



The Curtain of Accountability

By Diana Bloom and Rabbi Avi Orlow

Yom Kippur is an opportunity for us to reflect on our past and to prepare to do better this coming year. It is an opportunity many of us are yearning for, to restart with design and purpose on our life's journey. Confronting the myriad issues facing us in 2020, it feels that this is going to be an important *Yom Kippur*.

In preparation for this day, we recall an important story about four figures who embarked on their own journey into a strange land, trying to ameliorate their perceived inadequacies. It turns out each of them already had everything they were seeking before entering this enchanted world, yet they needed to go on an important journey together, in order to remember. Most would immediately recognize this plot line from the Wizard of Oz. The tin man was always the most empathetic, the lion was full of courage, the scarecrow was brimming with wisdom, and all Dorothy had to do to return to Kansas was click her heels together. (This is also the story of the [four who entered Pardes](#), but that is another article)

As we look out on the current state of affairs, we see a world that desperately needs accountability at every level: personally, professionally, locally, nationally, and globally. Not an accountability as punishment or consequence, as we might see in the prayers or the media. Rather, we seek accountability as a construct and means for personal improvement. Accountability is an intentional process to do what we said we would do, as we said we would do it, when we said we would do it. Now is a chance to look inwards to explore our own personal and individual avenues towards accountability.

When the Temple stood, the apex of the *Yom Kippur* service was when the High Priest pulled back the curtain in front of the Ark of the Covenant to enter alone into the Holy of Holies to offer a communal atonement sacrifice. Today, we too can pull back the curtain of our most vulnerable internal lives, and remember, or discover, that our tradition is all about accountability and an invitation to do *teshuva* – return home. As Dorothy said, "If I ever go looking for my heart's desire again, I won't look any further than my own backyard. Because if it isn't there, I never really lost it to begin with!"

The path has been there for us the entire time in the practices and techniques of the wisdom of our tradition. *Yom Kippur* is not about punishment, but about a chance to reconnect and achieve self-actualization. As we prepare for *Yom Kippur*, we are inspired by the idea that we can all find our brains, hearts, courage, or even our way home.

And as we set out on this path, we think about who joins us on this journey. Together with our accountability partners we can support each other along the way. Together we can help each other find our strengths, and confront what we are avoiding. None of us needs to settle for thinking about our deficiencies or what we wish we could or would do differently, alone. Along with our fellow travelers we can commit and follow through on moving beyond intentions to actions. How do we show up for our family members, friends, and colleagues as true companions on life's journey?

The yellow brick road is long and it leads in the right direction. But a well-planned path is not enough. To get to where we want to go, we might think about setting aside time each day to plan for tomorrow, creating time in our calendar to **do** the things that are **due**. The step-by-step consistency of doing the work will help us get closer to the Emerald City. [Lao Tzu](#) said, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step."

In 5781 let's do what we said we would do, as we said we would do it, when we said we would do it. The road to greater accountability is not always easy. Along the way we will all fall short. The question is not *if* we fail but how we get back on track. On *Yom Kippur*, we are invited to be proactive and seek accountability for ourselves, our communities, and the world. When we pull the curtain back we are not disappointed to find that the wizard is a mere mortal, rather, we are inspired when we discover accountability is no further than our own backyard.

Diana Bloom is a consultant, and trainer who is passionate about supporting individuals and organizations to bridge the gap between their intentions and actions. Her humorous, engaging, and straightforward style, along with realistic, actionable tools help others achieve greater accountability in their professional and personal lives.

Rabbi Avi Katz Orlow is the Vice President of Innovation and Education at the Foundation for Jewish Camp. He has a deep love of irreverent, relevant, and revealing Torah and blogs religiously at saidtomyself.com.

<https://ejewishphilanthropy.com/the-curtain-of-accountability>