

YOGA FOR THE DAYS OF AWE

Release and Renew

CELEBRATING THE HIGH HOLY DAYS AT HOME affords us an opportunity to embark on new experiences and discover new traditions. It also means perching in front of a computer screen for several hours. Even with the best of intentions, things like standing up to stretch every twenty minutes and walking around every hour, sitting for a prolonged period of time is taxing on the body, mind, and spirit.

Yoga is an incredible tool for releasing tension and coming back to your body. The following sequence specifically targets the muscle groups that tense after sitting for several hours.

Please note: Only you know your body and your limitations. Never put yourself in a position where you might hurt yourself. Speak with your physician or health care professional to assess whether or not this sequence is right for you if you have concerns.

This resource includes poses in three language; Hebrew– a way of linking yoga with our observance of *Yamim Noraim*, Sanskrit– the language in which this ancient practice was passed down, and English. There is a brief explanation of the benefits, step-by-step instructions, tips, and affirmations to meditate on while in each pose.

This is a 20 minute sequence meant to be completed in order, but you can also pick a pose or two, explore them individually, and still enjoy the benefits.

Wishing you High Holy Days full of meaning and movement!

G'mar Chatimah Tovah,

COREY DANE

RYT 200, CBST & CHORUS MEMBER

1 THREAD THE NEEDLE - השחל את המחט

I meet challenges courageously and calmly.



ABOUT THIS POSE

Thread the Needle – **PARSVA BALASANA** – in Sanskrit, stretches and opens the shoulders, chest, arms, upper back, and neck.

This pose also provides a mild twist to the spine, which reduces tension and relieves stress.

STEP 1

Begin in Table Top. On an inhale, firmly press your left hand into the floor and draw your right arm up over head. Turn your head to sweetly gaze at your right hand. Avoid turning your head too far which applies pressure on the neck.

STEP 2

On an exhale, slide your right arm underneath left arm, palm up, and draw your right shoulder towards the floor. Rest your right ear and cheek on the floor, a blanket, or a pillow, and gaze towards the left. Keep your left elbow lifted and your hips raised, careful not to press weight into your head which causes strain on the neck.

STEP 3

Inhale through your nose– soften along your low back, hips, and belly. Exhale through your nose– imagine your shoulder, arm, upper back and upper torso tension melting into the earth.

Repeat for 3-6 breath cycles (inhale/exhale), then slowly draw your right arm back, return to Table Top, and repeat on the second side.

TIPS

- Place a blanket or pillow underneath your knees to remove discomfort.
 - If you're having trouble getting your shoulder to the floor, inch the opposite hand forward. Ex: When attempting to draw your right shoulder to the floor, inch your left hand forward to make space.
 - If you feel tension in the neck, stop and explore this pose at the wall.
1. Stand an arms length away and firmly press both hands into the wall.
 2. Release your right hand, slide your right arm underneath your left, as you draw your right shoulder and right ear towards the wall.
 3. Stay for 3-6 breath cycles then repeat on the second side.

2 DOWNWARD FACING DOG - כלב מביט מטה

I am flexible in body, mind, and spirit.



ABOUT THIS POSE

Downward Facing Dog – **ADHO MUKHA SHVANASANA** – in Sanskrit, deeply stretches your hamstrings, shoulders, calves, arches, hands, and spine.

This pose, one of the most recognized in yoga, has a wealth of energetic benefits. It can provide relief from headaches, insomnia, and fatigue, it can improve concentration, remove stress, improve digestion, and lead to an overall sense of calm.

STEP 1

Begin in Table Top. Spread your fingers wide, point your index fingers directly in front of you, and press firmly through your hands.

STEP 2

On an exhale, tuck your toes, lift your knees, lift your tailbone towards the ceiling, and send your sits bones back towards the wall behind you, as you work to straighten your legs without locking your knees.

STEP 3

Walk your feet back and imagine making an “A” with your body as you press the floor away from you, lift through your pelvis, and lengthen your spine.

STEP 4

Inhale through your nose– externally rotate your arms and draw your shoulder blades up, back, and down. Exhale through your nose– internally rotate your thighs, draw your sits bones up and back, and drop your heels closer to the floor. Relax your head and gaze sweetly between your feet or at your navel.

Repeat for 3-6 breath cycles (inhale/exhale), then slowly walk your feet to meet your hands and roll up to stand vertebrae by vertebrae.

TIPS

- The goal isn't for your heels to touch the floor, but if you'd like to make contact with something, press your heels into a rolled up blanket or towel if they don't reach.
- You can stay stationary for 3-6 breath cycles, or explore gentle movement by pressing one leg straight and bending the other, then reversing.
- If you're feeling the floor is too far away, bring it closer by placing blocks or books underneath your hands. You can also opt to place your hands on a chair or place your hands on a wall.

3 FORWARD FOLD - כפיפה לפנים

I am free to let go in this moment.



ABOUT THIS POSE

Forward Fold – **UTTANASANA** – in Sanskrit, stretches and lengthens the hamstrings and calves, opens the hips, and relieves tension in the neck and shoulders.

This pose combines folding and inverting. By dropping your head below your heart this pose can have a very calming effect. It can help relieve stress, headaches, anxiety, fatigue, and improve digestion.

STEP 1

Begin in Mountain Pose, standing tall. Inhale– draw your arms high over head. Exhale– bend at the hips, lengthen your torso, and fold over your legs.

STEP 2

Place your fingertips or hands on the floor, on a block, a book, on your ankles, or on the back of your calves; whatever is accessible to you today.

STEP 3

Let your head hang heavy, keep your neck relaxed. Press your feet firmly into the floor as you rotate the tops of your inner thighs in towards center.

STEP 4

Inhale through your nose– lengthen your spine. Exhale through your nose– release deeper into your fold.

Repeat for 3-6 breath cycles (inhale/exhale), then slowly roll up, vertebrae by vertebrae.

TIPS

- If you have tight hamstrings, bend your knees a lot to help you maintain length in the spine and avoid tension in the low back.
- Deepen the stretch in the upper back and shoulders by grabbing opposite elbows and gently swaying side-to-side.
- This pose can be done in a chair by ignoring Steps 1 and 2, and instead hanging over your seat and letting your arms fall to the floor. Jump to Steps 3 and 4.
- Move out of this pose, and any pose where your head is below your heart for a sustained period of time, very slowly.

4 SUPPORTED BRIDGE - חצי גשר עם תמיכה

I am strong because I am supported.



ABOUT THIS POSE

Supported Bridge – **SETUBANDHA SARVANGASANA** – in Sanskrit, opens the chest, heart, and shoulders, and it stretches the spine, the back of the neck, the thighs, and the hip flexors.

Because your heart is higher than your head in this pose, it is considered an inversion and has some of the same calming, stress relieving benefits as the Forward Fold in this sequence.

STEP 1

Lie on your back with your knees bent, feet on the floor, arms by your side, palms down.

STEP 2

Inhale through your nose, and on your exhale, press your feet, arms, and palms firmly into the floor, as you softly lift your hips and place support, (block, book, rolled up blanket or towel, folded pillow...) above your tailbone, directly under your sacrum.

STEP 3

Draw your tailbone towards your pubic bone, release your glutes, and feel yourself supported by whatever you placed underneath your sacrum. Open your chest and your heart while keeping your neck neutral, chin tucked slightly.

STEP 4

Inhale through your nose– think about lengthening your tailbone. Exhale through your nose– release and let your weight rest on your support.

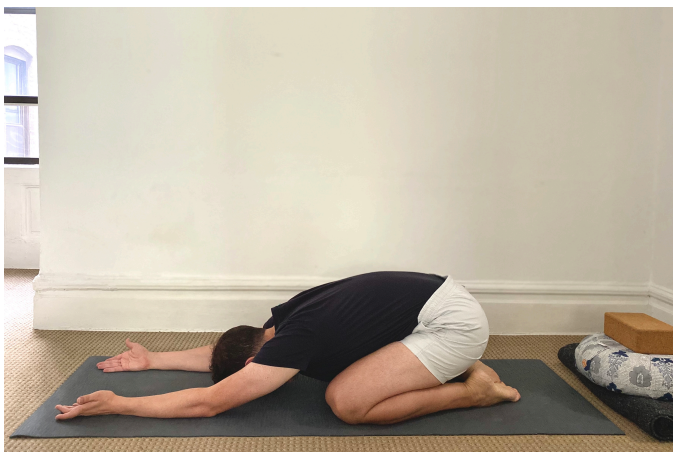
Repeat for 3-6 breath cycles (inhale/exhale), then softly press your feet into the floor, lift the hips, draw your support out from underneath you, and let your hips descend to the floor. Widen your feet enough so your knees can fall in and support one another as you rest and reset for 3-6 breath cycles.

TIPS

- The taller your support, the more back bending you'll feel. If you'd rather not explore a big back bend, pick a support that's shorter and allows you to remain closer to the floor.
- The knees tend to splay open. Keep them parallel in order to take pressure off your hips.
- If you know other arm variations, (cactus, bound, T...), feel free to explore them to deepen the chest opening. Otherwise keep your arms at your side palms facing down.

5 CHILD'S POSE - תנוחת ילד

I am secure because I am loved.



ABOUT THIS POSE

Child's Pose— **BALASANA** – in Sanskrit, helps to stretch the hips, thighs, and ankles while reducing stress and fatigue. It gently relaxes the muscles on the front of the body while passively stretching the muscles of the back.

This final pose, a pose of rest, centers, calms, and soothes the brain, helping to relieve stress and reset the system.

STEP 1

Spread your knees wide, sink your hips and buttocks back towards your heels, and bring your head towards the floor in the space your made between your legs.

STEP 2

Draw your arms by your sides, stretch them out in front of you, or make a little pillow to cushion your head and neck.

STEP 3

Inhale through your nose— send breath into your low back. Exhale through your nose— release your hips and draw your pelvis closer to the earth.

Stay here for 3-5 minutes, push yourself up into a seat, then pause for a moment and reflect on how you feel.

TIPS

- Child's Pose can help increase flexibility, but here, it's about being comfortable and feeling relaxed. Adjust your knees and your head and play around with arm positions so you can comfortably sit for at least three minutes.
- If your head doesn't reach the floor, place a block, a book, a pillow, or a blanket underneath.
- Place a blanket or pillow underneath your knees to remove discomfort.
- Turn to Child's Pose throughout this sequence when you need to pause, relax, and reconnect to your breath.