

DAF HASHAVUA

ראש השנה | ROSH HASHANAH

CANDLE LIGHTING:

Friday 11th September

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

London: 7.10pm

Jerusalem: 6.14pm

Saturday 12th September

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

London: 8.10pm

Jerusalem: 7.26pm

Sunday 13th September

Yomtov ends:

London: 8.07pm

Jerusalem: 7.24pm

Monday 14th September

The Fast of Gedalia starts and ends:

London: 4.51am-7.59pm

Jerusalem: 5.10am-7.14pm

(For other cities, please consult your local community)



THE TRIBE WEEKLY

ROSH HASHANAH

11-13 SEPTEMBER | 1-2 TISHREI

ROSH HASHANAH – A TIME TO DREAM



BY: **SHIFRA CHESLER**

Tribe Educator

Many years ago, Martin Luther King Jr., one of history's greatest leaders, gave a famous speech called **"I Have a Dream."** He didn't spend his time talking about what had gone wrong in the past. Instead, he inspired people to imagine a better future and to believe they could help build it. That's exactly what Rosh Hashanah

is about. Every year we say that we pass before God **like sheep**. Imagine a shepherd watching each sheep walk by. Is he thinking about what that sheep was like last year? No. He's looking at it **today**. Is it healthy? Is it growing? Is it becoming what it has the potential to be? God looks at us in the same way. Rosh Hashanah isn't about being trapped and judged by the past, it's about asking, **"Who do I want to become this year?"**

This Rosh Hashanah, take a moment to dream. Dream about the kind of friend you want to be, the kind of son or daughter

you want to be, and the kind of person who makes our community stronger. Maybe your dream is to include someone who feels left out, help more at home, smile at someone who needs it, or take your Judaism a little more seriously. You don't have to change everything overnight – every big journey starts with one small step. So, when you hear the shofar this year, ask yourself: **"What's my dream for the person I want to become?"** Then make this the year you take your first step towards becoming that person.

Shana Tova!

The Rosh Hashanah Quiz!

If these are the answers, what are the questions? See how many you can get right!

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Ram's horn | A. What do we dip apple into on Rosh Hashanah? |
| 2. 10 days | B. What is being celebrated on Rosh Hashanah? |
| 3. 1 st & 2 nd of Tishrei | C. How many days is Rosh Hashanah? |
| 4. The start of the new year | D. How many days are there between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur inclusive? |
| 5. 100 | E. What are the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur inclusive called? |
| 6. Honey | F. Which animal/animal body part is the Shofar from? |
| 7. 2 days | G. What is the Hebrew date of Rosh Hashanah? |
| 8. Aseret Yemei Teshuva
(Ten Days of Repentance) | H. What is the total number of shofar blasts blown on each day of Rosh Hashanah? (this year, just on the 2 nd day since the shofar is not blown on Shabbat) |

Answers: 1.F 2.D 3.G 4.B 5.H 6.A 7.C 8.E



To sponsor Daf Hashavua, scan this QR code or go to www.theus.org.uk/daf-hashavua-sponsorship

For any comments or questions, contact education@theus.org.uk

United Synagogue Daf Hashavua

Produced by US Education & Events together with the Rabbinical Council of the United Synagogue

Editor-in-Chief: Rabbi Baruch Davis

Editorial and Production Team:

Rabbi Daniel Sturgess

Rebbetzen Nechama Davis

Shevi Grunewald

Jennifer Dorling

www.theus.org.uk

©United Synagogue 2026

This Daf can be recycled



SHANA TOVA!

BY: **SHIRA JACKSON**

US Educator

Rosh Hashanah is described in our prayers as the birthday of the world, a time when the word '*chayim*', life, stands out in our prayers. But the idea can feel almost too big to hold.

What does it mean to celebrate the anniversary of creation itself? We "re-coronate" God as the creator and ruler of the universe on a day of awe that includes every person and place, whether they know it or not, with the challenge to "choose life".

Yet Rosh Hashanah is also distinctively Jewish. The shofar, the prayers, and the melodies that we have carried for generations are part of a unique link between God and us.

Rosh Hashanah charges us to hold both truths at once: that we are part of the world, and that we have our own particular role within it. These two truths can be seen in the first two "*uvechen*" paragraphs in the Rosh Hashanah *Amidah*. "And so place the awe of You, Lord our God, over **all** that You have created" and "And so place honour, Lord, upon

your people", (p67, Koren Sacks *machzor*).

Part of that contemplation is realising that being Jewish is not something that happens only on Shabbat or in shul. It is something we live in the middle of our real lives. What does it mean to be a Jew on a Wednesday morning at home, when you are packing lunches or trying to get everyone out the door? What does it mean on a Thursday afternoon in a work meeting, when decisions are being made and your voice matters? During a university seminar, in the way you speak to a colleague, or show up for a friend?

Rosh Hashanah invites us to pay attention to those moments, to see them as part of our Jewish story just as much as the shofar blasts or the Shabbat candles.

This edition of the Daf takes its inspiration from the Biblical week of Creation – the unfolding of the world step by step, light to land to life. Each article explores one of those moments as a way of thinking about our place in

the wider human story and the unique responsibilities that come with being part of the Jewish people. Creation was not a single act; it was a process, a layering of meaning and possibility. Our own identity works the same way.

We hope these articles will spark questions and possibilities. How might I bring a little more light into my world, in my relationships, professional interactions and educational and social responsibilities? Rosh Hashanah is the world's birthday, but it's also a chance to begin again in our own lives, in small, steady ways.

May this new year open up new ways of being Jewish – not only in the special moments, but in the everyday ones too.

**Shana Tova Umtuka,
a good and sweet year
and may God bless you.**

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 Yitzchak (Isaac) to Sarah and Shmuel (Samuel) to Chana (Hannah).

Without Yitzchak, there is no continuation of the tradition that his father Avraham began. Shmuel 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



"LET THERE BE LIGHT"

BY: CHIEF RABBI SIR EPHRAIM MIRVIS KBE

What were the first words ever spoken?

In our prayers, we describe Rosh Hashanah as "*Hayom harat olam*" – the anniversary of the day on which the world was created. The Torah's opening verses tell us that on that day, Hashem uttered the words: "*Yehi Or*" – Let there be light.

The Ethics of the Fathers teaches, "With ten sayings the world was created." (*Avot* 5:1) The first such saying was for the formation of light. But why did Hashem use words to perform His acts of creation, rather than simply willing the world into being?

In this manner, at the very dawn of creation, Hashem taught us the eternally true lesson that speech is not incidental to creation, but central to it. Words have creative power. They can shape reality as surely as any

physical force can. Because we are made in Hashem's image, that power is also ours, along with the responsibility to use it well.

And why was the first utterance of Hashem dedicated to the creation of light, rather than time, or space, or life itself?

The Torah here offers a clue in what it does not say. There is no companion verse declaring "*Yehi choshech*" – Let there be darkness. Darkness needs no creating. It is simply the absence of light. The Talmud (*Chagigah* 12a) explains that the light of that first day was not necessarily the physical light of the sun, which was created on the fourth day, but a light reserved for the righteous. If darkness is absence rather than substance, then it falls to us to do the work light does: to displace darkness wherever we find it.

For this reason, the Torah

“ If darkness is absence rather than substance, then it falls to us to do the work light does: to displace darkness wherever we find it.

provides a clear chronological sequence for Day 1: "*Vayehi erev, vayehi voker*" – And it was evening, and it was morning. Darkness comes first. This is the pattern for every day in the Jewish calendar. Shabbat begins in the evening. Our festivals begin in the evening. Yahrzeits begin in the evening. It has, in a figurative sense, also been the pattern of Jewish existence itself: light has tended to emerge from darkness.

This past year, our community has seen that pattern with stark clarity. We lived through the

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.



terror attack on the Heaton Park shul in Manchester last Yom Kippur, the series of arson attacks against Jewish targets, the violent knife attack in Golders Green and so much more. There have been long stretches when many of us have felt vulnerable and exposed. And yet, as in every previous generation, light has followed. Our community has responded to each of these moments not by retreating into hiding, but with astonishing resilience. We have focused on rebuilding and offering support for one another in exactly the ways that have displaced the darkness for generations before us.

The name of our prayer book, *'Siddur'*, comes from the root *'seder'*, meaning 'order'. Intriguingly, all *siddurim* right around the world seem to be in the wrong order. Surely, they should commence with the *Maariv* (evening) service, followed by *Shacharit* (the morning service) and then *Mincha* (the afternoon service)? However, as we all know, the order is first *Shacharit*, and then *Mincha* and

“The first words ever spoken were not simply a record of what happened at the dawn of time. They were an instruction, renewed for every generation since: that when darkness falls, we must declare, “Let there be light”.

Maariv. Why do our prayers not mirror the order of creation?

We take our inspiration from King David, who declared, “It is good to praise Hashem ... To recount Your kindness in the morning and Your faithfulness in the night.” (Psalm 92). We cannot escape the darkness the world sometimes hands us, but we are not obliged to begin there. The *siddur* reflects our aspiration to start each day with a renewed spirit of hope and promise, rather than from a place of fear or dread.

In the Torah's account of creation, every day is numbered in the ordinal form – “*Yom sheni*” – the second day, “*Yom shlishi*” – the third day, “*Yom revii*” – the fourth day, and so on. There is just one exception: The first day is not called “*Yom rishon*” – the

first day, but rather, “*Yom echad*” – one day. Rashi (1040-1105) and others read this as Hashem's way of underlining that each day stands complete in itself, not merely as a step toward the next one. A day is not only a fragment of some longer story. It is also, in its own right, an entire world of possibility.

There can be no better way to think about Rosh Hashanah. It is our yearly return to the beginning – to *Yom Echad* – and with it, a chance to recover something of that first day's intent. The first words ever spoken were not simply a record of what happened at the dawn of time. They were an instruction, renewed for every generation since: that when darkness falls, we must declare, “Let there be light”.

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 Shmuel 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 Avraham 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”.



BOUNDARIES THAT DON'T DIVIDE

BY: **RABBI SAM FROMSON**

Community Rabbi, Golders Green Synagogue

The story of Creation is not all high drama. One of its quieter moments is the separation of the waters. God divides the waters above from the waters below and gathers the lower waters into one place so that dry land can appear.

The boundary God draws is not a wall. It marks out distinct domains so that a world can exist at all. The waters above and below are part of one creation, each held in its place. That is what separation is for. Not to divide,

“ This is the first way we crown God as King. Not with words alone, but with how we behave when no one important seems to be watching.

but to give each thing its space, so that together they can become something whole.

Many of us know what it is to live a life that looks like two separate worlds. I have felt this keenly. I serve as a rabbi in our community in Golders Green. I am also the co-founder of an insurtech company we have spent the past nine years building. For a long time, I assumed these were two distinct selves. One belonged in shul, one at my desk. Many people carry the same quiet assumption about their lives.

The Torah suggests another way. It lets two domains stand clearly, then brings them together. The holiness is not in the wall. It is in the combination.

Our tradition never asked us to choose between the study hall and the marketplace. The *Mishnah* teaches that Torah is beautiful when joined to a

worldly occupation, and that Torah without work will not last.¹ Rambam (Maimonides, 1138-1204) ruled this into law. The ideal is not seclusion but a life that earns its bread through honest labour while holding onto Torah.²

The integration is real. We carry the Jewish part of ourselves into everything. Into the mission we choose and the energy we bring to it. Into how we treat a colleague or a client. Into the kindness of a single interaction, and whether we hold to our word when breaking it would pay better.

I feel fortunate that my own work brings insurance together with wellbeing, and something in that feels deeply Jewish. But holiness at work does not depend on the industry you are in. I have had to let people go, knowing a family and a mortgage sat across the table. I do not always get it

The Torah does not share Avraham'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

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

¹ Pirkei Avot 2:2

² Hilchot Talmud Torah 3:10

“***Eemunah* is the belief that God is there. *Bitachon* is the quiet courage to live as though you mean it.**

right. None of us do. What matters is that we try to act, even then, with real care, in line with our values.

Imagine standing in the presence of a king. We would weigh our words and hold to a higher standard without being told. But we are always in that presence. If we lived as though that were true, our conduct in the ordinary hours of the day would already be a form of service. This is the first way we crown God as King. Not with words alone, but with how we behave when no one important seems to be watching.

The working world has taught me something deeper still, about effort and trust. Our tradition asks two things of us at once that pull in opposite directions. We are obligated in *hishtadlut*,

to make our fullest effort and act as though everything depends on us. We are also called to have both *emunah* (faith) and *bitachon*, to trust that the outcome rests entirely with God. The medieval scholar, Rabbeinu Bachya ibn Pekudah (11th century) dedicates a whole section of his *Chovot HaLevavot* (Duties of the Heart), the Gate of Trust, to this balance. The Talmudic sages put it in a single line; “Everything is in the hands of Heaven except the fear of Heaven.”³ *Eemunah* is the belief that God is there. *Bitachon* is the quiet courage to live as though you mean it.

This is where the two halves meet. To trust that the outcome rests with God is to accept that God reigns over everything. That acceptance is itself an act of crowning the King. When we call out *HaMelech*, the King, in *Shacharit* on Rosh Hashanah, we are saying that the throne is not ours. *Eemunah* and *bitachon* are how we acknowledge that sovereignty. We do all that we can, then bow before a kingship far greater than our own.

This is the essence of Rosh Hashanah. It is the day of judgement, but at its heart it is the day we crown God as King. Its great theme is *malchut*, sovereignty. We declare that the Holy One reigns over all the earth, and the shofar is the trumpet blast of a coronation. Three times a day in *Aleinu*, we pray *letakein olam bermalchut Shadai*, for a world perfected under God’s kingship, and on Rosh Hashanah we mean it most.

So we crown God in both ways. In how we act, by carrying ourselves as if always before the King. And with *emunah* and *bitachon*, by doing all we can, then placing the outcome in God’s hands.

Hayom harat olam, today the world is born. The work of Creation is not finished, and neither are we. So we give the year everything we have and trust the rest to God. And we carry the same whole self to the desk that we carry to the shul.

Shana Tova and may we be inscribed together in the book of life.

³ Berachot 33b

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.



MAKING A GOOD LIVING

BY: **RABBI MORDECHAI WOLLENBERG**

Woodford Forest United Synagogue and Vice-Chair, RCUS

What would you wish for if someone offered you a blessing for the coming year?

Good health? Happiness? Success? Perhaps simply enough money to pay the bills without constantly worrying about them.

As Rosh Hashanah approaches, our thoughts naturally turn to the year ahead and to the prayers we will recite in the *Machzor*. We ask God to bless us with life, health and peace. Among those prayers is the request in *Avinu Malkeinu* to be written *b'sefer parnasa ve'chalkalah*, "in the Book of livelihood and sustenance."

Jewish tradition, however, speaks not only about *parnasa*, earning a livelihood, but about *parnasa tova*, a good livelihood.

There is a world of difference between making a living and making a good living.

That raises an important question. What exactly is a "good" living?

The answer begins right back at the beginning of the Torah.

The third day of Creation is unique. It is the only day on

which the Torah says *ki tov*, "it was good", twice. It is also the day on which the earth first produces vegetation, trees and crops. Before there are cities, businesses, professions or financial markets, there is the land itself producing sustenance for humanity.

The Torah reminds us that our livelihood ultimately begins not in the boardroom or the office, but with God's blessing upon His world.

Today we naturally think about *parnasa* in very personal terms. My job. My salary. My business. My pension. The story of Creation encourages us to think much more broadly.

Before I can enjoy my own livelihood, the wider world must flourish. Rain must fall. Crops must grow. Nature must function. Society must be stable. The economy must allow people to work, trade and provide for their families. My own prosperity depends upon blessings bestowed on everyone.

Perhaps this is one of the

“ The greatest blessing is not simply making a living, but making a good living.

important distinctions between the *kelal*, the community as a whole, and the *perat*, the individual. Of course we pray for our own needs, but we also recognise that those needs can never be separated from the wellbeing of the wider world around us. We cannot sincerely ask God to bless our own livelihood while being indifferent to the society, the environment and the people upon whom that livelihood ultimately depends.

Rabbi Lord Sacks zt"l often reminded us that Judaism does not see us as owners of the world but as its guardians. Adam is placed in the Garden of Eden "to work it and to protect it." We are privileged to benefit from the world God has created, but we also bear responsibility to preserve it for those who come after us.



“ We cannot sincerely ask God to bless our own livelihood while being indifferent to the society, the environment and the people upon whom that livelihood ultimately depends.

That does not mean Judaism is opposed to business, ambition or prosperity. Quite the opposite. Supporting one's family is a mitzvah. Creating employment, serving customers honestly and contributing to society are all noble achievements.

But Judaism asks a deeper question.

What sort of livelihood are we seeking?

That, perhaps, is the meaning of *parnasa tova*.

Not merely enough income, but income earned honestly.

Not merely financial success, but success that leaves room for family, for pursuing mitzvot and for acts of kindness.

Not prosperity achieved at another person's expense, but prosperity that enables others to flourish alongside us.

Not simply wealth, but blessing.

This is especially relevant in a society that often measures success by salary or status alone. It is possible to earn an excellent

living and yet sacrifice one's health, family life or personal integrity along the way. Equally, someone of comparatively modest means may enjoy a truly rich life because their work reflects their values and enables them to make a positive contribution to the lives of others.

Later in the Rosh Hashanah prayers, *Untaneh Tokef* reminds us that on this day it is decreed "who will be impoverished and who will be enriched." These moving words remind us that many aspects of our lives remain beyond our control.

Yet Judaism has never encouraged passivity. Alongside prayer comes *hishtadlut*, making every reasonable effort ourselves. We work diligently, develop our talents and seize opportunities, whilst recognising that, ultimately, the blessing comes from God. Success is neither entirely in our hands nor entirely beyond them.

As we stand before God

this Rosh Hashanah, perhaps we should listen carefully to the words we use. We ask to be written *b'sefer parnasa ve'chalkalah*, "in the Book of livelihood and sustenance." But Jewish tradition challenges us to pray for something even deeper: *parnasa tova*, a good livelihood.

On the third day of Creation, the earth began to produce not for itself but for all who would inhabit it. The first expression of abundance was something shared.

May God bless us all in the coming year with *parnasa tova*: a livelihood that enables us to support our families with dignity, strengthen our communities and world, care responsibly for His world, and recognise that the greatest blessing is not simply making a living, but making a "good" living.





LIGHT UP?

BY: **REBBETZEN SHULI LISS**

Highgate United Synagogue

It's there every day. We depend upon it, and yet most of the time we don't notice it. So large and so far away, and yet we survive by the gift of its warmth.

The sun, the moon and the stars light up our existence. In our prayers, we say that God "counts the number of the stars; to all of them He assigns names" (Psalm 147:4). Every one of those tiny stars (although some are actually quite large) has its own name, its own purpose, its own light to shine.

We also all have a name. And we, too, have a purpose. If only we felt this more strongly, we would approach our days differently. Less scrolling, less self-doubt, and more action. God created me for a reason, and it is my job to find that

reason and run with it.

On Rosh Hashanah, man was created. **This was the purpose of creation.** Ramchal (Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzatto, 1707-47, Italy/Land of Israel) teaches in *Derech Hashem*¹ that humanity is the purpose of creation. He expands on this in *Mesillat Yesharim*², speaking about "a person's obligation in *his world*". By saying 'his world', Ramchal reminds us that every person has a unique mission. Our task is to discover it and use our gifts to bring more goodness into the world.

God created the world as a space for us to shine the light He placed within us.

Looking back at the past year, there have been so many moments of darkness. Beautiful, precious soldiers whose lives were cut short as they fought bravely to protect our people. Across the world, terrorist attacks on public spaces have brought fear and confusion.

It is now that we need more light, togetherness and positivity. We have found it in unlikely places. Former hostages sharing words

“ Every person has a unique mission. Our task is to discover it and use our gifts to bring more goodness into the world.

of faith and encouragement. Previously unaffiliated Jews reconnecting with their heritage and their people and using their particular talents and interests to inspire others.

We do not know the names of all the stars. They seem so distant and almost irrelevant. Just think about the moon. We barely notice its existence in the dark night, and yet it sits there faithfully, orbiting around us as we orbit around the sun. The moon's gravitational pull quietly helps keep our planet stable and safe.

The vastness of creation can sometimes make us feel small and unimportant. When we look up at the night sky, it can feel as though the darkness is overwhelming. Yet we may not realise just how

“ We fulfil our purpose not only by sharing our own light, but by helping others find the confidence to share theirs.

¹ Part 1, Chapter 3

² Chapter 1



much difference the moon makes to our ability to see. A full moon is hundreds of thousands of times brighter than the brightest stars in the night sky. Together with the stars, its light enables us to navigate our journeys when the streetlights have failed us.

In the same way, our own personal light can help others move forward through difficult times. We are travelling this road together, and if each of us contributes our soul's flame to the Jewish people's mission, we can create positive change. Every mitzvah, every kind word, every act of self-sacrifice and faith brings God's presence into the world.

Sometimes our role is not to shine more brightly ourselves, but to **help someone else discover their light**. We do this when we invite someone to shul, share words of inspiration, encourage a friend to step up, or simply show someone that their contribution matters. Some of the greatest lights in the world shine because someone else believed in them first. On Rosh Hashanah we pray

that we become *Agudah Achat* – one bond – in serving God. We fulfil our purpose not only by sharing our own light, but by helping others find the confidence to share theirs.

In the *Unetaneh Tokef* prayer, we are reminded that God remembers "each person's actions and his appointed responsibility". If only we knew exactly what that responsibility was! Some days are so confusing – **what does God want from me now?** We walk along the path as best we can, sometimes clumsily, trying to

do the right thing while perhaps missing part of our *tafkid* (purpose).

The stars, moon and sun know their purpose, and they shine their light. Our job is to follow the Torah and try to discover which particular light is ours to shine.

As we approach this holy day, let us take a moment to think about where we are, who we are with, why God put us here, and what light we have to share. May God answer our prayers and grant us the wisdom to fulfil our role this year, so that together we can make the world shine a little brighter.

“ The stars, moon and sun know their purpose, and they shine their light. Our job is to follow the Torah and try to discover which particular light is ours to shine.



BIRDS, FISH AND THE JOURNEY TO THE HIGH HOLY DAYS

BY: **DAYAN ELIEZER ZOBIN**

London Beth Din

The Torah's account of creation is not merely a chronology but an architecture of meaning. Whilst the first three days create environments, the next three populate them. On the first day God creates light and darkness, and in parallel, on the fourth, He places within that realm the sun, moon and stars to bear the light. On the second day He separates the waters below from the heavens above; on the fifth, He fills those domains with fish for the seas and birds for the skies. On the third day, dry land emerges and vegetation flourishes; on the sixth, animals and, finally, humanity appear to inhabit the earth.

The seventh day stands apart. Shabbat is not another act of creation but the sanctification of creation itself. It is the moment when existence acquires purpose, when the physical world is lifted towards the spiritual, and when time itself becomes holy.

Jewish tradition makes a remarkable connection.

Although Rosh Hashanah is described as *Hayom Harat Olam*, "the birthday of the world", the

festival commemorates not the beginning of creation on the first day, but the creation of humanity on the sixth. Rosh Hashanah is the anniversary of the human being, the creature capable of moral choice. The fifth day therefore, the creation of the birds and fish, corresponds to *Erev Rosh Hashanah*, the day before the New Year. Before humanity appears, we are asked to contemplate the creatures of sea and sky.

The *Yamim Noraim*, the Days of Awe, are framed by symbolism of birds and fish. On Rosh Hashanah night, many eat the symbolic fish head, praying that we be a head, not a tail, a leader not a follower. On Rosh Hashanah afternoon we perform *Tashlich*, standing by flowing water while reflecting on repentance. On Erev Yom Kippur many perform the custom of *Kapparot*, at which some use a chicken that is then given to charity. Finally, on Yom Kippur we read the Book of Jonah, whose central image is a man swallowed by a fish before rediscovering his mission.

“ We are not particles trapped by deterministic laws of science, but human beings gifted with free will, and it is in that freedom that Godliness can be found.

The two signs of a kosher fish: fins and scales. Fins propel; scales protect. A fish that merely floats is carried wherever the current leads. However, a fish with fins can choose its direction, and can swim against the current. Likewise, scales form a protective armour, allowing the fish to inhabit its environment without being consumed by it.

This has long been a metaphor for Jewish history. Across continents and centuries, Jews have lived among many cultures, contributing richly to each while preserving a distinctive covenantal identity. The Jewish story is not one of withdrawal from the world but of faithful





“ The fish reminds us to be true to our identity and values, while courageously swimming towards purpose, even against the current.

engagement with it.

Birds appear in another great drama of moral repair. The *metzora* – suffering from a spiritual affliction associated by the Sages with *lashon hara*, destructive speech – sacrifices **two birds** as part of their purification process. We associate birds with constant twittering. Here we have two birds, one to remind us how damaging evil speech can be, the other to atone for good speech left unsaid. Sometimes the wound is inflicted by criticism. Sometimes by the compliment never offered, the gratitude never expressed, the lonely person never greeted, the encouragement forever postponed.

We create or destroy worlds with words. In *Vidui*, the confessional prayer recited on Yom Kippur, we continuously acknowledge that our failures involve speech: deceit, gossip, humiliation, false promises, careless words, or misplaced silence. Failure of speech begins not with the tongue but with perception. We notice faults before virtues, failures before

gifts. Repentance therefore demands not only purer speech but purified vision.

Curiously, unlike animals and fish, when it comes to the rules of *Kashrut*, the Torah gives no explicit physical signs by which kosher birds are identified. Similarly, no algorithm can programme good communication. Rather, we rely on an unbroken tradition, all tracing back to Sinai. Just as birds need a flight path – a map to navigate the skies, so too, the human ability to rise above our earthly existence demands guidance, wisdom gained through cross generational conversation, and a perspective that is only granted to us in the present if we are able to connect to the past.

Jonah, inside the great fish, stripped of every illusion of independence, discovers that one cannot flee from God or from conscience, nor can one question the ability of humans to soar, to repent. Emerging alive from the depths, he carries to Nineveh the message that change is possible. No human being or corrupt society is ever beyond hope.

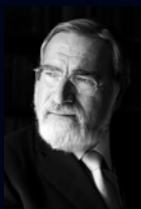
We are not particles trapped by deterministic laws of science, but human beings gifted with free will, and it is in that freedom that Godliness can be found.

Perhaps that is the connection between the High Holy Days and the creation of birds and fish.

Birds reminds us that in speech lies human transcendence and, like the kosher bird, we can soar heavenward, in search of values and mission, propelled by the wisdom of tradition. The fish reminds us to be true to our identity and values, while courageously swimming towards purpose, even against the current.

Only then are we ready for the sixth day – the day of humanity – Rosh Hashanah.

For to be truly human is neither merely to walk upon the earth nor merely to survive within it. It is to speak with compassion, to navigate with conviction, to swim the swirling currents, whilst remaining faithful to our inner values and authenticity and, ultimately, to bring heaven and earth together in lives of holiness, purpose and hope.



WHY WERE WE CREATED?

BY: **RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ZT"l**

This essay is from Rabbi Sacks' 2012 Covenant & Conversation series. Learn more from Rabbi Sacks at www.rabbisacks.org

There is a deep question at the heart of Jewish faith, and it is very rarely asked. As the Torah begins, we see God creating the universe day by day, bringing order out of chaos, life out of inanimate matter, flora and fauna in all their wondrous diversity. At each stage God sees what He has made and declares it good.

What then went wrong? How did evil enter the picture, setting in motion the drama of which the Torah – in a sense, the whole of history – is a record? The short answer is: man, Homo

“ For in creating humans, God brought into existence the one life form with the sole exception of Himself, capable of freedom and choice.

sapiens, us. We alone of the lifeforms thus far known to us have freewill, choice and moral responsibility. Cats do not debate the ethics of killing mice. Vampire bats do not become vegetarians. Cows do not worry about global warming.

It is this complex capacity to speak, think, and choose between alternative courses of action that is at once our glory, our burden, and our shame. When we do good we are little lower than the angels. When we do evil we fall lower than the beasts. Why then did God take the risk of creating the one form of life capable of destroying the very order He had made and declared good? Why did God create us?

That is the question posed by the Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 38b):

When the Holy One, blessed be He, came to create man, He created a group of ministering angels and asked them, "Do you agree that we should make man in our image?"

They replied, "Sovereign of the Universe, what will be his deeds?"

God showed them the whole future of humankind.

The angels replied, "What is man that You are mindful of him?" [i.e. Let man not be created].

God destroyed the angels. He created a second group, and asked them the same question, and they gave the same answer.

God destroyed them.

He created a third group of angels, and they replied,



“When God made humanity in His image, it means that He gave humans the freedom to choose, so that you can never fully predict what they will do.

“Sovereign of the Universe, the first and second group of angels told You not to create man, and it did not avail them. You did not listen. What then can we say but this: The universe is Yours. Do with it as You wish.”

And God created man. But when it came to the generation of the Flood, and then to the generation of those who built the Tower of Babel, the angels said to God, “Were not the first angels right? See how great the corruption of humankind is.”

And God replied, “Even to old age I will not change, and even to grey hair, I will still be patient” (Isaiah 46:4).

Technically the Talmud is addressing a stylistic challenge in the text. For every other act of creation in *Bereishit* (Genesis) 1, the Torah tells us, “God said, ‘Let

there be’ ... And there was.” In the case of the creation of humankind alone, there is a preface, a prelude. “Then God said, ‘Let us make humanity in our image, in our likeness ...’” Who is the “us”? And why the preamble?

In their seemingly innocent and childlike (but in actuality, subtle and profound) way the Sages answered both questions by saying (to quote Hamlet) that with an enterprise of this pith and moment, God consulted with the angels. They were the “us”.

But now the question becomes very deep indeed. For in creating humans, God brought into existence the one life form with the sole exception of Himself, capable of freedom and choice. That is what the phrase means when it says, “Let us make humanity in our image after our likeness.” The salient fact is that God has no image. To make

an image of God is the
archetypal

act of idolatry.

This means not just the obvious fact that God is invisible. He cannot be seen. He cannot be identified with anything in nature: not the sun, the moon, thunder, lightning, the ocean or any of the other objects or forces people worshipped in those days. In this superficial sense, God has no image. That, wrote Sigmund Freud in his last book, *Moses and Monotheism*, was Judaism’s greatest contribution. By worshipping an invisible God, Jews tilted the balance of civilisation from the physical to the spiritual.

But the idea that God has no image goes far deeper than this. It means that we cannot conceptualise God, understand Him, or predict Him. God is not an abstract essence; He is a living presence. That is the meaning of God’s own self-definition to Moses at the Burning Bush: “I will be what I will be” – meaning, “I will be what I choose to be.” I am the God of freedom, who endowed humankind with freedom, and I

am about to lead the children of Israel from slavery to freedom.

When God made humanity in His image, it means that He gave humans the freedom to choose, so that you can never fully predict what they will do. They too – within the limits of our finitude and mortality – will be what they choose to be. Which means that when God gave humans the freedom to act well, He gave them the freedom to act badly. There is no way of avoiding this dilemma even for God Himself. And so it was. Adam and Eve sinned. The first human child, Cain, murdered the second, Abel, and within a short space of time the world was filled with violence.

In one of the most searing passages in the whole of Tanach, we read:

God saw that humanity's wickedness on earth was increasing. Every impulse of his innermost thought was only for evil, all day long. God regretted that He had made man on earth, and He was pained to His very core. (*Bereishit 6:5-6*)

Hence the angels' question, which goes to the ultimate question at the heart of faith. Why did God, knowing the risks and dangers, make a species that could and did rebel against Him, devastate the natural environment, hunt other species to extinction, and oppress and kill his fellow man?

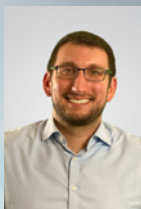
The Talmud, imagining a conversation between God and the angels, is suggesting a tension within the mind of God Himself. The answer God gives the angels is extraordinary: "Even to old age I will not change, and even to grey hair, I will still be patient." Meaning: I, God, am prepared to wait. If it takes ten generations for a Noah to emerge, and another ten for an Abraham, I will be patient. However many times humans disappoint Me, I will not change. However much evil they do in the world I will not despair. I despaired once and brought a Flood. But after I saw that humans are merely human, I will never bring a Flood again.

God created humanity because God has faith in humanity. Far more than we have faith in God, God has faith in us. We may fail many times, but each time we fail, God says: "Even to old age I will not change, and even to grey hair, I will still be patient." I will never give up on humanity. I will never lose faith. I will wait for as long as it takes for humans to learn not to oppress, enslave, or use violence against other humans. That, implies the Talmud, is the only conceivable explanation for why a good, wise, all-seeing and all-powerful God created such fallible, destructive creatures as us. God has patience. God has forgiveness. God has compassion. God has love.

For centuries, theologians and philosophers have been

“ The real phenomenon at its heart – the mystery and miracle – is not our faith in God. It is God’s faith in us.

looking at religion upside-down. The real phenomenon at its heart – the mystery and miracle – is not our faith in God. It is God’s faith in us.



REMEMBER, REMEMBER

BY: **RABBI ELI BIRNBAUM**

Stanmore & Canons Park Synagogue

One of the most tantalising questions about Shabbat is: Why does it *need* to take place on Saturday? If the whole point is to rest from 'weekday activity', couldn't its observance be more flexible? We live in a fast-paced world where the concepts of nine-to-five jobs and regular working weeks are becoming a relic of the pre-high-tech past. If Tuesday suits my schedule better, would it really make any difference to God *when* I light candles, make *kiddush*, and eat too much high-cholesterol food?

In recent times, I've seen several organisations advertise Shabbat as some sort of 'digital detox day', appealing to every demographic of our screen-obsessed society, desperate to watch the sun set without an invasively inevitable 'ping' ruining the experience.

But this drastically undersells what Shabbat exists to do. A digital detox day can take place anytime, anywhere. Shabbat cannot. On this, the Torah draws a deliberate and explicit link between the fact that God "rested" on the seventh day and the fact that *therefore* it *specifically* took on a unique holiness:

"And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, for on it

He rested from all the creative work that God had created to be made." (Bereshit 2:3)

This link is repeated in greater detail in the fourth of the Ten Commandments:

*Remember (Zachor) the Shabbat day to make it holy. For six days you shall toil and perform all of your work. And on the seventh day...you shall not do any manner of work; you, your son and daughter, your servant and maidservant, your livestock and the stranger who dwells in your cities. For in six days God made the heavens and the earth...and He rested on the seventh day. **Therefore**, God blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."* (Shemot 20:8-11)

The opening word to this paragraph establishes a surprising connection between Shabbat – which we are commanded to 'Remember', and Rosh Hashanah, which our sages refer to as 'Yom Hazikaron', literally: the Day of Remembering. We will explore this cross-pollination momentarily. First, another question from within Shabbat itself demands closer analysis: Why are we summoned to 'share' our day of rest with livestock? Does an ox highlight Saturday in its calendar as 'no plough day'? Does a horse

“ From the fact that we were created for a reason flows the fact that our actions and deeds must, in God's eyes, be memorable.

breathe a sigh of relief knowing it will soon enjoy a break from dressage rehearsal?

Clearly there is something unexpectedly holistic about Shabbat that opens a far deeper understanding of what it is we are 'remembering' every seventh day. Indeed, the clue lies in that particular choice of verb. We are not just commanded to 'keep' Shabbat; we are called to 'remember' it. What does this mean?

To unravel this all, we require one final clue. It is the last recorded communication¹ from God to Moses before he descended Mount Sinai:

"The Children of Israel shall keep the Shabbat day for all generations, an eternal Covenant.

*Between me (God) and the Children of Israel, **it is a Sign for eternity...**"* (Shemot 31:16-17)

There it is.

¹ According to the reading of Nachmanides (Shemot 25:1, 35:1 et al.)



“ We are not just commanded to ‘keep’ Shabbat; we are called to ‘remember’ it.

Shabbat is a ‘sign’, a mnemonic. Our observance of Shabbat testifies to the *entirety of creation* – including the animals under our care! – *that it was all created, by a Creator*. Why cannot Tuesday suffice as my day of rest? Because no matter how tranquil or spiritually uplifting I might personally find that experience, it fails to mirror the pattern of God’s original creation and *therefore* fails to testify to that creation’s realness. Just as He created for six days and rested on the seventh, so must we. So must everything under our sphere of influence, even the animals.

This testimony is pivotal because it speaks to the very core of what Shabbat exists to reinforce: By testifying once a week that there was a creation, this means that everything we lay eyes on was brought into being *purposefully* and not as the by-product of a series of random scientific flukes. QED, we exist for a reason.

We tell the other half of this story on Rosh Hashanah: the anniversary of creation’s sixth day, commemorating Adam and Eve’s arrival – an arrival that gave creation its reason, on the eve of the very first Shabbat – that mnemonic ‘day of rest’ that would enshrine our purpose in memory ‘for all generations’.

It is here that the

Remembrance of Shabbat converges with the Day of Remembrance of Rosh Hashanah in a beautiful closing of the circle: From the fact that we were created for a reason flows the fact that *our actions and deeds must, in God’s eyes, be memorable*. For better, they deserve to be celebrated and rewarded. And for worse, they must be examined and improved. This is a major aspect of Rosh Hashanah, as encapsulated in the ‘Remembrance’ section of the *Mussaf* prayer: “You remember the deeds done in the world, and recall all creatures fashioned since the beginning.”

With these words and the realisation of significance, importance, and meaning that they give, we embark on a journey into the Ten Days of Repentance and culminating in Yom Kippur, a day described (*Vayikra* 16:31) as ‘a Shabbat of Shabbats’. Or: A convergence of remembrance and memorability: The remembrance of our own purposeful existence as celebrated by Shabbat, compounded by the

memorability of our actions and deeds as celebrated and examined in this holy, auspicious time of year.



First vs last

For 10 years, Rebbetzen Shira Chalk has penned the Tribe Scribe.

As she moves onto new projects, we thank her for the entertaining educational content and wish her well. Below is her first Tribe Scribe, followed by her final one overleaf. Stay tuned for our new series starting next week.



THE TRIBE SCRIBE

ON ROSH HASHANAH, REACH FOR THE SKY!

TRIBE BEAR WAS DISCOURAGED.
 IT WAS ALMOST ROSH HASHANAH AND
 WHEN HE THOUGHT ABOUT LAST YEAR,
 NOTHING HAD CHANGED! HE WAS
 STILL THE SAME BEAR - HE HAD
 NOT IMPROVED. HE BEGAN TO LOSE
 HOPE. SO HE WENT TO SPEAK TO
 RABBI RABBIT.

Page Editor: Sharon Raskin



DO YOU KNOW HOW LONG IT TAKES FOR THE GIANT CHINESE BAMBOO TO GROW AS TALL AS A BUILDING?

DURING THE FIRST YEAR, THE TINY PLANT IS WATERED AND FERTILISED AND NOTHING HAPPENS.

YEAR 1... YEAR 2... YEAR 3... YEAR 4...

IT IS WATERED AND FERTILISED FOR ANOTHER WHOLE YEAR, AND ANOTHER, AND ANOTHER, BUT STILL NOTHING HAPPENS!

FINALLY, IN THE FIFTH YEAR, IT SHOOTS UP TO THE SKY!

IN SIX WEEKS THE BAMBOO GROWS 90 FEET!

UNDERNEATH THE GROUND, AN ENORMOUS NETWORK OF ROOTS WAS DEVELOPING TO SUPPORT THE BAMBOO'S SUDDEN GROWTH.

GROWTH TAKES PATIENCE. EVERY DROP OF WATER MAKES A DIFFERENCE; EVERY STEP YOU TAKE MAKES AN IMPACT.

SO HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE FOR IT TO GROW SO HIGH?

SIX WEEKS!

YOU MEAN I HAVE CHANGED? HURRAY!

THAT'S YOUR MISTAKE. IT TAKES FIVE YEARS. IF THE FARMER WOULD HAVE STOPPED WATERING THE PLANT AT ANY POINT IN THOSE FIVE YEARS, IT WOULD HAVE DIED. WHAT WAS HAPPENING ALL THAT TIME?

YOU MAY NOT SEE THE CHANGE RIGHT AWAY BUT GROWTH IS STILL HAPPENING. WITH COMMITMENT AND DETERMINATION TO REACH YOUR GOALS, TOGETHER WITH GOD'S HELP, YOU'LL EVENTUALLY BREAK THROUGH AND REACH GREAT HEIGHTS.



tribe

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.



THE TRIBE SCRIBE

ROSH HASHANAH: THE END!



OVER 70 MILLION
WHATSAPPS ARE
SENT EVERY MINUTE.



OVER 270 MILLION
EMAILS ARE SENT
EVERY MINUTE.

OVER \$13 MILLION IS SPENT
ONLINE EVERY MINUTE.



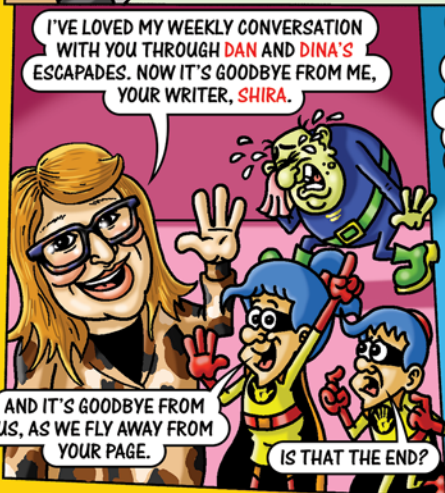
ONCE A YEAR ON **ROSH HASHANAH**, WE ARE INVITED TO TAKE A BREAK FROM THE NOISE AND JUST STOP! THE KEY **MITZVAH** OF **ROSH HASHANAH** IS TO LISTEN TO THE **SHOFAR**. WE DON'T NEED TO DO ANYTHING. WE NEED TO BE STILL. WE NEED TO LET GO AND LISTEN. EAR YOU GO!

AND THEN WHAT? WE MAKE SPACE FOR OUR INNER VOICE, HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO REFLECT, RENEW AND HAVE THE COURAGE TO THINK ABOUT PERSONAL CHANGE.



IT'S ALSO A TIME OF PERSONAL CHANGE FOR US HERE AT THE **TRIBE SCRIBE**. TODAY IS OUR 10TH BIRTHDAY ON THE **TRIBE SCRIBE**, HERE ON THE BACK PAGE OF YOUR **DAF**.

IN THE LAST 10 YEARS WE HAVE HAD OVER 500 EPISODES. WE'VE SPENT HAPPY TIMES AND HARD TIMES TOGETHER, BUT THE TIME HAS COME FOR US TO MOVE ON.



I'VE LOVED MY WEEKLY CONVERSATION WITH YOU THROUGH **DAN** AND **DINA'S** ESCAPADES. NOW IT'S GOODBYE FROM ME, YOUR WRITER, **SHIRA**.

AND IT'S GOODBYE FROM US, AS WE FLY AWAY FROM YOUR PAGE.

IS THAT THE END?



OF COURSE NOT! WE MIGHT BE AT THE END OF OUR ANNUAL **PARASHA** CYCLE AND THE END OF OUR DECADE OF TRAVELS TOGETHER, BUT OUR LEARNING JOURNEY AND THE **JEWISH** STORY ALWAYS HAS ANOTHER EPISODE.



RABBI LORD SACKS Z"L WRITES, 'THE **JEWISH** STORY ENDS WITHOUT AN ENDING. IT CLOSSES WITHOUT CLOSURE... THE **TORAH** ENDS WITHOUT ENDING TO TELL US THAT WE TOO ARE PART OF THE STORY AND WE TOO ARE STILL ON THE JOURNEY.'

SO AS WE SET OFF IN OUR DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS, WE WISH YOU **NESIA TOVA** - SAFE TRAVELS ON YOUR LEARNING JOURNEY. **SHANA TOVA** - MAY THIS YEAR BRING YOU TO WONDERFUL DESTINATIONS!



tribe
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.