

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

ROSH HASHANA
HA'AZINU/SHABBAT SHUBAH

SEPTEMBER 24-27, 2014

1-3 TISHREI 5775

DEDICATIONS: In memory of Victor Jimmy Azrak 7 Tishrei

SEPHARDIC CONGREGATION OF LONG BEACH

Dear Benai Asher,

With less than 48 hours until Rosh Hashanah, the pace of activity picks up with lots to do. It is a time to take a spiritual accounting, review the machzor, and compile a list of goals for the coming year, reconnect with friends and family, and so much more. It is also a time to **enable others** to celebrate the High Holidays joyously. We can give tzedakah to support those in need by contributing to the Sephardic Congregation Chesed Fund, at <http://www.benaiasher.org/donate-online/>, and enter Chesed Funds in the subject line. We can also reach out to inspire more people to meaningfully celebrate the holiday. Here are three very important ways to make this happen:

- 1) **Hospitality:** If you have room at your table **to host guests** for any of the upcoming holiday meals, please let us know. At the same time, if you would like **to be hosted** for one of the upcoming holidays meals, please let us know that, too, so that we can match guests with hosts.
- 2) If you are able to **blow shofar** for those unable to make it to services, or for patients in neighborhood senior centers and nursing homes, please let us know.
- 3) **Encourage attendance at our Learners High Holiday Service.** This year I hope to do something new and host a learner's service on both days of Rosh Hashana at 9AM until about 10AM. Many people have complained in the past that they either don't follow the prayers or because they were never taught find themselves lost as to meaning and goal in Rosh Hashana. We hope that during this hour we can have a mini service with explanation. At that point those attending can join the regular service for the Torah reading and Shofar Blowing.

There are so many people in the community who will appreciate this service. Please share the information about the service with someone who would appreciate it. Even with mimosas at the Allegria, there are many Jews in Long Beach who would enjoy becoming a part of our family if we only invite them and make the experience something they can enjoy.

Let us make the most of the last week of the Jewish year and do what we can to share the beauty of the High Holidays with many more of our Jewish brothers and sisters. As we gather in our homes and in synagogue to greet the New Year, let us do so having done all that we can to make this Rosh Hashanah as meaningful and uplifting as possible for our families, our community, and all those seeking a warm and inspiring holiday.

Tizku LeShanim Rabot

May we all be blessed and written for a year of health happiness, peace and prosperity,

David Bibi

PS ... We are hoping to have some child sitting available on both days of Rosh Hashana from 10AM to 1PM and again for Kol Nidre and Yom Kippur. If you have children who need to be watched, please give us their names and ages and we will endeavor to have people with us to help.

PSS... Our intent is to begin regular tefilah at 8AM each morning of Rosh Hashana and get to the Amidah by 9AM. Torah reading will be at about 10AM and we will try to limit each day's olim to five plus two plus maftir. Musaf and Shofar at 11AM and we want to get out way before 1PM. Please keep these times in mind. They only work if everything is sold in advance, so please help us out.

HIGH HOLIDAY HONORS

Parnasa of Rosh Hashana SOLD David for Jonah

Opening the Ark on Rosh Hashana – Sold Leon for Richard Lobell

Carrying The Torah SOLD Albert Yusupov for Bobby Mizrahi

Carrying The Second Torah Sold Leon for Baruch Kahn

Carry the Haftara Case SOLD Bobby and Hindy for Mathew

Rimonim for all the Torah's SOLD – Purchased by Ernie for Sam Yusupov

Raise the Torah Hagbah SOLD Albert Yusupov for Sam Shetrit

Gelila Wrap the Torah SOLD Leon for Hal

Mashlim with Kaddish SOLD David for Bobby

Haftara with Kaddish \$ 1800

Parnasa of Rosh Hashana Day SOLD Bobby and Hindy for Shaya

Parnasa of Rosh Hashana Mincha SOLD Robert Yadgarov for his brother Ronen.

Parnasa of Rosh Hashana evening service \$2600

2nd Day Rosh Hashana

Opening the Ark on Rosh Hashana SOLD Bobby and Hindy for Meyer

Carrying The Torah SOLD Albert Yusupov for Hal Waldman

Carrying The Second Torah SOLD Mrs Halio for Shaya

Carry the Haftara Case SOLD Ely for Ari

Rimonim for all the Torah's SOLD Richard Soleymanzadeh For "one boy and one girl per Torah who have never done it, or not done it recently"

Raise the Torah Hagbah SOLD Albert Yusupov for Robert Yadgarov

Gelila Wrap the Torah \$500 SOLD For Lobell Boys.

Mashlim with Kaddish \$ 1500

Haftara with Kaddish \$ 1800

Parnasa of Rosh Hashana 2nd Day – SOLD Bobby and Hindy for Abie

Parnasa of Rosh Hashana Mincha – The prayer for financial success \$1800

Sephardic Cong of Long Beach Benai Asher

HIGH HOLIDAYS SCHEDULE 5775-2014

Wednesday, September 24, 2014 – Ereb Rosh HaShanah

Selihot 6:20
Shahrit followed by Hatarah 7:00

Prepare Erub Tabshilin
Candle Lighting 6:30 PM
Minha followed by Arbit 6:30 PM
Prayer for Financial Success

Thursday, September 25, 2014 – First Day Rosh HaShanah

Vatikin 5:45 AM (sunrise 6:45:05)
Shahrit 8:00 AM
Learners Minyan 9:00 AM
Shofar 11:00 AM apx
Minha followed by Tashlikh 6:00 PM
Arbit 7:15 PM
Candle Lighting After 7:26 PM

Friday, September 26, 2014 – Second Day Rosh HaShanah

Vatikin 5:45 AM (sunrise 6:46:05)
Shahrit 8:00 AM
Learners Minyan 9:00 AM
Shofar 11:00 AM apx
Candle Lighting 6:27 PM
Minha 6:30 PM
Kabbalat Shabbat followed by Arbit 6:45 PM

Saturday, September 27, 2014 – Shabbat Teshuba

Perasha “Ha’azinu”
Shahrit - 9:00 AM
Class 5:30 PM
Minha 6:00 PM
Seudah Shelishit 6:30 PM
Arbit 7:15 PM
Habdalah – Shabbat Ends 7:25 PM
Hatarah 7:30 PM
“Hatarah” – the nullifying of one’s vows and oaths for the past year will be recited after Arbit. All men and women are urged to attend.

Sunday, September 28, 2014 – Fast of Gedalyah

Fast Begins 5:27 AM
Selihot 7:15 AM
Shahrit 8:00 AM
Minha 6:15 PM
Arbit 6:50 PM
Fast Ends 7:05 PM

Aseret Yeme Teshuba – Mon Sept 29 – Thurs Oct 3

Selihot 6:15
Shahrit 6:55 AM Mon/Thurs
Shahrit 7:00 AM Tues/Wed

Friday, October 3, 2014 – Ereb Yom Kippur

Selihot 6:15
Shahrit 7:00 AM
Minha (some put Tefillin) 3:00 PM
Candle Lighting 6:16 PM
Fast Begins 6:20 PM
Kal Nidre 6:30 PM

Saturday, October 4, 2014 – Yom Kippur

Shahrit 8:00 AM
Musaf 12:00 PM
Minha 4:30 PM
Ne’ilah Services 6:00 PM
Arbit 7:00 PM
Fast Ends – Habdalah 7:08 PM
Birkat Halebana – Blessing on the Moon

SELECTED CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS FOR ROSH HASHANAH 5775 - 2014

ERUB TABSHILIN

Our sages instituted Erub Tabshilin as a means to enable us to prepare food on the Friday of the Holiday for Shabbat. This year the holidays are followed immediately by Shabbat and Erub Tabshilin is applicable. On Wednesday afternoon, set aside a piece of bread and cooked food intended for Shabbat (i.e. a hard-boiled egg). Raise it and recite the following:

“Barukh Ata Ado-nay Elo-henu Melekh Ha’olam Asher Kideshanu Bemisvotav Vessivanu Al Misvat Erub.”
“In accordance with the Law of Erub, it shall be permissible for us to bake, cook, prepare and do all necessary things for Shabbat during Yom Tob (the holiday).”

Be sure to eat the bread and food by “Seuda Shelishit” on Shabbat.

Candle Lighting

The blessing for candle lighting for both nights of Rosh HaShanah:

“Barukh Ata Ado-nay Elo-henu Melekh Haolam Asher Kideshanu Bemisvotav Vessivanu Lehadlik Ner Shel Yom Tob.”

Kiddush

A regular Rosh HaShanah Kiddush is recited on both nights of Rosh HaShanah. The blessing of “*Shehechyanu*” is recited on both nights.

Seder for Rosh HaShanah Both Nights:

After Kiddush and the blessing on the bread, it is our custom to precede the family meal with special foods chosen symbolically and eaten with appropriate blessings and wishes suggested by their names. Recite the prayer and the blessing before eating the following:

Apple dipped in sugar or honey

May it be Thy will Oh L-rd to grant us a year from the first day to the last, goodly as the apple and sweet as honey.

“Barukh Ata Ado-nay Elo-henu Melekh Haolam Boreh Peri Ha’ess.”

Leek

May it be Thy will...that all our enemies and those who hate us be eliminated.

Swiss Chard

May it be Thy will...that those who have beaten us or sought harm shall be beaten in the coming year.

Dates

May it be Thy will...that all our enemies and those that hate us be neutralized and non-existent.

Squash, gourd, or pumpkin

May it be Thy will...to consider our good deeds and guard us from enemies that gird at us.

Pomegranate

May it be Thy will...that we will be rich and replete with acts inspired by religion and piety as this pomegranate is rich and replete with seeds.

Frijoles, lobia, or fasoolia beans

May it be Thy will...that we will be rich and replete with acts inspired by religion and piety as these beans are rich and numerous.

Sheep’s head, Fish head, cow brains, or the like

May it be Thy will...that we may go ahead in all we undertake and be the first for good deeds.

Sephardic Cong of Long Beach Benai Asher

OBSERVANCE OF ROSH HASHANAH

Both days of Rosh HaShanah are observed in a similar way to Shabbat with the exception of cooking and carrying. One may not work, write, or sell, buy or ride in a car, but one can cook (transfer fire from an existing flame or pilot to another) and one may carry outside (even without an Erub) keys, talit, baby carriage, etc. One may not strike a match to start a fire even for the purpose of cooking. We suggest the use of the pilot light or a candle left burning from before the holiday. You may use the candles that were lit for the holiday.

Tekiat Shofar:

The Shofar is sounded on both days of Rosh HaShanah this year. The Shofar is sounded during the morning services. Make sure that you arrive on time since the Missva (commandment) of listening to the Shofar is of the utmost importance. Although women are not obligated from the Torah to listen to the sound of the Shofar, generations of women have taken it upon themselves to fulfill this commandment.

We call upon all the women to come early enough to be able to participate and fulfill the Missva of Shofar.

Som Gedalyah:

The Fast of Gedalyah begins with the break of dawn **5:27 AM** on **Sunday, September 28, 2014** and ends at **7:05 PM**.

Prayers on the Ten Days of Penitence:

Beginning on Rosh HaShanah, we add certain verses and paragraphs to the prayers relating to the 10 days of Penitence. These prayers are found in every siddur. Do not forget to recite "Shir Hama'alot" before "Yosser". In the Amida recite "Zokhreneu Le'haim", "Me Khamokha", "Hamelekh Hakadosh", "Ukhtob Le'haim Tobim", and "Ubsefer Haim". These additions remain in effect through Yom Kippur.

ShabbatShalomNewsletter@gmail.com
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Our weekly article is now printed in the Jewish Voice. Please pick up a copy at your local shop or go on line to JewishVoiceNY.com. You can also comment on the articles there and tweet them to your friends.

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Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue, 17th Floor, Artistic Frame. Mincha at 4PM through October 30th – Please join us! 212-289-2100

Editors Notes Advice from the Brigadier General

When we spend Shabbat in Manhattan with Rabbi Elie Abadie, it's always a curiosity as to who will show up for breakfast at the SAFRA synagogue on the morning. Two very special visitors joined us this weekend. One was Rabbi Nissim Ze'ev, a well-known know student of Porat Yosef, who has served as a Rabbi, Shochet, Mohel and Chazzan in Israel, in Mexico and here in New York. He is probably most famous for being the one who started the Shas party in Israel and he still represents Shas as a member of the Knesset.

Rabbi Ze'ev was very close to Haham Ovadia Yosef z's'l and as this coming Shabbat is when the 12 months of mourning for the Rishon LeSion conclude, Rabbi Ze'ev told us of his earliest relationship with the Rabbi who lived in the same building as his grandmother. He entertained us with other personal anecdotes and reminded us of how special Haham Ovadia was and how much we have lost. It was Haham Ovadia who made us and the rest of the Jewish people take pride who we are, where we come from and what we can accomplish.

The other guest was Brigadier General Rabbi Avichai Rontzki, the former Chief Military Rabbi of the Israel Defense Forces. He is also the rosh yeshiva of the Hesder Yeshiva in Itamar and a founder of that city in the Shomron. Rabbi Rontzki also wrote the highly acclaimed four volume army halachic guide Hitzim K'yad Gibor. As we spoke privately afterwards, we discussed politics and the press and his recent but unwanted publicity. More important though, the rabbi is a brilliant scholar and we discussed a message for Rosh Hashanah which probably applies to almost all of us.

The rabbi grew up in a secular family and found himself in 1973 as a commander in the army. We must remember that only six years earlier Israel had delivered a stunning blow to its Arab neighbors

defeating them miraculously in the Six-Day War. The relationship between Israeli and Arab had changed forever. Even more so the image of the Jew had been transformed in the eyes of the world. The Israeli army's crushing victory had altered the image of a Jewish victim into a Jewish warrior.

The Israelis believed that they would find themselves at peace with their Arab neighbors for at least a generation or more. They supposed that they would not be bothered for 20 to 30 years after the Arab world saw the strength of their military. Yet at the same time only two weeks before Yom Kippur of that year the Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir met with King Hussein of Jordan. The King informed the prime minister that the Arabs were preparing for war. And this was not the only sign. From the end of 1972, Egypt began a concentrated effort to build up its forces, receiving MiG-21 jet fighters, SA-2, SA-3, SA-6 and SA-7 anti-aircraft missiles, T-55 and T-62 tanks, RPG-7 anti-tank weapons, and the AT-3 Sagger anti-tank guided missile from the Soviet Union and improving its military tactics, based on Soviet battlefield doctrines. What was happening seemed obvious.

And then, only three days before Yom Kippur, 600 family members of Russian diplomats were suddenly evacuated from Syria and Egypt. The Israelis certainly took note of this, but wrote it off as a mass vacation. Why? Human nature often allows internalized preconceptions to mask the stark face of reality. In the minds of Israeli leaders, there was no way the enemy would attack so even when the evidence pointed in the opposite direction, the facts simply couldn't be true. But unfortunately a few days later, on the Holiest day of the year, we found out that it was true and so many lost their lives, possibly needlessly. The Egyptians and Syrians both initially made threatening gains into Israeli-held territory. Then somewhat miraculously, the tide was turned. It was through this that the rabbi and his wife Ronit who he had met in his unit set together on the path to be chozer beTeshuba – to return religiously. The Rabbi went on to study at Machon Meir and Mercaz HaRav.

The rabbi went on and explained this fault of being blinded to the truth raises its ugly head time and time again. The brigadier general suggested that it was obvious to everyone that Hamas was building tunnels in Gaza. Weren't the dangers that the tunnels presented obvious? Yet the obvious was ignored. As we approach Rosh Hashana and we are supposed to do an introspective search into ourselves, examining our faults and where we stand, it is prudent to be reminded of this error that so many

of us succumb to. We let our own preconceptions stand in the way of truth.

Someone did a survey of subway riders. The question posed to them was as follows: "What percentage of people riding the subway would return a found wallet with cash to its rightful owner?" Most answered that it would be less than one in four who would return the wallet. When the same people were asked, "And if you found the wallet, what would you do?" Ninety percent declared they would return the wallet. Ninety percent were pretty sure that they were better than most everyone else.

This is the tool of the evil inclination. It whispers into our ear. "You are one of the good ones. You don't need to change. You don't need to fix anything. Let them start to become like you before you need to worry."

Rabbi Abittan would often state that the one thing which blinds us more than anything else is pride. Imagine the pompous man declaring, "I know what I know, don't bother me with facts". The rabbi once mentioned that the numerical value of honor in hebrew – kavod – is 32. Coincidentally this is the same numerical value as the word – lev – or heart. And is the heart not the source of pride?

On Rosh Hashana, we hope to blow the shofar and have the sounds of the shofar enter into our hearts. We call the sounds a wake up call. The goal is to release each of us from our world of illusions. The goal is to wake us up from our preconceived notions. The goal is to get us to open our eyes and see the truth. The Shofar enters the heart and it breaks the 32, the 32 which is Kavod. Once we let go of our pride and once we stop holding so tightly on to our honor we remove the mask. That mask not only hides who we are. That mask prevents us from seeing.

This Rosh hashana when we hear the sound of the Shofar, may it penetrate into our hearts. May the sound help us to remove the layers. May the sounds break away the masks and allow us to see and know our true selves. Because before I can change and become someone new, I need to see who I am now. Before I can change, I need to realize what needs to be changed.

Looking forward to a new year and a new and improved me. Come join me on the journey.

PS ... By popular request, we are reposting an article we published last year for Rosh Hashana -

Omens and Attitudes

Reprinted from the Rosh Hashana 5774 Newsletter

My daughter Mikhayla, my own master chef who turned 20 this week (Happy Birthday Mikhayla), asked me to go to Amazing Savings for some things she needed. She was preparing for Rosh Hashana with Chantelle. While in the store I noticed two yeshiva boys in their suits and white shirts with their mom.

The mother pulled a set of small bowls and one boy asked why they would need such small bowls. The mother responded that they would be good for the simanim - the special foods we serve on the night of Rosh Hashana.

Why a Big Deal Over Some Foods We Don't Want to Eat Anyway?

The other boy laughed and asked, "Ma, what do you think? That this is Pesach? Ma, it's not the Seder! Why such a big deal over some foods that we don't want to eat anyway? Do you really think it matters?"

I couldn't mind my own business. The mother was a bit aggravated. She went one way and the boys went the other way. So I went over to speak with them.

The truth is that their question is very valid. Just imagine for a second getting a speeding ticket in some small town in upstate New York or New Jersey. You arrive at this small town court. The cop who wrote you the ticket is there and the judge asks you how you plead. You try some guilty with explanation excuse and then the judge cuts you short, asks the cop a few questions and tells you if you're done he will decide the verdict.

Try Telling it to the Judge

You tell him to wait one more minute. You pull out from your bag a jar of honey and some sliced apple and as you dip the apple into the honey you state aloud, may it be the will of your honor the judge to sweeten my verdict just like this honey sweetens the apple and you eat the apple, relishing each bite in front of the court.

Odds are that the judge will either throw you into a cell for a few hours charging you with contempt or ask that you be taken to the local hospital for observation.

Rosh Hashana is supposed to be the day of judgment. And as we learned in school as children, G-d takes out the scale. On one side go our sins and on the other go our merits. If we are worthy, we are judged positively and if not then we're in for some trouble.

How can eating a pomegranate or some blacked eyed peas increase our merits? How can

eating a gourd or some dates help destroy our enemies? How can an apple in honey sweeten out judgments? How is it possible through these foods to change sins into merits? What's going on here?

Is There Such a Thing as a Good Omen?

Is there such a thing as a good omen? And on Rosh Hashana is it the food or the prayer? And if it's the prayer then why do we need the food?

The Talmud tells us about omens. If someone wants to know if they will be judged for life then on the days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur he should light a candle in a draft free room. If the candles burns then fine, if the candle goes out, he better get some more life insurance quickly.

If he wants to know if he will merit a good parnasa or livelihood, he should take a chicken. He should feed it and if after a while it gains weight than all is good. But if it loses weight, he should get on the phone and call the bankruptcy attorney because tough times are ahead. And there are more.

The Talmud then warns not to try any of these at home. "Perhaps he will not see it and worry and as a result he will experience misfortune".

A Reason to Be More Confused

Then Abaye goes on to say that what does work is eating pumpkin, fenugreek, leeks, beets and dates. These are good omens. He doesn't mention any yehi ratzons, nor prayers. Eat those foods he suggests. And if you were confused when we started, you should be even more puzzled now. How can we begin to understand what is going on here?

The Arizal suggests that the person who lit the candle and sees the candle go out goes into depression. Perhaps the "Satan" blew it out just to mess with your mind. Sadness is a tool of the other side as it disconnects us from Hashem. Recall our forefather Jacob who in mourning for the loss of Joseph for 22 years lost his Ruach HaKodesh – his connection with G-d. Abaye in his brilliance suggests that if depression can disconnect us and damage our Mazal then joy can do the opposite. And these special foods should bring us joy.

In Parashat Ki Tavo we read of 98 chilling curses. Why are we subject to curses? The Torah tells us it's because we didn't serve Hashem with joy and a good heart. We are commanded again and again to be happy and to serve Hashem with joy.

These foods which make up the simanim of Rosh Hashana can be sweet but sometimes sour. If we taste them and appreciate them; If we taste the sweetness and forget the tart; If we are thankful of the world G-d gave us and are happy with Hashem then Hashem is happy with us. If we are satisfied and happy then there is no place for sadness, anger or

jealousy. Satisfaction and joy have the power to change us and change our lives.

The Benefits of Regarding Hashem as Our Father

If we are happy with Hashem and look at him as a father then Hashem will look at us as his children. A child who does something wrong and comes to his parent admitting his sin, feeling bad not only for doing something wrong but for embarrassing his parent and truly tries to never do the same wrong again in essence converts the sin into a merit. The father cherishes the child and the entire act becomes part of a victory tale.

On Rosh Hashana, Hashem's behavior towards us mirrors our own behavior. If we are happy with the world and satisfied; If we share and care; If we look towards G-d as a parent, then he looks at us as a child.

The Power to Change Our Mazal

Eating those foods, appreciating them, being satisfied with them and enjoying them really has the power to change our Mazal. We really can turn a sin into a merit. They have the power to change the scale by literally converting the sins on the left side of the scale into merits on the right side.

The key lies in our own hands. The key lies in our own attitudes. On this Rosh Hashana as you sit with your family and taste these foods stop and smell the proverbial roses. Go around the table and ask everyone to focus on what they have to be thankful for. Focus on the glass half full. Commit to being satisfied and fighting jealousy and anger.

Don't forget that what we project finds its way back to us. May we project love and unity, satisfaction and appreciation, and may we be blessed with a year of health, happiness, peace and prosperity. Amen!

Tizku LeShanim Rabot,

David Bibi

Rabbi Bolton on Rosh Hashana

In a few days will be the Jewish holiday of Rosh HaShanna. Jews all over the world will be filling synagogues praying and listening to the Shofar and then after that, a week later, fasting for a full day in Yom Kippur 'The day of Forgiveness'.

But how many really appreciate these miraculous phenomena?

What strange force is it that draws non-observant and even atheistic Jews to spend even several hours in a

Synagogue waiting to hear the blast of a ram's horn or to fast for no apparent reason?

Here are two stories that perhaps will help understand.

Shortly after world war two, Josef Stalin "The Sun to the Nations" was adored and feared by the entire Russian populace. His rule and judgment were so absolute that even the millions of his own people that died in his Siberian 'correction' camps and their relatives were expected to be grateful to him for 're-educating' them.

Rabbi Mendel Futerfass lived in Russia. He was a Lubavitcher Chassid; a Jew that believes that the Moses of his day is the Lubavitcher Rebbe. And the Lubavitcher Rebbe said that everyone must sacrifice even their lives do insure that every Jew, even in the G-dless U.S.S.R gets a genuine Torah education.

Rab Mendel was, arrested, charged with subversive activities and put in jail shortly after Rosh HaShanna until his trial. It was pretty clear that he would be found guilty and spend the rest of his life in Siberia, which in most cases wasn't much time.

Then, in his damp prison cell together with hundreds of criminals he suddenly realized that several days had passed and that night would be Yom HaKippurim; The day of Forgiveness!

On one hand he became depressed. He had to spend the holiest day of the year in this hell of a prison.

But on the other hand..... He was alive!! Jewish! A Chassid of the Lubavitcher Rebbe!! What would he accomplish by depression? He had to rise above the situation!! That is what being a Chassid is about!!

That night he prepared for himself a little Synagogue; his bed (which was a long plank of wood attached to the wall). He would sit on his bed and say as many of the prayers of Yom Kippur as he remembered and G-d would help.

But it wasn't so easy. The prayers of Yom Kippur are different and there are a lot of them.

But one prayer stood out in his mind; a poem arranged alphabetically whose each line begins with the words 'Everyone believes' ('Kol Ma'aminim'): 'Everyone believes that there is nothing but G-d' etc.

In the stillness of the night, while everyone else was asleep he sat swaying gently back and forth on his

bed praying quietly to the Creator. "Kol Ma'aminim b'Chod Drachav mishpat".....

Then suddenly the thought entered his mind "Hey, what am I saying here! 'Everyone believes? Everyone believes!?' Why, the sadistic devils who arrested me and threw me in prison were anti-Semitic bloodthirsty Yevseksia ('Jewish division' of the communist party) Jews, who lived only to wipe out any mention of G-d and His people.

Rab Mendel put this new question aside with all his others... and finished his prayers.

Several nights later he had a soul-shaking experience that answered his question. In the large cell where he and about two hundred other prisoners were imprisoned, everyone but Rabbi Mendel was fast asleep. He was sitting upright, saying his 'Shma Yisroel' prayer before going to sleep when suddenly he felt that someone was staring at him. He looked up. It was Ivan, a huge mountain of a man with a scarred ugly face, everyone knew him and was afraid of him. He was a known murderer. Now it seems that he had set his sights on poor Rab Mendel.

Maybe because he hated Jews, perhaps another reason, but Ivan jumped silently from his bed, crouching like a huge cat and quietly approached the Rabbi.

When he reached Rab Mendel he bent down, put his face into his and whispered deliberately and slowly, "You're Jewish, right?"

Rab Mendel never hid his Judaism; better to die a Jew than to live a lie. He looked him in the eye and answered firmly, "Yes!"

The murderer pointed to his own chest and whispered loudly, "So am I." Rav Mendel was really surprised. He saw that something was going on behind those murderous eyes.

"And I'll tell you something else" Ivan continued, "I even fasted this Yom Kippur. That's right! Me, Ivan the murderer who hates G-d, fasted on Yom Kippur.

He paused for what seemed an eternity and continued. "A few days ago I heard one of the Jewish prisoners say 'Tomorrow is Yom Kippur' and suddenly I decided I was going to fast! I don't know why, but I did it.

The next day I told the guards I was sick and they put me in the 'hospital' (which was no more than an

empty room with a wooden bed in it) and locked the door and I just sat there.

I couldn't figure out why I was sitting there but after a while I felt really uneasy. Then it occurred to me that I feel uneasy because Jews PRAY on Yom Kippur. I remembered that my grandfather took me to services and he used to pray and cry to G-d with all the other Jews, and now look at me! I'm a murderer, a thief, all I've done is hurt people all my life and I can't even.....

"Then suddenly I remembered a prayer!

"It was something my grandmother used to say to me every morning when she woke me up. I remembered her soft, sad eyes and I began to cry. Do you hear? I cried on Yom Kippur just like my grandfather did! Just like all the Jews! And when I stopped crying I didn't even wipe my eyes I just said the prayer, my grandmother's prayer:

"Modeh Ani L'fa'ne'chaw Melech Chai v'Ka'yam" ('I surrender before You, living and eternal King')

"I don't even know what it means. But I sat in that room the entire day. That's right, I sat from the morning until eight at evening and said over and over again: 'Modeh Ani L'fanechaw Melech Chai v'Kayam. Modeh Ani L'fanechaw Melech Chai v'Kayam.' "

He paused for another minute in deep thought, then snapped out of it, pointed his finger at Rab Mendel and whispered menacingly, 'Now don't you tell anyone what I just told you, understand?! Nothing. I said nothing."

And he turned and returned to his place.

Rav Mendel sat in the silence staring at Ivan as he climbed into his bed, turned his face to the wall and was snoring instantly.

Suddenly the thought entered his mind. 'Aha! That is the answer to my question I had on Yom Kippur!

Why.... if that murderer believes..... it's a sign that "Kol Maaminim' EVERYONE believes.

The second story is one I heard about the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

The Rebbe was a very sought after person. He received more mail than any man in the U.S.A. (I heard even more than the president) and he never gave a piece of inaccurate advice or a bad prediction in his life.

So it was no wonder that many Israeli politicians, even anti-religious ones came to consult with him (Although they didn't always take his advice, as we see the results in Israel today).

It so happened that someone wrote in and complained to the Rebbe. 'How can it be that such a respectable Torah figure as himself gives any sort of attention, no less honor, to such Torah-hating Jews?

The Rebbe answered, 'When a Jew wakes up in the morning on Yom Kippur, shaves, cooks breakfast, turns on the radio and while eating (all these things are transgressions) hears the announcer say "Today is the Jewish Day of Atonement, thousands of Jews throughout the world are fasting. "

Suddenly he remembers that he bought tickets to the Synagogue services. He looks at his watch, grabs the cup of coffee, runs out of the house to his car, drives to the Synagogue, runs inside, takes his seat and opens his prayer book for fifteen minutes.

Suddenly he slaps himself on the forehead and yells out, 'Oh no! I'm late for the meeting in the stock market!' He closes his book and runs out of the house of prayer.

Concluded the Rebbe: 'You have no idea how much pleasure G-d gets from that fifteen minutes that he sat in the Synagogue'.

This is the power of the High Holy Days (Rosh HaShanna and Yom Kippur).

Almost unexplainably Jews throughout the world suddenly are moved. It's not because they are thinking about punishment or reward, but rather because they feel that G-d is the Creator of the world.... G-d is actually creating THEM, constantly, for FREE and cares about what they do.

Rosh HaShanna is the sixth and final day of creation when G-d created man. And every Jew feels subconsciously that he is that man. He too must help G-d to put the finishing touches on the creation.

On the High Holy days we feel that G-d trusts us and has faith in us to improve the world.

This is the message of the Shofar and it will only be completely manifested with the arrival of Moshiach. Then the 'Great Shofar' will sound, arouse all the Jews and through them the entire world. Then all mankind will declare (as we say in the prayers of

these High Holy Days) "The G-d of Israel is King and His kingship is on all being."

But it all depends on us.... Prayer is essential but it is not sufficient. We must DO.... SPEAK and even THINK positively.

Even before Rosh Hashanna; just one more good deed, word or even thought can tilt the scales. Hopefully this Rosh HaShanna all the Jews in the world will celebrate together in the Third Temple in Jerusalem.

Have a healthy, happy, sweet New Year with Moshiach NOW!!

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

“One with clean hands and a pure heart, who has not sworn in vain by my soul and has not sworn deceitfully.” (Tehillim 24:4)

During the High Holiday season, we open the hechal a number of times to pray to Hashem to provide us with a good livelihood. The Tehillim we read is Chapter 24 “Le-David Mizmor.” In the verse quoted above, David Hamelech mentions that a person should not be one who swears in vain and does not swear deceitfully. What is David referring to?

Rabbi Y.S. Elyasiv zt”l explains that in the Talmud (Niddah 30b), it says that every Jew is obligated to fulfill the vow his soul took before it was born, that “he should be a saddik and not a rasha.’ However, David Hamelech mentions that a person should not violate two vows – one should not swear in vain and not in deceit. Rabbi Elyashiv explains with a parable: A person lent his friend \$100 for a week. When the week was over, the borrower handed the lender back the exact bill he was lent a week earlier. The lender looked at the borrower in disbelief.. “If you were not going to use it, why did you borrow it from me in the first place?”

Hashem gives every individual the gift of life so that he can attain eternal reward. If a person sins, he unquestionably abuses that gift. But even when he does not sin, but fails to toil to perform misvot, he has likewise lived a life of vanity.

King David asks rhetorically, “Who will ascend the mountain of Hashem and reach his holy place?” He answers that it will be the one who has neither sworn deceitfully nor sworn in vain, the one who not only has not sinned but has also not wasted the opportunities that this world offered to ascend the ladder of spirituality by performing misvot and living a Torah life.

As we pray for parnessah, remember our commitments to grab every opportunity to do more and more misvot. Shabbat Shalom and Happy Holiday. Rabbi Reuven Semah

"Hashem created you forgetful and you forgot your Creator." (Debarim 32:18)

There was once a person who owed many people money, and every time they asked him for it he would get under tremendous pressure and have no way to respond. One day, his friend saw his suffering and suggested to him that any time a creditor asked him for money he should act crazy as if he cracked from the pressure of his financial burden. This way, they would eventually leave him alone. Sure enough, every time one of his creditors approached him for money he would talk about the weather, the stock market, etc., and carry on as if he'd snapped. In no time, the word was out that he had lost his mind because of his financial burden and people start leaving him alone. One day, the original friend who gave him this idea approached him and told him that the loan that he had given him was due. This so called crazy fellow began to carry on like he did for his other creditors. His friend then replied, "I gave you the idea to do this and you're trying to pull it off on me?"

Hashem created a human being with the ability to forget his problems and worries. Without this, a person would be overcome with all of the burdens life has to offer. If a person forgets Hashem or his obligation to keep the Torah and misvot, he is acting like the fellow in the story, since he is using the very gift that Hashem gave him for his benefit against his Benefactor. Let's not forget this lesson. Shabbat Shalom. Tizku Leshanim Rabot. Rabbi Shmuel Choeka

RABBI ELI MANSOUR ROSH HASHANA- Our False Sense of Security

There is a custom among Ashkenazim (and perhaps among some Sepharadim, as well, though our community does not have such a custom) to recite during the Musaf service on Rosh Hashanah a special prayer called U'netaneh Tokef. Many regard this prayer as the highlight of the Rosh Hashanah service, the most emotional and gut-wrenching moments of prayer. This prayer lays out in very clear and explicit terms what precisely is happening on this day of Rosh Hashanah:

“On Rosh Hashanah it will be written, and on the fast of Yom Kippur it will be sealed – how many will pass [from the world], and how many will be created; who will live, and who will die; who is at his end, and who is not at his end; who by water, and who by fire; who

by the sword, and who by wild beasts; who by hunger, and who by thirst; who by earthquake, and who by plague; who by strangulation, and who by stoning; who will stay in place, and who will be exiled; who will live peacefully, and who will endure tribulations; who will have tranquility, and who will suffer; who will become poor, and who will become rich; who will be lowered, and who will rise."

Nobody with a pulse can hear these words and not be moved by this clear and frightening description of the judgment that takes place on Rosh Hashanah.

To properly grasp the power of this prayer, however, we must be aware of its background. As recorded by the Or Zarua (Rabbi Yishak of Vienna, 13th century), this prayer was composed by a Sadik in Germany named Rabbi Amnon of Mayence. He was a respected, high-ranking advisor to the local bishop, and his stature aroused the envy of other church officials. These officials approached the bishop and urged him to pressure Rabbi Amnon to convert to Christianity. After all, they noted, it would be only appropriate for a person of such rank to be a member of the Christian faith.

And so, the bishop summoned Rabbi Amnon and asked him if he would convert.

"Convert?" Rabbi Amnon said. "Why do I need to do that? I have been a loyal and faithful advisor to you all these years as a Jew. I don't need to become a Christian."

But the bishop persisted, and eventually, Rabbi Amnon, under duress, said, "Look, give me three days to think about it."

As soon as he left the bishop, Rabbi Amnon fell into depression. He could not believe that he had uttered those words – that he would consider abandoning his faith. Three days later, the bishop summoned Rabbi Amnon and asked what he decided.

"I decided," Rabbi Amnon said, "that you should cut off my tongue, which spoke of the possibility of my rejecting my faith!"

The bishop was incensed. He decreed that right there and then Rabbi Amnon's arms and legs should be amputated. That Rosh Hashanah, Rabbi Amnon asked to be brought by stretcher to the synagogue, and just before Kedusha during the Musaf prayer, he requested permission to recite a prayer. It was then that U'netaneh Tokef was recited for the first time. Rabbi Amnon loudly chanted this prayer which he composed, and as soon as he finished, his soul

departed. He later appeared in a dream to one of the leading Rabbis in Germany at that time, Rabbi Kalonymus, and informed him that U'netaneh Tokef is regarded as a very sacred prayer in the heavens, and should be instituted as part of the Rosh Hashanah service. This prayer thus became an integral part of the Rosh Hashanah prayer service in Ashkenazic congregations, and remains so to this very day.

Nobody understood this message of "who will live and who will die" better than Rabbi Amnon. Just a week earlier, he was a wealthy, prominent man, and suddenly he was tortured to death. He was able to compose this prayer because he experienced firsthand the fragile nature of life, just how quickly fortunes can be reversed.

We all make certain assumptions about our lives. We assume that just as until now we and our families have generally been healthy, this good health will continue during the coming year. We assume that because we've enjoyed safety and security in our neighborhoods, we have no reason for fear. We assume that because we've had a steady job or a successful business for many years now, there is no reason to worry about supporting our families. The story of Rabbi Amnon, and the U'netaneh Tokef prayer, show us that these assumptions are incorrect, that we live with a false sense of security. On Rosh Hashanah, God determines whether our current success and good health will endure. We cannot assume that our situation the previous year or years will necessarily continue.

As frightening as this thought is, the U'netaneh Tokef prayer ends on an encouraging note: "But repentance, prayer and charity eliminate the harsh judgment." Although we have no guarantees, we do have power over the outcome. Through "Teshuba, Tefila, U'sedaka" – repenting from our wrongdoing, pleading to God for mercy, and giving charity – we have the ability to avoid harsh decrees and see our current situation of health and security continue into and through the coming year, Amen.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks The Leader's Call to Responsibility

When words take wing, they modulate into song. That is what they do here in Haazinu as Moses, with the angel of death already in sight, prepares to take leave of this life. Never before had he spoken with such passion. His language is vivid, even violent. He wants his final words never to be forgotten. In a sense he has been articulating this truth for forty

years but never before with such emotion. This is what he says:

Give ear, O heavens, that I may speak,
Earth, hear the sayings of my mouth ...
The Rock, His acts are perfect,
For all his ways are just.
A faithful God without wrong,
Right and straight is He.
He is not corrupt; the defect is in his children,
A warped and twisted generation.
Is this the way you repay God,
Ungrateful, unwise people?
Is he not your father, your Master.
He made you and established you. (Deut. 32: 1-6)

Don't blame God when things go wrong. That is what Moses feels so passionately. Don't believe, he says, that God is there to serve us. We are here to serve Him and through Him be a blessing to the world. God is straight; it is we who are complex and self-deceiving. God is not there to relieve us of responsibility. It is God who is calling us to responsibility.

With these words Moses brings to closure the drama that began in the beginning with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. When they sinned, Adam blamed the woman, the woman blamed the serpent. So it was in the beginning and so it still is in the twenty-first century secular time.

The story of humanity has been for the most part a flight from responsibility. The culprits change. Only the sense of victimhood remains. It wasn't us. It was the politicians. Or the media. Or the bankers. Or our genes. Or our parents. Or the system, be it capitalism, communism or anything between. Most of all, it is the fault of the others, the ones not like us, infidels, sons of Satan, children of darkness, the unredeemed. The perpetrators of the greatest crime against humanity in all of history were convinced it wasn't them. They were "only obeying orders." When all else fails, blame God. And if you don't believe in God, blame the people who do. To be human is to seek to escape from responsibility.

That is what makes Judaism different. It is what made some people admire Jews and others hate them. For Judaism is God's call to human responsibility. From this call you can't hide, as Adam and Eve discovered when they tried, and you can't escape, as Jonah learnt in the belly of a fish.

What Moses was saying in his great farewell song can be paraphrased thus: "Beloved people, I have led you for forty years, and my time is coming to an end.

For the last month, since I began these speeches, these Devarim, I have tried to tell you the most important things about your past and future. I beg you not to forget them."

"Your parents were slaves. God brought them and you to freedom. But that was negative freedom, chofesh. It meant that there was no-one to order you about. That kind of freedom is not inconsequential, for its absence tastes like unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Eat them once a year so you never forget where you came from and who brought you out."

"But don't think that chofesh alone can sustain a free society. When everyone is free to do what they like, the result is anarchy, not freedom. A free society requires cherut, the positive freedom that only comes when people internalise the habits of self-restraint so that my freedom is not bought at the expense of yours, or yours at the cost of mine."

"That is why I have taught you all these laws, judgments and statutes. None of them is arbitrary. None of them exists because God likes giving laws. God gave laws to the very structures of matter – laws that generated a vast, wondrous, almost unfathomable universe. If God were only interested in giving laws, He would have confined himself to the things that obey those laws, namely matter without mind and life-forms that know not liberty."

"The laws God gave me and I gave you exist not for God's sake but for ours. God gave us freedom – the most rare, precious, unfathomable thing of all other than life itself. But with freedom comes responsibility. That means that we must take the risk of action. God gave us the land but we must conquer it. God gave us the fields but we must plough, sow and reap them. God gave us bodies but we must tend and heal them. God is our father; He made us and established us. But parents cannot live their children's lives. They can only show them by instruction and love how to live."

"So when things go wrong, don't blame God. He is not corrupt; we are. He is straight; it is we who are sometimes warped and twisted." That is the Torah's ethic of responsibility. No higher estimate has ever been given of the human condition. No higher vocation was ever entrusted to mortal creatures of flesh and blood.

Judaism does not see human beings, as some religions do, as irretrievably corrupt, stained by original sin, incapable of good without God's grace. That is a form of faith but it is not ours. Nor do we see

religion as a matter of blind submission to God's will. That too is a form of faith but not ours.

We do not see human beings, as the pagans did, as the playthings of capricious gods. Nor do we see them, as some scientists do, as mere matter, a gene's way of producing another gene, a collection of chemicals driven by electrical impulses in the brain, without any special dignity or sanctity, temporary residents in a universe devoid of meaning that came into existence for no reason and will one day, equally for no reason, cease to be.

We believe that we are God's image, free as He is free, creative as He is creative, on an infinitely smaller and more limited scale to be sure, but still we are the one point in all the echoing expanse of space where the universe becomes conscious of itself, the one life form capable of shaping its own destiny: choosing, therefore free, therefore responsible. Judaism is God's call to responsibility.

Which means: thou shalt not see thyself as a victim. Do not believe as the Greeks did that fate is blind and inexorable, that our fate once disclosed by the Delphic oracle, has already been sealed before we were born, that like Laius and Oedipus we are fated, however hard we try to escape the bonds of fate. That is a tragic view of the human condition. To some extent it was shared in different ways by Spinoza, Marx and Freud, the great triumvirate of Jews-by-descent who rejected Judaism and all its works.

Instead like Viktor Frankl, survivor of Auschwitz, and Aaron T. Beck, co-founder of cognitive behavioural therapy, we believe we are not defined by what happens to us but rather by how we respond to what happens to us. That itself is determined by how we interpret what happens to us. If we change the way we think – which we can, because of the plasticity of the brain – then we can change the way we feel and the way we act. Fate is never final. There may be such a thing as an evil decree, but penitence, prayer and charity can avert it. And what we cannot do alone we can do together, for we believe "it is not good for man to be alone."

So Jews developed a morality of guilt in place of what the Greeks had, a morality of shame. A morality of guilt makes a sharp distinction between the person and the act, between the sinner and the sin. Because we are not wholly defined by what we do, there is a core within us that remains intact – "My God, the soul you gave me is pure" – so that whatever wrong we may have done, we can repent and be forgiven. That creates a language of hope, the only force strong enough to defeat a culture of despair.

It is that power of hope, born whenever God's love and forgiveness gives rise to human freedom and responsibility, that has made Judaism the moral force it has always been to those whose minds and hearts are open. But that hope, says Moses with a passion that still sears us whenever we tread it afresh, does not just happen. It has to be worked for and won. The only way it is achieved is by not blaming God. He is not corrupt. The defect is in us, His children. If we seek a better world, we must make it. God teaches us, inspires us, forgives us when we fail and lifts us when we fall, but we must make it. It is not what God does for us that transforms us; it is what we do for God.

The first humans lost paradise when they sought to hide from responsibility. We will only ever regain it if we accept responsibility and become a nation of leaders, each respecting and making space for those not like us. People do not like people who remind them of their responsibility. That is one of the reasons (not the only one, to be sure) for Judeophobia through the ages. But we are not defined by those who do not like us. To be a Jew is to be defined by the One who loves us.

The deepest mystery of all is not our faith in God but God's faith in us. May that faith sustain us as we heed the call to responsibility and take the risk of healing some of the needless wounds of an injured but still wondrous world.

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