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September 23, 2015: Yom Kippur

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Title: Yom Kippur

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9/23/2015—I watched a part of a movie a few days ago about a British official fighting Muslim extremists in Britain. Early in the movie, a Muslim cleric is radicalizing a young British man, although one who might have been born abroad. They are in a bar, watching young people getting drunk. “We are not like them,” says the cleric. On this Day of Atonement, I am reminded that no one in the world is like the rootless western secularist. A holy day like Yom Kippur gives shape to a year and to a life—along with the rest of the religious calendar. But to the secularist, one day is like another. That is why so many of us look to nature to provide seasons and rhythms. But the religious holy day is not just seasonal, but meaningful. That is literally filled with meaning. My relationship with ultimate reality is renewed. I am reassured that life is not an accident and is not pointless. I am placed once again in a great cosmic drama. This drama of course requires a central character. This character could be God, but as in Job, I always believed it was I. Or perhaps it was I in relation to God. Thus, my purification was required by the universe. And I could emerge renewed and refreshed after the holy day. If it sounds like I miss Yom Kippur and the Kol Nidre ceremony that was performed last night, it is because I do. But all of it—including the fasting—is too involved to perform unless one is a part of it. And one cannot just watch it from a distance. So, despite numerous invitations, I don’t go back to Dor Hadash for Kol Nidre and I don’t fast and pray on my own. But I do blog. Thinking the religious calendar is now my substitute for having one.