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### Edible Judaism--Taking It All In

If the days of Awe are about meditating on Torah, Jewish history and peoplehood, they are also largely about food. My mother used to say, "holidays don't just happen, someone has to make them," and this task generally falls within the purview of women. As a Jewish woman, much of my focus, time and attention during the Days of Awe is taken up with food--shopping for ingredients for the chocolate chip zucchini cake I always make for *Erev Rosh Hashanah*, searching recipes on Jewish food blogs, daydreaming about something new and exciting to bring to a break-the-fast meal. I relish this time, when I can step into a role where I feel comfortable and fluent. Everything else about Judaism has required extensive learning, usually accompanied by the uncomfortable realization that I don't know enough. Food gave me a way of becoming Jewish that I could relate to instantly, and a role I could inhabit with confidence. Only with regard to food have I ever really felt like "I've got this."

Like services, prayer and contemplation, food is central to most Jewish holidays, providing what one Jewish author calls a "vehicle of memory, of commonality and difference, and of women's central contributions." "Food" she says, "contains the language of memory—embodied." The word "tradition" comes from the Latin word meaning *transfer--traditio*. When we prepare traditional foods for family and friends, we transfer our knowledge, skill and intention to them. In eating, we partake of their symbolism instantly. As the food becomes part of our bodies, we become one with our traditions and with each other. Just as some so-called "primitive" peoples perform ritual cannibalism, we, too, symbolically, "eat our ancestors." For me, learning to cook these foods and eating them is especially transformative and important, as it provides a way for the Jewish ancestors of others around me to become mine.

*Erev Rosh Hashanah* comes and the rest of the world goes on around us. I shop and cook in the hot fall afternoon while squeezing in work and last minute nail appointments. We dress, we kiss, we eat, we laugh. There is always good, strong coffee with dessert. We groan as we push away from the table, glancing at our watches and wondering whether someone else will have nabbed our usual parking space. It feels good to be separate, together.