

Shalom,

I am Jessica Moore, the Director of Lifelong Learning here at Kolot.

I am someone who came to Judaism later in life, ever since my conversion I've always tried to continue to study. Over the summer, I was invited to study at the Pardes Center in Jerusalem. One of the classes focused on the Mishnah, Jewish Oral Law. Why do we have these legalities? My takeaway was the importance of the obligation we have to each other. The legal framework was trying to create a pathway to understanding and empathizing with each other, trying to create a type of intergenerational unity for creating a "better" world.

The Viddui uses very strong language "Sorry I've sinned." "Sorry, I've called others to sin." So I thought to approach writing the message for the Viddui the same way I approach education and even my own personal learning - with grace. Then I thought maybe the Viddui is not entirely about what we've done, but instead instructions on what not to do or caution us on how we act in the future. A reminder of obligations to ourselves and each other. Sometimes prayers and stories highlight what's missing and I think for the Viddui it's the responsibility or obligation to give grace. To, excuse my language, break bread with each other even if we disagree.

As the character Cindy Hayes in *Orange is the New Black* and so many others say "Judaism is about what you do." Judaism is about the present - the now and how that impacts the future. Not about what you have done, but what you have the possibility to do. How you can grow into a being a better person each day.

Maybe you were snippy at someone after a bad day.

Maybe on the way to shul, you were already cranky and moved someone aside.

Maybe you're falling asleep right now as I'm saying this. But that's okay because you can continue to make choices.

Say hi to someone new at Shabbat services.

Take breaks when working or studying.

As you atone, think about ways you can give yourself grace.

Judaism is about humanity, and seeing the divine spark in all of us. So above all, give yourself and others grace.

G'mar chatima tova