

Some questions may include:

- What is spirituality?
- What does it matter to me?
- What is Kabbala?
- Am I allowed to study Kabbala?
- Can I learn to be spiritual?
- How can I learn to be spiritual?
- Does being spiritual mean getting close to God?
- Is spirituality the same as religion?

## Trigger Activity - Defining Spirituality

*Spirituality is difficult to define. The Oxford English Dictionary lists 13 definitions of spirituality as a noun, and the Merriam-Webster includes 4, one of which is “the quality or state of being spiritual” which is not particularly helpful. In this activity, students will grapple with defining spirituality and recognize that its meaning is very personal.*

- Ask students to write down whatever comes to mind when they think about “spirituality” and ask a few volunteers to share their answers.
- As a class discuss: What do you think spirituality means, and how does it connect with religious practices, traditions, rituals, etc.?
- Explain that, in general, spirituality involves connecting with something greater than oneself, finding meaning, and ultimately, cultivating inner peace.
- Ask a few students to volunteer: Can you think of any moments in your life when you felt deeply connected to something larger than yourself?
- Now share a metaphor with the class. Ask them to imagine trying to find a station on the radio, among all the static and the difficult to hear, faraway stations. We too seek connections to God, and sometimes it is difficult. When we behave in a Godly way, we lose the static and find the station—we have managed to tune in to the Divine frequency or consciousness.
- Ask if this metaphor resonates and discuss. Explain that this (tuning into the Divine frequency or consciousness) will be the working definition of “spirituality” for the rest of the course, as we learn about big ideas like God, the nature of our souls, how should we behave, etc. Throughout the course, we will be thinking about what the Jewish tradition tells us about how to achieve spirituality, how to tune into the Divine frequency.



## Spirituality Journal

*This course uses journaling to give students the space to ask questions, consider ideas raised in class, and to evaluate the impact the learning is having on their daily lives. Each student will need a notebook/journal for the duration of this program. This activity should help students understand the purpose and benefits of keeping a journal and will begin the practice by allowing students to reflect on their daily experiences and spiritual thoughts.*

- Explain that a spirituality journal is a personal space where one can reflect on spiritual experiences, thoughts, and feelings.
- Share the benefits of keeping a spirituality journal: increased mindfulness, personal growth, and a deeper connection to one's spiritual path.
- Distribute the journals or ask students to take out the journal they brought from home.
- Optional: Explain that personalizing or decorating their journals can make them feel more personal and special, encouraging regular use. Some ideas:
  - » Create Covers: Provide students with blank paper to design their own covers. They can draw, paint, or use collage techniques. You might also have the students make their own paper to use as the cover.
  - » Nature Incorporation: Use leaves, flowers, twigs, or other natural materials to create a nature-themed cover. Students can glue these materials onto their journal covers.
  - » Personal Symbols: Encourage students to include symbols, words, or images that hold personal spiritual significance.
- First journal entry: Provide a few journal prompts to help students get started. Give students 10 minutes to write their first journal entry. Encourage them to find a quiet space in the room where they can focus.

### Sample prompts:

- » Describe a moment today when you felt connected to something greater than yourself.
  - » Reflect on a religious ritual or practice that feels meaningful to you. In what way do you connect to this practice, and why?
  - » Reflect on a religious ritual or practice that you WISH you connected to or felt meaningful to you. Why do you not connect with it, and why do you want to?
  - » What does spirituality mean to you? And describe your own spiritual practices...what is the most meaningful to you?
  - » What are you hoping to learn in this class? What questions do you have about Jewish spirituality?
- Conclude by recapping the importance of spirituality and how a spirituality journal can be a valuable tool for personal growth.
    - » Explain that this journal will be a regular and important part of the course and that students are encouraged to find a regular time to record their thoughts in the journal.
    - » Ask students to write at least one journal entry over the next week and be prepared to discuss their journaling experiences in the next class. See journal prompts below in the unit conclusion.
    - » Remind students that their spirituality journal is a personal and private space for them to explore their thoughts and experiences. There are no right or wrong entries.



## Thought Exercises

*Below are two activities—select the one that best suits your class.*

- **PaRDeS Exploration** – With the help of text study handouts, students will learn a *pasuk* and several commentaries, trying to understand the differences between the levels of explanations and how they came from the text. Students will also be challenged to try to understand how the different messages/explanations can coexist. We provide two different examples, and teachers can choose to do both or only one.
- **Exploring the Roots of Jewish Practices** – Students are likely familiar with some reasons for various Jewish practices. In this gallery walk activity, students will explore additional, deeper meanings for those same rituals.

### **PaRDeS Exploration**

*Before starting the text study, the teacher should introduce the PaRDeS framework to the students, explaining (based on the definitions above) what each letter means. Explain to the students that Torah has multiple levels of understanding, but it is not always easy to classify them like we will do in this activity. Additionally, each verse in the Torah does not necessarily have all four levels of understanding.*

Handout the page(s) for the text(s) that you wish to explore. The handouts can be found on page 14, following the conclusion.

## Exploring the Roots of Jewish Practices

*In this gallery walk activity, students will explore and understand the deeper meanings behind various Jewish prayers, rituals, holidays, and practices. This will take place in two rounds. The first round will focus on identifying the common (often halachic or midrashic) explanations of the rituals, and the second round will delve into the deeper underpinnings of the rituals.*

### Materials Needed:

- Large poster boards or pasteboards
- Color coded sticky notes (one color for round #1, one color for common explanations, and a third color for spiritual explanations)
- Markers and/or pens
- Handouts about rituals (optional, see sample at the end of the unit)

### Procedure:

Set up stations around the room, each dedicated to a different Jewish practice. Examples include:

- *Kol Nidrei*
- Counting the *Omer*
- *Kabbalat Shabbat*
- *Netilat Yadayim* (ritual hand washing)
- *Havdalah*
- *Tallit* and *Tzitzit*
- Lighting Shabbat candles

For each practice, hang up a poster board with the name of the ritual written on it.

### Round 1 (20 minutes):

- Assign students to groups and have each group start at a different station.
- Provide each group with markers and sticky notes of the first color.
- Instruct students to list as many details as they can about the ritual on the poster board, each on a different post-it. This may include how it is performed, when it is performed, and any associated customs or laws.

## Round 2 (20 minutes):

- (Optional) Provide handouts with explanations of the deeper meanings and roots of each practice, focusing on both common and spiritual explanations. A sample handout appears at the end of this lesson; create similar handouts for each ritual.
- Students should discuss within their group the explanation/meanings behind the different details of the rituals. (If you have provided handouts, students can use them as aids).
- Using color-coded stickers or markers, have students categorize each explanation as either common or spiritual.
- Students should add these insights to the poster boards, creating a comprehensive view of each ritual.

## Presentation, Reflection, Discussion:

- Have each group present their findings to the class, explaining both the common and spiritual aspects of the rituals they explored.
- Facilitate a discussion on how understanding alternative roots of a ritual can enhance their appreciation and practice of that ritual.
- Encourage students to share any surprising or particularly meaningful insights they gained. They might also discuss where they derive more personal meaning, from more common or more spiritual rituals/explanations.

## Conclusion

*Explain to the class that this unit is the first in a longer journey. Give students a few minutes to read their journal entries from the beginning of the unit. Now that they have concluded the introductory unit to the curriculum, ask them to respond to one or more of the following prompts in their spirituality journal:*

- What does Jewish spirituality mean to you?
- How has this thinking about multiple/parallel interpretations changed your thinking about Jewish ritual/life/traditions?
- What questions do you have about Jewish spirituality now that you have begun to consider it?

## HANDOUT 1, PAGE 1

# PaRDeS Exploration

Read the following *pasuk* and then explore the different commentaries, trying to understand how the explanations are different from each other, and how they spring from the text.

**בראשית א: א - בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹקִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ:**

***Bereshit* 1:1 - When God began to create heaven and earth.**

PaRDeS	Commentary	Translation	Text
<b><i>Pshat</i></b>	Rashi on <i>Bereshit</i> בראשית ברא 1:1	If, however, you wish to explain it in its plain sense, explain it thus: At the beginning of the creation of heaven and earth when the earth was without form and void and there was darkness...	וְאִם בְּאֵת לְפָרְשׁוֹ כְּפִשׁוּטוֹ, כִּךְ פָּרְשׂהוּ בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרִיאַת שָׁמַיִם וְאָרֶץ, וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תְהוֹ וְבַהּ וְחֹשֶׁךְ
<b><i>Remez</i></b>	Story told of the Vilna Gaon	Vilna Gaon once told his students: all the mitzvot appear in the first word of the Torah. A student asked: Teach us our rabbi, how is the mitzvah of pidyon haben hinted at in the section of the Torah? The Vilan Gaon responded: the mitzvah of pidyon haben appears in the word <i>Bereshit</i> . The first letter of each word stands for " <i>ben rishon acharei shloshim yom tifdeh</i> " which means "Firstborn son - after 30 days you shall release" (a reference to the mitzvah)	הגאון רבי אליהו מוילנא אמר פעם לתלמידיו: כל תרי"ג מצוות מרומזות בפרשה הראשונה בתורה. שאל אחד התלמידים: ילמדנו רבנו, היכן מרומזת בפרשה הראשונה בתורה מצות פדיון הבן? השיב הגאון לשואל בלי שהיות: מצות פדיון הבן מרומזת במלה הראשונה של התורה, שכן המלה "בראשית" נדרשת בראשי תיבות: בן ראשון אחר שלושים יום תפדה...

## HANDOUT 1, PAGE 2

<p><b>Drash</b></p>	<p>Rashi on <i>Bereshit</i> בראשית ברא 1:1</p>	<p>This verse calls for explanation in the manner that our Rabbis explained it: God created the world for the sake of the Torah which is called "ראשית" (See <i>Mishlei</i> 8:22, "The beginning of His way") and [also for] the People of Israel who are called "ראשית" (see <i>Yirmiyahu</i> 2:3, "The beginning (ראשית) of His (God's) increase").</p>	<p>אין המקרא הזה אומר אלא דרשני, כמו שדרשוהו רבותינו בשביל התורה שנקראת ראשית דרכו (משלי ח'), ובשביל ישראל שנקראו ראשית תבואתו (ירמיה ב');</p>
<p><b>Sod</b></p>	<p>Sforno on <i>Bereshit</i> 1:1. The Talmud (<i>Megilla</i> 21b) commenting on <i>Pirke Avot</i> 5:1 states that the word "<i>Bereshit</i>" was an act of creation on its own.</p>	<p>At the beginning of time. this is the first moment which is indivisible into shorter periods. There had not been a concept "time" previous to this, i.e. there had only been unbroken continuity.</p>	<p><b>בראשית.</b> בתחלת הזמן והוא רגע ראשון בלתי מתחלק שלא היה זמן קודם לו:</p>

### Questions:

1. Read the *pasuk* in context. Does the *pasuk* make sense without explanation?
2. Can you explain how each of the explanations are derived from the original text?
3. What and how do each of these explanations add to your understanding of the text?
4. Do any of the explanations seem contradictory to each other or mutually exclusive?

## HANDOUT 2, PAGE 1

# PaRDeS Exploration

Read the following *Pasuk* and then explore the different commentaries, trying to understand how the explanations are different from each other, and how they spring from the text.

שמות פרק יג: יח: וַיִּסַּב אֱלֹקִים | אֶת־הָעָם דֶּרֶךְ הַמִּדְבָּר יַם־סוּף וְחַמְשִׁים עָלוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ  
מִצְרַיִם:

***Shemot* 13:18 - So God led the people roundabout, by way of the wilderness at the Sea of Reeds. Now the Israelites went up armed out of the land of Egypt.**

PaRDeS	Commentary	Translation	Text
<b><i>Pshat</i></b>	Rashi	The word חמושים must mean "armed" (with weapons)	אין חמושים אלא מזינים
<b><i>Remez</i></b>	Rabeinu Bachye	And you will find that the word חמשים is written without the letter "vav" to teach us that the Torah which was given after 50 days was the purpose of <i>Bnei Yisrael</i> leaving Egypt. And, there is an added layer of hint, or רמז to the 50 times that the Exodus is mentioned in the Torah.	ותמצא מלת וחמשים חסר וא"ו וחמשים כתיב ללמדך שהתורה שנתנה לחמשים יום היתה תכלית מה שעלו בני ישראל מארץ מצרים, ועוד יש בו רמז לחמשים פעמים שנזכרה יציאת מצרים בתורה.



## HANDOUT 2, PAGE 2

<p><b>Drash</b></p>	<p>Rashi</p>	<p>As it states in the <i>mechilta</i> (a collection of <i>midrashim</i>), the word חמושים means that 1/5 of the people went out (from Egypt) and 4/5 died during the three day plague of darkness.</p>	<p>דָּבַר אַחַר, חֲמִשִּׁים אֶחָד מִחֲמִשָּׁה יֵצְאוּ וְאַרְבָּעָה חֲלָקִים מָתוּ בְשִׁלְשֵׁת יָמֵי אֶפְלָה (מְכִילְתָּא)</p>
<p><b>Sod</b></p>	<p>Ohr Gedalyahu</p>	<p>The <i>Zohar</i> teaches that the phrase, "The Children of Israel went forth from Egypt <i>chamushim</i>" means that they left fifty times. This means that they went out from all fifty levels of spiritual impurity, and each time they left one level of spiritual impurity, it is called "leaving Egypt."</p> <p>And each of the (50) days that they traveled in the desert until they received the Torah was part of the Exodus from Egypt, and each day they removed one level of impurity of Egypt until they arrived at Mount Sinai and received the Torah, at which point they were completely freed from the enslavement of Egypt.</p>	<p>וּמְצִינוּ בְּזוֹהַר "ק' שֶׁאָמְרוּ "וְחֲמִשִּׁים עָלוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל", שְׁחֲמִשִּׁים פְּעָמִים יֵצְאוּ, פִּי' שֶׁיֵּצְאוּ מִכָּל הַחֲמִישִׁים</p> <p>שְׁעָרֵי טוֹמְאוֹה, וְכָל יְצִיאָה מִשְׁעַר שֶׁל טוֹמְאוֹה נִקְרָא יְצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם, וּבְאֵלּוּ הַיָּמִים שֶׁהָלַכוּ בְּדֶרֶךְ הַמְּדַבֵּר עַד קִבְּלַת הַתּוֹרָה, בְּכוֹלֵם הִתְּנָה יְצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם, שֶׁבְּכָל יוֹם וְיוֹם יֵצְאוּ מִשְׁעַר טוֹמְאוֹה אֶחָד שֶׁל מִצְרַיִם, עַד שֶׁבָּאוּ לְמַתַּן תּוֹרָה וְאֵז יֵצְאוּ לְגַמְרֵי מְכַל שְׁעֵבוֹד לְהַמְצַרִּים</p>

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## HANDOUT 2, PAGE 3

### Questions:

1. Look up the definition of the word חמוש in Hebrew. Which of the commentaries does this fit with? What do the rest of the explanations do with the word?
2. Can you explain how each of the explanations are derived from the original text?
3. What and how do each of these explanations add to your understanding of the text?
4. Do any of the explanations seem contradictory to each other or mutually exclusive?

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## Sample Handout, Page 1

# Ritual Explanation Sheet – *Kol Nidrei*

Across the Jewish world, *Kol Nidre* is sung at the beginning of *tefilla* on the eve of Yom Kippur. There are many elements to the ritual and are multiple explanations for the way the ritual is implemented. Some of these are presented below.

### 1. *Kol Nidrei* is recited in the evening (but before sundown).

#### *Common Explanation:*

The evening is chosen because Yom Kippur starts at sunset. Reciting *Kol Nidrei* just before sunset ensures that the vows are annulled as the Day of Atonement begins, aligning with the halachic principle of resolving spiritual matters before Yom Kippur.

#### *Spiritual Explanation:*

The time between day and night (twilight) is considered a time of heightened spiritual potential, where the earthly and heavenly realms are closest together. Reciting *Kol Nidrei* during this period allows for the cleansing of spiritual impurities and the preparation of the soul for Yom Kippur.

### 2. Three Torah scrolls are taken out of the ark for the *Kol Nidrei* service.

#### *Common Explanation:*

Taking out three Torah scrolls adds solemnity and reverence to the service. It signifies the importance of the communal vow annulment process.

## Sample Handout, Page 2

### *Spiritual Explanations:*

- The three Torahs represent the three judges of a *Beit Din*.
- The three Torah scrolls can symbolize the three patriarchs (Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov), invoking their merit and protection during the High Holy Days.

### **3. The ark remains open throughout the recitation of *Kol Nidrei*.**

#### *Common Explanation:*

Keeping the ark open signifies the openness of heaven at this time, and the urgency of the moment. It is an invitation for Divine mercy and forgiveness.

#### *Spiritual Explanation:*

An open ark symbolizes the direct presence of the *Shechinah* (Divine presence), facilitating a direct connection to the Divine during this solemn prayer.

### **4. *Kol Nidrei* is recited three times, each time with increasing intensity.**

#### *Common Explanation:*

Repeating *Kol Nidrei* three times ensures everyone hears and understands the annulment of vows, emphasizing its importance.

#### *Spiritual Explanation:*

Repeating the prayer three times symbolizes the rectification across three spiritual worlds (*Asiyah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Beriyah*), ensuring a complete spiritual cleansing.

### **5. *Kol Nidrei* is a legal formula that annuls vows and promises made during the past year.**

#### *Common Explanation:*

The formula serves a practical purpose, nullifying vows that might not have been fulfilled, thereby avoiding sin.

## Sample Handout, Page 3

*Spiritual Explanation:*

Annulment of vows symbolizes the release of spiritual constraints, allowing people to approach Yom Kippur with a pure heart and mind.

- 6. The text includes the phrases “from this Yom Kippur until next Yom Kippur” and mentions the different types of vows and oaths.**

*Common Explanation:*

Including the comprehensive list provides total coverage and ensures that there is a clean slate for the new year.

*Spiritual Explanation:*

This acknowledges the cyclical nature of time and the possibility of spiritual growth intentions over the course of a year.

- 7. The congregation stands during the recitation of *Kol Nidrei*.**

*Common Explanation:*

Standing shows respect for the solemnity of the moment and the seriousness of annulling vows before God.

*Spiritual Explanation:*

Standing represents an elevated spiritual state, aligning with the heightened spirituality of Yom Kippur.

- 8. Some communities have the custom for the entire congregation to repeat parts of the prayer after the *chazan*.**

*Common Explanation:*

This custom ensures active participation from the congregation, emphasizing communal responsibility and unity.

## Sample Handout, Page 4

*Spiritual Explanation:*

This custom symbolizes collective spiritual elevation and purification.

- 9. *Kol Nidrei* is usually led by the chazan or a respected member of the congregation.**

*Common Explanation:*

The *chazan* or a respected congregation member has the authority and knowledge to properly perform the ritual, ensuring its validity.

*Spiritual Explanation:*

The leader acts as a conduit for Divine energy, facilitating the congregation's spiritual cleansing.

- 10. The leader is often flanked by two other individuals, usually members of the congregation or rabbis, holding the Torah scrolls.**

*Common Explanation:*

The presence of two individuals adds honor to the ceremony and provides witnesses for the communal vow annulment.

*Spiritual Explanation:*

The two individuals symbolize spiritual support, reinforcing the leader's role in guiding the congregation through the ritual.

- 11. Many people wear a *kittel* (a white robe) during the *Kol Nidrei* service**

*Common Explanation:*

Wearing white symbolizes purity, repentance, and a state of humility, aligning with the themes of Yom Kippur.

## Sample Handout, Page 5

*Spiritual Explanation:*

The *kittel* symbolizes Divine purity and elevates the wearer's spirituality.

- 12. It is common for men to wear a *tallit*, which is typically worn only during daytime services only.**

*Common Explanation:*

Wearing the *tallit* during *Kol Nidrei* adds an extra layer of solemnity and reverence to the evening service.

*Spiritual Explanation:*

The *tallit* symbolizes being enveloped in Divine light and protection, appropriate for the sacredness of Yom Kippur.