

In memory of all those brutally murdered in the war on Israel,
including the fallen soldiers of the IDF

בס"ד

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DAF HASHAVUA

ראש השנה | ROSH HASHANAH

CANDLE LIGHTING:

Monday 22 September

A long-lasting candle and
candles for Rosh Hashanah
should be lit by:

London: 6.45pm

Jerusalem: 5.59pm

Tuesday 23rd September

Candles for 2nd night Rosh
Hashanah should be lit from the
long-lasting candle after:

London: 7.44pm

Jerusalem: 7.11pm

Wednesday 24th September

Yomtov ends:

London: 7.42pm

Jerusalem: 7.10pm

Thursday 25th September

The Fast of Gedalia starts and
ends:

London: 5.12am-7.33pm

Jerusalem: 5.17am-6.59pm

(For other cities, please consult
your local community)



INTRODUCTION TO THIS ISSUE

Once again, as we stand on Rosh Hashanah at the crossroads between the year gone by and the year to come, there may be many things running through our minds.

Will we be happy and healthy? Will our finances be stable? What will the next year bring for British Jewry? Will there be peace in Israel and around the world?

Each of us has probably been asking big questions this year. That quiet inner voice of reflection and the louder call to action have been heard by Jews around the world.

Hillel, one of the sages from the Mishna who lived in the first century CE, used to ask himself three “big” questions (*Pirkei Avot* 1:14). To accompany you through the Rosh Hashanah prayers this year, in light of the questions which may be reverberating in our heads, we have framed our articles according to Hillel’s questions and other questions which arise from them.

**IF I’M NOT FOR MYSELF,
WHO WILL BE FOR ME?**

What are the things that I alone am here to achieve? What is there that nobody else in the world can accomplish other than me?

**IF I’M ONLY FOR MYSELF,
WHAT AM I?**

What can I contribute to those around me? What are my responsibilities towards my family and friends, my community, the Jewish people and the wider world?

**IF NOT NOW,
WHEN?**

As they say in Hebrew, Yallah! Let’s go for it!

May God help us to answer the questions wisely and bless all of our readers and the Jewish people with a healthy, prosperous and successful New Year.

– *Daf Hashavua Editorial team*



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EACH PERSON'S UNIQUE MISSION

BY: **RABBI BARUCH DAVIS**

Daf Hashavua Editor-in-Chief

*Who is not remembered on this day? For the life of every creature comes before You; **everyone's deeds and their mission**...happy is the person who does not forget You and takes strength in You.* (Rosh Hashanah Mussaf Amidah, Koren machzor, p.532).

Amidst the many upheavals of Israel's prolonged war since 7 October, I am often reminded of the phrase "*maase ish ufekudato*" – everyone's deeds and their mission. When the barbaric assault was inflicted on Israel, hundreds of thousands of Israelis sprang into action to defend the country, with a strong sense of mission.

We have seen that the sense of purpose in the aftermath of many of the tragedies on and since 7 October has been very powerful and inspiring.

Dor Almog lost his best friend, Amit, at the Nova festival. Then, on 22 January 2024, as a soldier fighting in Gaza, Dor was the only survivor when a building collapsed, killing the other 21 soldiers in

his team. At that moment, Dor had a deeply-comforting out of body experience in which he was with his friend Amit. Then he felt himself returning to his seriously injured body, which had sustained fifty percent burns. "*Uvacharta bachayim*", choose life, he kept telling himself.

Dor's extremely distraught mother asked herself "How will I tell him that all his friends were killed, that not one survived? How will he react?" Dor made a

truly miraculous recovery and, when recently interviewed by *Living L'Chaim*, gave an emphatic answer: "*I am strong. I have taken my situation in both hands and embrace it, because I am the last one who survived. I have a big thing to do since 7 October, for my friends, for the hostages, for the war. I have not survived for nothing and this is what makes me strong. This is what makes me get up in the morning, a sense of mission. Am Yisrael Chai!*"



Dor Almog speaks about his incredible story of survival, Living L'Chaim

Rosh Hashanah Torah Reading Summary

FIRST DAY TORAH READING

On the first day, both the Torah and Haftarah readings are about the birth of a child to an infertile woman, Yitzchak (Isaac) to Sarah and Shemuel (Samuel) to Chana (Hannah).

Without Yitzchak, there is no continuation of the tradition that his father Avraham began. Shemuel is the prophet who united the twelve tribes of Israel into one nation and prepared the way for the monarchy.

On Rosh Hashanah each one of us is encouraged to ask ourselves how we can use our unique talents and circumstances to make the world a better place.

The Torah reading opens with the

My wife, Nechama, has written about the loss of fallen soldier Rabbi Avi Goldberg and his widow, Rachel, mother to their eight children, further on in this issue. The Goldberg's oldest son, Yehuda, who was himself serving as a soldier in the North at the time, was recently interviewed. "The first thing our mother told us was: *"Uvacharta bachayim*, choose life! They killed Abba, but they won't kill us, or his spirit! The Almighty gave us this command, choose life!" Yehuda continued: "It's not simple to get up in the morning,



Yehuda Goldberg

“ There is so much to be done in defence of Israel and within our communities. If we are able to make an impact, or to work towards acquiring certain skills to make an impact, we have a mission. This why we are here!

but remembering these words of our mother, and the tremendous example set by our father, help us carry on living, determined to live up to his example". Yehuda continued: "I am here to do good, to help someone. Wherever I am is the right place, at the right time. This is now my purpose and mission."

Let us return to our opening quote from Rosh Hashanah Mussaf: *For the life of every creature comes before You; everyone's deeds and their mission...*

Rabbi Aharon Kotler zt"l (1892-1962) explains the meaning of the words "their mission" (*pekudato*) as their **unique role or assignment**, because every individual is created with their own distinct purpose and mission.

The Talmudic saying "The world was created for me" teaches that every person has a **special task and calling** in this world. And this is what one is judged on during

Rosh Hashanah — **how far have you progressed with your mission here? Are you fulfilling the unique purpose for which you were sent into the world?**

For many of us, it can take a long time to even realise what our unique contribution to this world should be. For Dor and Yehuda and many others in Israel today, a painful tragedy in their lives has given them clarity.

We hope and pray never to be tested in this way. But we are in fact constantly tested. There is so much to be done in defence of Israel and within our communities. If we are able to make an impact, or to work towards acquiring certain skills to make an impact, we have a mission. This why we are here!

We are privileged to be living through times when we are able to learn from so many outstanding role models, people on fire to fulfil their particular mission in the world.

poignant words "God remembered Sarah, just as He had said. ..." and she gave birth to Yitzchak. Avraham gave Yitzchak his *brit* at eight days and made a special feast to celebrate his weaning. But then there is friction between Yitzchak and his older half-brother, Yishmael. Sarah demands that

Avraham sends Yishmael away, together with his mother Hagar. God tells Avraham to do what Sarah asks, "for it is Yitzchak who will keep your name alive".

Hagar and Yishmael wander in the desert until their water runs out. As Yishmael is about to die of thirst, an angel of God calls out to

Hagar, telling her not to worry for He has heard the prayers of her child. God 'opens her eyes', she sees a well of water and Yishmael's life is saved.

The main Torah reading concludes with a dispute between Avraham and Avimelech and the origins of the town Beer Sheva.



THE ROLE OF THE JEW: INWARD AND OUTWARD

BY: **CHIEF RABBI SIR EPHRAIM MIRVIS KBE**

IF I'M ONLY FOR MYSELF,
WHAT AM I?

Is Judaism inclusive or exclusive?

In our Havdalah at the conclusion of Shabbat and Yomtov we acknowledge that, in the same way as Hashem differentiates between light and darkness and holy and profane, so does He differentiate between the Jewish people and all others.

Our exclusivity finds its expression in every element of our Jewish existence. We have our own Shabbat, dietary laws, norms and traditions. We pray in a uniquely Jewish manner. Our communities

“ Succot teaches us that there is no contradiction between our dual obligation to be both an exclusive and universal people. In fact, each one is necessary for the other.”

build and maintain Jewish schools. Many of us live within closeknit Jewish communities and we aspire to raise children who will marry a Jewish partner and go on to guarantee the continuity of our faith for all time.

At the same time, in our Amida for the High Holydays, we declare that we are an inseparable part of humankind. We exclaim, “*Veyeasu chulam aguda echat...*” – “May everyone on earth be bound together as one to perform Your will wholeheartedly”. Our prophetic mission is to be “a light unto the nations” and at the height of our High Holyday prayers we pronounce Hashem’s words, “For My house shall be called a House of Prayer for all peoples”.

We have been charged with a unique set of responsibilities by Hashem, who is the creator and parent figure of all human beings.

So, how do we square this all up?

The festival of Succot provides us with an answer. The Succah is

the only one of our precepts which must, by definition, be visible to all. Indeed, a Succah is only kosher if it is of a certain size and open to the elements. The unusual practice of leaving the security of our homes and entering the Succah, sends a powerful message: that Hashem intends for us to be different and that we are proud of it.

Yet, in Temple times, over the seven days of the festival, a total of seventy bulls were sacrificed on the altar, representing the seventy original nations which came into being following the dispersion prompted by the Tower of Babel debacle. On Succot we therefore face outwards, with the welfare and wellbeing of every single person in mind. The festival teaches us that, as knowledgeable, committed and proud Jews, we should strive to impact positively on everyone in our societies, whose lives we hope to uplift and enhance.

Succot teaches us that there is no contradiction between our dual

MAFTIR - BOTH DAYS

The maftir is about the special offerings brought on Rosh Hashanah.

HAFTARAH FIRST DAY

What stands out in the haftarah, aside from the gift of a child to Hannah, is the way Hannah prays.

Her passionate prayer to be granted a child is, however, fairly brief. Her lips moved but her voice could not be heard. Then, following the birth, as Shemuel grows up, she returns to the *Mishkan* at Shiloh and delivers a much longer prayer, this time of thanksgiving.

SECOND DAY TORAH READING

God’s words to Abraham which begin the Torah reading for the second day are truly shocking:

“Take your son, your only son, whom you love, Yitzchak, and go to the land of Moriah and offer him up as a burnt-offering on one of the mountains which I shall show you”.

“ Hashem is asking each and every one of us: “how well are we living up to our own responsibilities?” And, in addition: “how responsible are we being towards others?”

obligation to be both an exclusive and universal people. In fact, each one is necessary for the other.

During our slavery in Egypt, Hashem described the Jewish people as “My firstborn son, Israel” (Shemot 4:22). The analogy is clear – the oldest child in a family is often given additional responsibility by their parents. Not because the parents love or care for their other children any less, but because they believe the oldest is both capable and willing to set an example for their treasured siblings. Similarly, the Jewish people are obligated to live in accordance with the exclusive responsibility of a Torah way of life, as an example to the rest of the world.

The Torah does not share Abraham’s thoughts with us. After years of waiting for this precious, only child, the only one to carry on the tradition which he and Sarah had begun – a burnt offering?!

Instead, we read that “Avraham gets up early the next morning, saddles his donkey himself and

The Jerusalem Talmud poses the question, “What is the most important principle of the Torah?” The great sage Rabbi Akiva famously replied, “Love your fellow as yourself”. (Vayikra 19:18)

Ben Azzai, a contemporary of Rabbi Akiva, protested that there is a principle which is greater than that: “This is the book of the generations of man on the day on which Hashem created man. In the image of Hashem He made him.” (Bereishit 5:1). Ben Azzai was pointing out to Rabbi Akiva that, whereas his verse calls upon us to be considerate to our fellows – those to whom we are already close – from Bereishit we learn that every soul, created in the image of Hashem, is precious.

Our challenge is to integrate and not assimilate. And, while bringing the beauty of our values to impact positively on all others, our compassion must extend to one and all.

Rosh Hashanah is the anniversary of the sixth day of creation, when Adam was brought into the world. After Eve was formed and the two of them partook of the forbidden fruit, the Torah presents us with the first question on record. Hashem asked

Adam, “Where are you?” (Bereishit 3:9). Of course, Hashem knew exactly where they were. What He implied with His question was, “Where are you holding? What is your *madrega* - spiritual level? How responsible are you being to yourself and to your future?”

One chapter later, Hashem asked another question. This time it was to Cain, who had just killed his brother, Abel. Hashem asked, “Where is Abel, your brother?” i.e. “How responsible have you been towards another?”

Cain’s lamentable answer was yet another question, “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

I believe that these questions provide us with a template. They are as pertinent and relevant to us today as they were to those original dwellers on earth. Hashem is asking each and every one of us: “how well are we living up to our own responsibilities?” And, in addition: “how responsible are we being towards others?”

Judaism does not ask us to choose between dropping our drawbridge down and pulling our drawbridge up. It calls us to do both. To celebrate our particular identity, for the sake of our universal aspirations.

sets off with Yitzchak, two lads and wood for the fire.” Yitzchak is quiescent and allows his father to tie him to the altar. Then an angel of God calls out “Avraham, Avraham! Do not lay your hand on the lad...” Avraham then offers a ram as an offering and the angel blesses him and his offspring. The

main reading ends with the birth of Rivka (Rebecca), Yitzchak’s future wife.

HAFTARAH SECOND DAY

From the book of Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah), this is one of the most beautiful haftarat of the year, depicting the return of the people



IF I AM ONLY FOR MYSELF...

BY: **RABBI MICHAEL LAITNER**

US Director of Education, Interim Rabbi at Belmont US

A curiosity of the main Rosh Hashanah Torah readings is that they cover episodes in the lives of Avraham and Sarah rather than passages which focus on the laws of Rosh Hashanah, such as the shofar, which might seem a more obvious choice. By doing this, the liturgy encourages us to focus on the human side of Rosh Hashanah and how it relates to us, rather than simply reviewing the laws of the day.

One of the most difficult episodes is God's instruction to Avraham to listen to Sarah and banish Hagar and her son Yishmael from their household (*Bereishit* 21:14-19). We read this on the first day (see RH Koren Machzor, p.474).

Hagar and Yishmael find themselves in the desert, their water finished. Hagar has an impossible dilemma: should she cast Yishmael away and try and distance herself from him, as all seems hopeless? Or should she say that, even if it seems there is

no hope, she could still be with him and bring him some comfort by being together. She could also pray for him, even though it seemed to no avail.

Despairing, Hagar chooses the former. She casts Yishmael aside under some bushes and moves a bowshot's distance away (see v. 16). Hagar weeps but utters no words, either in prayer or at all. Amidst her understandable feelings of helplessness in this tragic situation, she seems unable to even sit with Yishmael to provide comfort or solace.

However, somehow, all is not lost.

An angel of God calls out to Hagar from heaven and says, "What is wrong, Hagar? Do not be frightened, for God has heard the voice of the lad *where he is*."

We do not know what Yishmael said or how he did so, but what makes his voice heard is *where he is*. What does this mean? Rabbinic teachings in the Midrash portray an argument between

God and the angels. The latter claim that Yishmael will be the source of future trouble to the Jewish people, so he should not be saved. God replies: "What is he now, righteous or wicked?" The angels reply "righteous" (he had repented). Thus, Yishmael is judged on *where he is* now – righteous, not on what he will become. On this basis, both Yishmael and Hagar are saved despite the angels' claim.

On Rosh Hashanah in particular, what are we to make of Hagar's dilemma?

One of the most famous teachings of Hillel, the first century CE sage in the Land of Israel, restates part of Hagar's dilemma. "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I?" (*Pirkei Avot* 1:14) On the one hand, Hagar had to protect herself; on the other, she needed to consider her son's needs and reach out beyond herself.

How does Hillel reconcile this

of Israel back to the Land of Israel:

You will once again plant in the hills of Samaria...blind and limping men, pregnant women...in tears shall they come, and in mercy shall I lead them...I shall turn their mourning into joy, console them and make happiness from their grief.

The haftarah concludes with God answering the tears of Mother Rachel, as she cries out for her children to return to their borders.

It is always an emotional and pertinent haftarah, and this year more than most.

“ This year, as we acknowledge the tears of all those who are in pain, perhaps without hope, we beseech God to grant us the ability and wisdom to help others.”

apparent dilemma of looking after oneself and looking out for others? A well-known story provides us with an insight into how he applied his teaching. He was approached by a would-be convert, who demanded that Hillel teach him the whole Torah whilst he stood on one leg. Hillel is unfazed by this unrealistic demand and responds: "What is hateful to you, do not do to another. That is the whole Torah; the rest is commentary. Go and learn." (Talmud *Shabbat* 31a)

This answer inverts the famous teaching in the Torah, which states that "you should love your neighbour as yourself," i.e. wish for another as you would wish for yourself (*Vayikra* 19:18).

Why does Hillel change to the negative – "what is hateful to you, do not do to another"? He wanted to convey a powerful

message: one cannot become a Jew if he has not learned how to think about the needs of others, and his route to doing so is to think if his actions or words to others would hurt him. (How would I feel if someone spoke about me or treated me like that?) If so, he should desist! Once he has succeeded in absorbing this fundamental value of Judaism, he is ready to build a full Jewish life.

On Rosh Hashanah, the whole world stands before God. Hillel reminds us that none of us is an island unto ourselves. Axiomatic to Judaism is understanding that, whilst I have to take responsibility for myself, I cannot overlook the responsibility for others. We pray in the plural, we advocate for others, and we act to improve the world around us. This is a major theme in the *malchiyot* section of the Rosh Hashanah *Mussaf*

Amidah prayer (pp.524-530).

We ask ourselves, have I reflected on how I carry out these responsibilities? Have I prayed for others and not just for myself?

Whilst we may feel critical of Hagar's conduct, are we sensitive to her tears?

This year, as we acknowledge the tears of all those who are in pain, perhaps without hope, we beseech God to grant us the ability and wisdom to help others.

Hagar's dilemma reverberates loudly, especially on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, when we reflect on the those in need, especially our brothers and sisters in Israel who have suffered many losses and sustained much injury over the past year. This Rosh Hashanah, we must ask ourselves what we can do to assist, through prayer or other means.





RACHEL IMEINU AND THE HEROIC RACHELS OF OUR DAYS

BY: **REBBETZEN NECHAMA DAVIS**

Israel, Daf Hashavua Editorial Team

Some months before Agam Berger was kidnapped by Hamas on 7th October 2023, her mother Meirav dreamt that her own recently-deceased mother said to her, "You must change your name to Rachel!" Meirav could not fathom what the dream meant. And then, in December 2023, as Meirav stood at Rachel's Tomb near Beit Lechem (Bethlehem) with hundreds of other women, crying and praying for her daughter's return, she realised God had been preparing her for what was to come. Rachel Imeinu, our Biblical matriarch Rachel, is always waiting for us to join her in her prayers for her children.

In the haftarah on second day Rosh Hashanah, the prophecy of Jeremiah, we read how Rachel Imeinu, buried on the road near Beit Lechem, weeps for her missing children, *Am Yisrael*, as they are exiled from Jerusalem. We are taught that she has been crying and pleading to God on our behalf ever since, until "*veshavu banim ligvulam*," the children will return to their borders. God comforts Rachel: "*mini kolech mibechei*," stop your voice from crying, because there is reward for your good deeds, and your children will indeed return! And so it was for **Meirav and Shlomi Berger** and their family, who were reunited with their precious daughter, Agam. To the great joy and gratitude of all of the Jewish people!

There are many Rachels the Jewish world has come to know in this painful and protracted war.

Rachel of Ofakim, who bravely plied the terrorists with biscuits as she distracted them from their terrible mission. **Rachel Polin-Goldberg**, who, with her husband, **Jon**, moved the world with her impassioned pleas for the life of their precious son, Hersh. **Rachel from Kibbutz Be'eri**, who left a note on the shul she had established, and which miraculously survived the onslaught and devastation on 7 October: "Dear soldiers, if you want to use this shul, call me on this number and I will tell you where the key is."

And then there is another

"I shall build you up once more. You will be built, young maiden of Israel, once more you will adorn yourself with drums and go out dancing to your own music."

— *Jeremiah 31:4*

Rachel, the wife and life partner of **Rabbi Avi Goldberg z"l** – a husband, father of 8, rabbi of a Jerusalem secondary school, military rabbi and soldier – who tragically fell in battle in October 2024.

Rabbi Avi's parents made



Agam Berger with her family. Courtesy of www.gov.il



Rachel Goldberg (right) with Rabbi Avi Hy'd (centre)

aliya from the UK, Rachel's from America, and they were both raised in Jerusalem. He was a talented clarinet player, she a gifted violinist. In every way, it was obvious to everyone that they were meant for each other. Idealistic, dedicated to bringing people closer to Torah, and with a charm and warmth which endeared them to everyone, they married young and set off on their life's journey together. Rachel was a nurse by profession but a *rebbetzin* by vocation; Avi was a rabbi, an educator, a community builder, and a people builder.

Their first adventure was a three-year stint of *shlichut* in Memphis, Tennessee, forging deep and ongoing connections with that community, where Rav Avi served as the head of the local *Kollel* and also taught in the Jewish school. Then it was time to return to their beloved Jerusalem.

Everything about Rabbi Avi was massive – his smile, his height, his warmth and his love for people,

especially his wife and family. His ability to listen to, understand and connect with people with different views to him was also exceptional.

As great as all those outstanding qualities was his love for the State of Israel, and that he was in a position to serve it. When the war broke out, he and Rachel were in no doubt that his place as an army rabbi and combat soldier was with his unit, even though he was 43 and, with more than 6 children, was exempt from serving.

Some people, like Rabbi Avi Goldberg, leave a massive void with their passing. They also leave an inspiring legacy, of love, acceptance, Jewish values and beautiful music. As a mark of the family, Rachel and her children spent this first Pesach without their precious husband and father playing the violin and other instruments for various groups across Israel – bereaved families, soldiers and families of hostages. As Rachel moves forward, she is

training to be a midwife, dedicated to bringing new life into the world. These are people with a "big picture" view of what their role is in this world. In his heartbreaking death, Rabbi Avi, and now his wife, Rachel, have shown the Jewish world what true nobility looks like. And then, last month, Rachel announced her engagement to Aminadav Rotenberg, the acting principle of Rabbi Avi's school. Aminadav lost his first wife to cancer, leaving him with three adult children. He described the death of Rabbi Avi as an 'enormous loss for our people'. He and Rachel have made the bold decision, with their families, to rebuild.

Jeremiah's magnificent prophecy in our haftarah seems incredibly apt for Rachel Goldberg: "I shall build you up once more. You will be built, young maiden of Israel, once more you will adorn yourself with drums and go out dancing to your own music".

Rabbi Sacks, in his commentary to the Rosh Hashanah machzor, makes an observation so applicable to our time, the Rachels we have mentioned and to so many others as well:

If anyone doubts the power of faith to shape history, they might ask whether the return to Zion could ever have happened without the hope incubated in visions like that of Jeremiah, seeing God comforting Rachel, assuring her of a future in which her children would return to their own land.

"Incubated". By the people of ancient and modern Israel.



WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO: THE SOUND OF THE SHOFAR

BY: **RABBI MATT MARKS**

Executive Head of Tribe

Intent matters. Hearing the shofar could be little more than your local GP or accountant struggling awkwardly to blow into a ram's horn in front of several hundred bleary-eyed professionals and their families, but could it be something more? Is football "the beautiful game," or is it twenty-two people running after a heavy balloon? Both descriptions are true – often what matters is what we bring to the moment.

And there is a moment in shul, as the prayers stretch into a familiar rhythm, when everything suddenly stops. The chazan pauses, eyes closed, breaths held, and then – a piercing sound breaks through, the shofar. What makes this ancient act so central to our Rosh Hashanah experience?

Rambam (1135-1204) describes the shofar as a wake-up call:

"Wake up, you sleepers from your sleep...
examine
your
deeds,

return in repentance and remember your Creator" (*Laws of Repentance* 3:4).

The sound of the shofar is unique because it is not formed by the usual mechanisms of speech. Rabbi Moshe Wolfson zt"l of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath (1925-2024) explains that the shofar is raw sound, untouched by the nuances of language and articulation. It represents a voice within us that cannot lie or pretend, a voice that cuts through routine and pretence, calling us back to who we really are.

Sometimes, the limits and structures of grammar and vocabulary help us articulate ourselves clearly. But at other times, those same structures get in the way – reducing our deepest feelings to clichés. That is why words like "I love you" can feel inadequate if not accompanied by a sincere gaze, or why a genuine cry can reach into the soul more deeply than the most eloquent speech.

If we allow it, the shofar can help us ask ourselves penetrating questions. When we ask ourselves, "What do we truly want for our

“The shofar is raw sound, untouched by the nuances of language and articulation. It represents a voice within us that cannot lie or pretend, a voice that cuts through routine and pretence, calling us back to who we really are.”

— Rabbi Moshe Wolfson zt"l

children?" or "What are we genuinely willing to do to make that happen?" we are pushed to confront deeper truths. Our mouths may quickly claim we would give up our lives for our children – yet sometimes we struggle to put down our phones to deal with their needs. The shofar calls us to face these truths without the comforting veil of familiar grammars. Can we stomach their fury when we stop them from doing something we know is not good for them? What do we really want? And what are we willing to change?
Think about how routines dominate our lives.



“ Each shofar blast resonates, reminding us that our heritage is not merely a passive inheritance but a living legacy.”

Routines are efficient, predictable and productive. They help us achieve goals. But sometimes routines dull our sensitivity to what truly matters. Early in our marriage, my wife gently suggested that I stop bringing home flowers every Friday. I was surprised – was it not a meaningful gesture? She explained that precisely because it had become routine, the meaning was being lost. It took breaking the pattern to reconnect with its deeper significance.

This is exactly what the shofar does in shul. It interrupts the familiar cadence of prayer, startling us out of spiritual autopilot. It forces us to confront the essence of the day: to be real, honest and reflective about our lives, relationships and aspirations. The shofar says: break the routine, pause, feel, reconnect.

There's a fascinating Talmudic tradition (*Rosh Hashanah* 16a) that we blow the shofar to “confuse Satan”. Satan represents the voice of doubt and accusation within us, the voice that says we cannot change, we are not good enough, or that growth is impossible.

By breaking the rhythm, by confronting routine with the piercing truth of the shofar, we silence these negative voices. We proclaim boldly: Change is possible. Renewal is real.

Rabbi Sacks zt”l famously taught that Judaism values character over career, eulogy virtues over résumé virtues. In his powerful words, we must cultivate the “inner self,” focusing on qualities like kindness, honesty, faithfulness, humility and joy. These are virtues often neglected in the rush of modern life, yet they determine the true quality and meaning of our lives. This is what the shofar asks of us – to pause our relentless pursuit of external success and to invest in inner depth.

Moreover, the shofar carries echoes of our past. According to Talmudic teachings, it recalls the binding of Isaac, symbolising the sacrifices our ancestors made for their beliefs. Each shofar blast resonates, reminding us that our heritage is not merely a passive inheritance but a living legacy. It also represents our future, the shofar of Mashiach that we refer

to in Mussaf.

All of us must find new ways to engage with and inspire our youth, who often see ritual as mere habit rather than living tradition. Creating genuine space for young people means allowing them to connect personally with Judaism's profound call to responsibility and authenticity. Like the rawness of the shofar sound, we have to internalise that young people crave meaning that speaks directly to their hearts, unfiltered by habit or formality – and that any suggestion otherwise is simply a symptom of the tools we use to dull those senses when those lofty aspirations feel out of reach.

So this Rosh Hashanah, as we hear the shofar, let it break our routine. Let it challenge us to reflect deeply. Let it remind us that real change begins when we pause long enough to listen – to ourselves, to each other and to God.

May the piercing clarity of the shofar inspire us to live not merely successful lives, but meaningful ones. Lives full of responsibility, appreciation, humility and community. Lives rooted not just in the traditions of the past, but vibrantly alive in the present, ready to inspire a new generation with its truth.





IF NOT NOW,
WHEN?

"HAYOM HARAT OLAM" – THE MOMENT IS NOW

BY: **SHIRA JACKSON**

US Education

"*Hayom harat olam*, this day is the birth of the world" (Koren Rosh Hashanah Machzor p.606). Today, the new Jewish year, is the 5786th birthday of the world. There is a Talmudic teaching (*Rosh Hashanah* 11a) that Rosh Hashanah marks the creation of humankind – the moment the world became populated with conscious beings. So, when we say *hayom harat olam*, what exactly are we commemorating?

The Hebrew word *harat*, used in this context to mean birthday, is derived from the root ה-ר-ה, and can mean conception or pregnancy (see, for example, p.473-4, Sarah conceives). So does Rosh Hashanah mark the world's conception, gestation or birth? These are very different milestones.

Three stages of creation

- *Conception* is pure potential – everything needed for life is encoded, yet nothing is visible. Eye colour, personality and abilities are waiting to unfold.

- *Pregnancy* is transformation – traits begin to form, though some only emerge later. Even inherited tendencies can be shaped by choice and experience.
- *Birth* is the culmination of the previous stages – the beginning of life outside the womb. The baby cries, unaware that what feels like an ending is really a beginning.

So, when we say *hayom harat olam*, which phase are we invoking?

Beyond time and matter

Two profound ideas can help frame the question. First, creation is not static. Though the world feels ever-present to us, it is not a given. Judaism teaches that existence is sustained by divine will – each moment is an act of renewed creation.

Second, time, as we experience it, is not ultimate reality. Einstein famously called time "an illusion,

“ Perhaps we can reframe the call: live each day as if it is the only opportunity to experience that particular day that you will ever get – because of course, it is.”

albeit a very persistent one.” To God, outside of time, past, present and future occur in a single instant. All of history – every beginning and every ending – is visible as one.

Hayom harat olam – today is conception, pregnancy and birth combined. It is potential, development and actualisation in the same moment.

We often speak about learning from the past and planning for the future. But in truth, today is the only moment we ever truly inhabit. Yesterday is gone; tomorrow will become today once it arrives.

Living the illusion of time with purpose

"Rabbi Tarfon said: the day is short, and the work is plentiful..." (Pirkei Avot 2:15)

He encourages us to live each day as if it were our last. This is not a bleak warning, but an invigorating reminder: time, illusion or not, is our most precious resource. Without time, we cannot earn, enjoy, grow or create. Life itself is made of time.

And yet – we are experts in wasting it. Our generation builds ever more sophisticated tools to fill, or sometimes kill, our time. We are pulled from meaning to endless scrolling, from goals to distraction.

Perhaps we can reframe the call: live each day as if it is the only opportunity to experience that particular day that you will ever get – because of course, it is.

A practice of presence

Each morning, as we wake up, we say *Modeh Ani*: "I thank You... for restoring my soul in mercy." Gratitude is a daily reset. As Rabbi Sacks zt"l said, as Jews, we thank before we think. To use that gift meaningfully, try a new habit: begin each day with a short intention – "Today is the day that..." Choose one priority. As your day comes to an end, close with a reflection – "Today was the day that..." Over time, these phrases give shape to otherwise fleeting days and create a sense of momentum and mission.

“Hayom harat olam is a call to presence and possibility. It invites us to emulate the Creator – to rise above time momentarily, and live fully in the now, because all else is beyond us.”

Small daily achievements reflect something greater – the individual purpose we have each been given. No two missions are alike. Only you can fulfil yours.

The power of Rosh Hashanah

What is unique about *today*, this specific day? On Rosh Hashanah, like the birth of a baby, we mark the close of one stage and the start of another. But Rosh Hashanah is more than a transition. It holds impact for the entire year ahead. Whatever we achieve today has the power to ripple forward – *hayom, this day*, shapes tomorrow.

It is a day of introspection, the crossroads of reflection and resolve. We stand on the shoulders of what was, and plant seeds for what will be. *Hayom harat olam* is a call to presence and possibility. It invites us to emulate the Creator – to rise above time momentarily, and live fully in the now, because all else is beyond us.

So, the question to ask ourselves, as we sit in shul, is "What would we like to achieve today – and how will we go about it?"



THE TRIBE WEEKLY

ROSH HASHANAH

22-24 SEPTEMBER | 1-2 TISHREI

IS ROSH HASHANAH HAPPY OR SERIOUS?



BY: **REBBETZEN
BRACHA
WEINIGER**

St John's Wood
Synagogue

While working on this article, I asked some teenage girls in our shul what they found most confusing about Rosh Hashanah. Their answer was simple but powerful:

"We just don't get it – is Rosh Hashanah supposed to be happy or serious?"

It is a great question. On the one hand, Rosh Hashanah has such a festive atmosphere. We dress in smart clothes, eat delicious meals with family and friends, dip apples in honey, and pack into shul for a celebration that feels royal and uplifting.

But at the same time, the shofar

blasts echo through the room, reminding us that this is the Day of Judgment. The Talmud tells us that God opens three books – one for the righteous, one for the wicked, and one for everyone in between – and our entire year hangs in the balance. We say that God decides the fate of every country: peace or war, abundance or famine. And even though it's a Yom Tov, we don't say *Hallel* like we do on other happy festivals.

So... what is it? A joyful celebration or a serious, reflective day? The answer is that it's both and that is what makes Rosh Hashanah special.

The serious side of Rosh Hashanah isn't meant to make us feel scared or gloomy. It's meant to wake us up, to check in with who we are and who we want to be. Rabbi Sacks zt"l once said that the shofar is like God's alarm clock.

It's there to jolt us out of our usual routines and help us think about the bigger picture. Being given the chance to pause, reset and reflect is actually a gift. It's something to be grateful for and even to celebrate. Rosh Hashanah is the day we get to hit 'refresh' on our lives.

And it's why the blessing at the end of the *Shofarot* section in the *Mussaf* prayers says: "*Blessed are You, God, Who hears the sound of the shofar of His people Israel with compassion.*"

Because, underneath all the seriousness is a deep love, the kind of love that says: "I believe in you, and I'm giving you another year to grow, accomplish and change the world."

Wishing you a *Shana Tova U'Metukah* – a year that's meaningful and sweet in every way.

Rosh Hashanah Number Cruncher!

How well do you know the numbers of Rosh Hashanah? Crunch your way through these 7 questions!

1. How many shofar blasts are customarily blown each day of Rosh Hashanah?
2. How many times is the shofar blown during the *Mussaf Amidah* repetition?
3. On which day of the Hebrew month of Tishrei does Rosh Hashanah begin?
4. How many days long is Rosh Hashanah?
5. What number is traditionally connected with a pomegranate?
6. According to the Talmud, how many books does God open on Rosh Hashanah?
7. How many verses are traditionally quoted in each of the three sections of the *Mussaf* prayers (*Malchuyot, Zichronot, Shofarot*)?





THE TRIBE SCRIBE

ROSH HASHANAH: RIPPLE EFFECT!

RABBI YISROEL SALANTER

WAS A GREAT TEACHER WHO STARTED THE **MUSSAR MOVEMENT** - WORKING ON BEING YOUR BEST SELF. PEOPLE ALL OVER THE WORLD ARE STILL INSPIRED BY HIS IDEAS TODAY. CHECK OUT MY FAVOURITE STORY PEOPLE TELL ABOUT HIM.



WHEN I WAS A YOUNG MAN THERE WAS A FIRE IN MY HEART! I THOUGHT THAT I COULD CHANGE THE WHOLE WORLD!



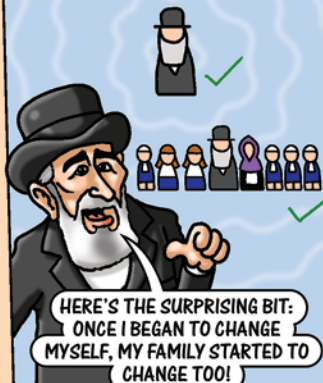
As the years passed, I realised the world was a bit more stubborn than I'd imagined. So I told myself: Well, at least I can change the people in my city.



But even that turned out to be harder than I thought. So I said: Fine... I'll just focus on changing my own family.



Believe it or not - I couldn't even manage that! Finally I admitted, I guess I'll just have to work on changing myself.



HERE'S THE SURPRISING BIT: ONCE I BEGAN TO CHANGE MYSELF, MY FAMILY STARTED TO CHANGE TOO!

When my family began to change, the people in my city started improving as well!



Before I knew it, the change had rippled outward - touching the whole world!

ROSH HASHANAH IS A TIME WHEN WE OFTEN HAVE GRAND PLANS TO IMPROVE EVERYTHING, AND CHANGE THE WORLD!



BUT THE ONLY PART YOU CAN ACTUALLY CHANGE IS **YOU!** LET'S START ON OURSELVES! START SMALL AND WATCH THE MAGIC HAPPEN. **SHANA TOVA!**



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www.tribeuk.com

Tribe is the Young People's Department of the United Synagogue: Creating a future for our community through engaging, educating and inspiring the next generation.