

Rosh Hashana Day 2
September 20, 2020

Shana Tova, Gut Yuntif Gut Yohr,

Today is the second day of Rosh HaShana. Did you know the name Rosh Hashana never occurs in the Torah? In the Torah, the Jewish New Year is called “**Shabbaton Zikaron.**” Which means something like “Stop and Remember.”

Our tradition teaches at this moment of separating the past year from the coming year we should stop and look back on our path that has brought us to this new year. It is our custom to do “*Cheshbon Nefesh,*” which literally means “an accounting of the soul.” Like going to the doctor for a physical,” Rosh Hashanah is a time for a spiritual “check-up.” We ask ourselves *have I hurt anyone in*

the past year? All of us are human, we all make mistakes. This is the time when we strive to remember our mistakes in order to make amends. We do this because we want the New Year to be a better one. By pushing ourselves to confront the uncomfortable - we are given an opportunity to remove a burden that could hold us back. If we do not do this, we cannot grow spiritually. If we do not change, then for us there will **not** be a new year. The calendar may change --- but if we do not, then spiritually we remain behind --- unrenewed.

On Rosh Hashanah we look back and we look forward. In Biblical Hebrew, there is no present tense, only a past and a future. This is so unlike American culture which focuses on the present. We are told "Live for the moment." In Hebrew the word

for ancient “*Kedem*,” is connected to the word for forward “*Kadima*.” The past and the future are formed from the same Hebrew root. This means if we want to be truly progressive we must know our history. Freud observed those who suffer amnesia have no dreams. Without memories there are no dreams. If we cannot remember our past we cannot dream of a better tomorrow.

The mitzvah of looking forward is powerfully described in a Hasidic story. When the great Polish Rebbe, the “Seer of Lublin” died, his worldly possessions were divided between his children. One of his sons, received an old clock which had adorned the Rebbe’s study. With his inheritance in tow, the son headed out of Lublin, but before long, a storm forced him to seek shelter in a small village

inn. The storm continued for days, and when he was finally able to resume his journey, he was presented with his bill, and he did not have enough money to pay it. So, with regret, he offered his father's clock as payment, which the innkeeper accepted and placed it in one of the guest rooms.

Sometime later, one of the Rebbe's students, sought a room at this very inn. He was invited to stay, but was unable to sleep. Restless, he paced back and forth all night long. When morning came, the student approached the innkeeper: "Where did you get that clock that was in my room?" The innkeeper shared the story, and a smile came to the students' face.

"You don't know what a treasure you have here!" he exclaimed.

"It's just an old clock," replied the innkeeper.

“It is much more than an old clock,” answered the student. “This was the clock of the great Rebbe of Lublin – I knew I recognized its chime. You see, an ordinary clock chimes to mark the passage of another hour... an hour that will never return... a reminder that time is running out for us to make our lives and our world whole again. The Rebbe’s clock chimes a different tune. It marks time toward the future, ringing with the reminder that we are one hour closer to redemption. And it is impossible to sleep when it chimes, for there is so much work to be done before redemption will come.”

As a community on Rosh Hashana we can look back with pride on our accomplishments. But we must not stop there. We cannot live in the past. Were we to do that we would become like Lot’s

Wife who could only look back and became fossilized. Times change. Communities evolve.

One of the most inspiring of God's creatures is the butterfly, which emerges from its chrysalis, changed and capable of flight. We too must not be afraid of change if we are to fly into the future.

May we use this Rosh Hashana as an opportunity to dream, to plan and to build the future of our Temple. I know I have only been here for a few months and I want to express my gratitude for welcoming, so warmly, my wife Deborah and our children to the congregation. With hope we look forward to the future we will build together.

May God bless us with a healthy year, free from the anxiety of disease. May we be blessed to

feel the closeness of community. May we be
blessed with a sweetness. *Shana Tova U'Metuka.*