

# THE ST JOHN'S WOOD SYNAGOGUE HIGH HOLY DAYS COMPANION





# ASTON CHASE



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# ROSH HASHANA MACHZOR PAGE NUMBERS

## FIRST DAY

	SHACHARIT	ROUTLEDGE	ARTSCROLL	KOREN
1	HaMelech	80	262	341
2	Silent Amidah	91	296	387
3	Repetition of Amidah	95	306	405
4	Kedusha	107	332	443
5	Avinu Malkeinu	111	384	455
6	Ein Kamochah	114	390	463
7	Torah Reading	117	402	473
8	Haftarah	121	416	483
9	Sounding of the Shofar	126	432	495
10	Returning Torah to Ark	129	440	507

### MUSAF

11	Hineni	-	444	511
12	Silent Amidah	131	448	515
13	Repetition of Amidah	142	470	551
14	Melech Elyon	145	478	561
15	Unetaneh Tokef	146	480	565
16	Kedushah	148	486	577
17	Vechol Ma'aminim	149	490	581
18	Aleinu	154	500	595
19	Ochilah La'Eil	155	504	601
20	1 <sup>st</sup> Shofar in Repetition	157	508	607
21	2 <sup>nd</sup> Shofar in Repetition	160	514	617
22	3 <sup>rd</sup> Shofar in Repetition	162	520	623
23	Modim	163	522	627
24	Duchaning	164	524	629
25	Hayom Te'amtzeinu	166	532	632
26	Ein Keloheinu	168	586	639
27	LeDavid Hashem Ori	39	178	289
28	Adon Olam	171	180	203

## SECOND DAY

	SHACHARIT	ROUTLEDGE	ARTSCROLL	KOREN
1	HaMelech	176	262	341
2	Silent Amidah	186	296	387
3	Repetition of Amidah	190	342	657
4	Kedusha	205	374	703
5	Avinu Malkeinu	210	384	715
6	Ein Kamochah	213	390	723
7	Torah Reading	216	402	733
8	Haftarah	219	416	741
9	Sounding of the Shofar	222	432	749
10	Returning Torah to Ark	225	440	757

### MUSAF

11	Hineni	-	444	759
12	Silent Amidah	227	448	763
13	Repetition of Amidah	238	536	797
14	Unetaneh Tokef	146	538	801
15	Kedushah	148	542	809
16	Vechol Ma'aminim	149	546	813
17	Aleinu	154	554	825
18	Ochilah La'Eil	155	558	829
19	1 <sup>st</sup> Shofar in Repetition	157	562	835
20	2 <sup>nd</sup> Shofar in Repetition	160	566	843
21	3 <sup>rd</sup> Shofar in Repetition	162	570	849
22	Modim	163	572	853
23	Duchaning	164	574	855
24	Hayom Te'amtzeinu	166	582	861
25	Final Shofar Blasts	-	584	867
26	Ein Keloheinu	168	586	867
27	LeDavid Hashem Ori	39	178	289
28	Adon Olam	171	180	203



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	KOL NIDRE	ROUTLEDGE	ARTSCROLL	KOREN
1	Kol Nidre	15	58	51
2	Maariv	17	66	63
3	Amidah	22	78	77
4	Ya'aleh	31	102	107
5	Selach Na	36	112	121
6	Amnom Ken	38	116	127
7	Ki Hineh	39	120	133
8	Shemah Kolenu	45	126	143
9	Ashamnu	46	130	149
10	Al Chet	49	132	155
11	Aleinu	58	152	181
12	An'im Zemirot	73	188	187
13	Yigdal	75	158	193
14	Adom Olam	76	158	195

## SHACHARIT

15	Hamelech	33	320	535
16	Silent Amidah	44	350	577
17	Repetition of Amidah	53	366	601
18	Ata Hu Elokenu	57	376	619
19	Imru Lelokim	64	390	639
20	Ha'aderet	70	402	649
21	Keil Orech Din	77	404	659
22	Z'chor Rachamecha	90	412	671
23	Shemah Koleinu	92	416	679
24	Al Chet	96	422	687
25	Ein Kamocha	107	440	719
26	Reading of the Law	110	452	727
27	Yizkor	Our Memorial Book		

	MUSAF	ROUTLEDGE	ARTSCROLL	KOREN
30	Hineni		482	769
31	Silent Amidah	124	486	775
32	Repetition of Amidah	134	502	801
33	Imru Lelokim	144	522	831
34	Unesaneh Tokef	149	530	843
35	Kedushah	151	534	853
36	Vechol Maaminim	152	538	859
37	Aleinu	157	550	873
38	Ochilah Lakeil	158	554	877
39	Vechach Haya Omer	161	560	885
40	Z'echor Rachamecha	178	584	927
41	Shema Koleinu	183	596	945
42	Al Chet	186	600	953
43	Birchat Cohanim	193	614	975

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44	Reading of the Law	197	630	985
45	Silent Amidah	206	650	1011
46	Repetition of the Amidah	215	666	1037
47	Z'chor Rachamecha	230	676	1055
48	Shema Koleinu	232	682	1065
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50	Ashrei	243	706	1101
51	Silent Amidah	246	712	1109
52	Repetition of Amidah	253	726	1133
53	Petach Lanu Sha'ar	258	736	1149
54	Umi Ya'amod	260	738	1153
55	Ashamnu	264	752	1173
56	Avinu Malkeynu	269	758	1185

## MAARIV

57	Maariv	272	766	1019
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# WELCOME

## MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM

THE  
SAATCHI  
קהלת סעאטי  
SYNAGOGUE

  
ST JOHN'S WOOD  
SYNAGOGUE

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the 5785 High Holy Days Companion for the St John's Wood and Saatchi Community. We hope that you will find this year's Companion useful, enjoyable, insightful and inspirational.

As well as the Machzor page numbers and wonderful Rosh Hashana messages, we have sourced articles on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur from an array of authors (male and female) that we aim to appeal to our diverse membership at SJWS. We hope that whoever you are, young or old, an occasional or a regular shul goer, you will find something that speaks to you and enhances your experience during this High Holy Days season.

We have also added a new chapter highlighting the vibrant SJWS community and all that it offers our members and visitors. Our combination of wonderful Rabbinic, administrative and volunteer teams not only provide inspiring religious services, educational programs, shabbat and festival meals; but also a growing and full range of community activities such as:

- **Children & Youth** – shabbat services, bar/batmitzvah program, kindergarten, Cheder, Babes in the Wood, Bnei in the Wood, dedicated social & educational events, Rosh Hashana, Chanukah and Purim Fun Days, summer camp, teenager advocacy & self-defence training
- **Young Professionals** – shabbat & festival meals, dedicated social & educational events, advocacy training
- **Ladies Guild** – regular freshly cooked lunches, welfare support, art lessons, weekly duplicate bridge club, art visits
- **Women** – shabbat & festival talks, weekly Tanya class, dedicated social events, special Women's Shabbat

Particularly during these challenging times we encourage all our Readers to join us and maximise your involvement in our special SJWS community – you are always welcome!

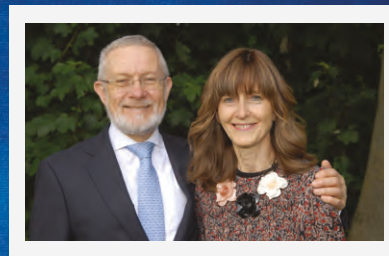
We wish you all a *Shana Tova Umetukah* – a good and sweet New Year, and we pray for peace in 5785.

The Editorial Team



# ROSH HASHANA MESSAGE

FROM DAYAN IVAN AND REBBETZEN RACHIE BINSTOCK



October 7<sup>th</sup>. A terrible turning point in Jewish history. Almost a year on and we are still reeling from the shock and the horror of that day, and from the response of much of the world where a distorted narrative recasts victims as aggressors.

Who could have imagined last Simchat Torah that (at the time of writing) our hostages would still be in captivity as we prepare for Rosh Hashana 5785, with world-wide antisemitism and Israel facing military challenges on multiple fronts?

How do we respond to the trauma of this year? How can we achieve the peace both within and outside of our borders, that we so long for but still eludes us?

One route is activism. Over the past year, our community has swept into action. We are both inspired and proud of the sheer volume and range of initiatives in response to October 7<sup>th</sup>. Solidarity events, fund raising, Israel advocacy training, support for schoolchildren, students on campus, campaigns against antisemitism and more. Our beautiful shul building has had the privilege of hosting several large scale, cross community events, benefitting all. People are connecting more to shul services and activities, drawing strength and comfort.

Our Yamim Noraim prayers lead us to an additional response. This period tends to be associated with judgement, and rightly so. But it is also profoundly connected with peace. Throughout the year we conclude our most important daily prayer, the Amida, with a blessing for peace:

*“Blessed are you, O L-d, who blesses His people, Israel, with peace.”*

From Rosh Hashana through to Yom Kippur, however, the wording is changed. The blessing becomes:

*“Blessed are you, O L-d, who makes peace.”*

The focus on peace at this time of year is not simply peace for the Jewish people, it is peace for all. It is a reminder that we need to renew our own efforts, both individually and as a community, to restore relationships that have become broken. Additionally, Pirke Avot teaches us: “Be of the disciples of Aaron; *ohav shalom verodef shalom* – love peace and pursue it.” We have to actively work on maintaining peace - ‘pursue it’ if we want to retain it.

We now stand before the High Holy Days, a time for introspection and self-improvement, and look ahead to a



Simchat Torah, one of the most joyous days in the Jewish year, tinged with an overlay of sadness.

In response to both, we invite you to join us in a personal peace plan. We know that one small spiritual act can have cosmic effect. Multiple individual acts of peace can change a world.

Together, we can aspire to:

**1) Hold on to our dreams of peace and reach out to share them** with colleagues, neighbours, and friends. If we can find the courage to articulate a message of peace and express our sorrow at the loss of all innocent life, we help dispel the damaging narrative that says the opposite.

Dayan Binstock writes: I experienced the truth of this powerfully in February, when I participated in a two-day Windsor Leadership Seminar bringing together Jewish, Christian and Muslim Faith leaders, instigated by King Charles. The King was deeply concerned that events in Gaza were causing tensions across communities. By bringing together senior religious figures, the King hoped that greater understanding could be promoted.

King Charles was absolutely right. There was misunderstanding between the faiths. The leaders I met were sensitive, caring, tolerant people, committed to interfaith understanding and the promotion of friendship and communication. Yet, some of them had a much distorted picture of the attitude of the Jewish community. They had picked

up the most exaggerated negative expressions of how Jews view Palestinians and assumed these were mainstream. They were moved and heartened to hear my colleagues and me articulate our deep concern for the value of every human life and how any innocent death pains us.

**2) Be an example to everyone we meet**, through our behaviour, our actions and our words, that we are a peace-loving people. In other words, be a mensch!

**3) Review our relationships and reach out to repair those that have become fractured.** Pirkei Avot teaches us ‘Don’t judge your friend until you have stood in their place,’ i.e. accept that there really are other perspectives. When we put down a grievance and are prepared to move forward, we move spiritual mountains.

Ultimately, our greatest power is prayer. When we pray intensely for something we desperately need, we have to be ready to respond to G-d’s challenge,

‘I hear, but what are you doing about it?’

If you’ve connected to the personal peace plan, you’ll have plenty to say!

*Oseh shalom bimromav - From on high, may G-d bless all our efforts and answer our prayers for peace and may we all be inscribed for a new year full of goodness.*

**Dayan Ivan and Rachie Binstock**



# ROSH HASHANA MESSAGE

FROM RABBI MENDEL AND REBBETZEN CHAI COHEN



It was Shabbat Shemini Atzeret, October 7th. I arrived at Shul as I do every week and began preparing for services. I noticed something different - there was an Israeli flag on the Bima in the Steinfeld Beit Midrash.

“There has been an attack in Israel, lots of rockets, and it is ongoing, so I put the flag on the Bima,” someone said. These were the first words informing me of the most tragic day for our people in modern times. I trembled.

Other congregants, some active or former soldiers, others with close family members in Israel, trickled in and whispered updates in my ears. With each one, my heart seemed to skip a beat, and I felt darkness descend. “There are pickup trucks in the cities” ... “People kidnapped”. One member who works closely with a secret service agent told me “It is not being reported yet, but they assume over a thousand have been killed, heaven forbid”.

It would be another 36 hours before I would turn on my phone and see the news unfolding. Instead, I saw imaginary images in my mind of what might be going on. I tried to process what was befalling our people. But it was *Zman Simchateinu*, the festival of rejoicing. I thought of Rabbis and communities before me: Yom Kippur in Israel 1973; Rosh Hashana in Auschwitz 1936; Simchat Torah in the Ghettos in 1944; Pesach in Lithuania 1649... What had they done? Had they continued celebrating? What did they preach in their sermons?

As Shemini Atzeret turned to Simchat Torah, opposing voices echoed my sentiments: We must not celebrate. We must celebrate. How can we dance? Are they dancing?



The days of Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah, October 7th and 8th, became an experience that would resonate for the remainder of the year. The differing voices that each of us had—pained, concerned, confused—yet wanting to live, to celebrate, to be proud Jews.

The deep conflicts of emotions, the paradox of the human condition, witnessing the unthinkable suffering of others but the need to continue, to persevere, to find resilience and faith at the most difficult times, and in fact to thrive - for those that no longer can.

And so it has been: Young children celebrated birthdays while their friends remained hostages in Hamas tunnels. Mothers delivered babies while their husbands served in tanks. Beachgoers jumped to the volleyball, while their protectors in the expanding wards of the Sheba Medical



Center had their legs amputated. Volunteers pruned vineyards for next year's crops, while ashes of burned homes blew in the fields nearby. Jews around the world were shaken, many felt a spiritual awakening, while Jew-haters gathered online and in person to spread hatred.

The words of King Solomon in Ecclesiastes ring true: A time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time for peace.... a time for dancing and a time for prayer . A time for laughter, and a time for sorrow. Never has it been so pertinent and tangible.

Our cherished texts inspire us to seek out the light, even in the darkest of times. No matter how overwhelming the news may be, or how it may feel like the world is against us, we must remember that there is always hope—we turn to Hashem. Our history is a testament to this truth: despite facing some of the most challenging and horrific periods, we have persevered and triumphed. In this time of trial, our community has come together like never before, united, spiritually awakened, and determined to do more.

Let this be our source of strength to pursue the good and the positive, and to hold fast to our deep faith that Hashem is watching over us. Trust that His Plan, though it may be hidden from us now, will ultimately lead to a brighter and better future.

As we come to Shul almost a year later, for Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur in the year 5785, these mixed feelings are no doubt in our minds.

We pray to Hashem, our Father and our King, to bless our people, for peace, for redemption, for comfort, and for a year filled with love, life, good health, prosperity and peace. Hashem give us goodness in the way we perceive goodness.



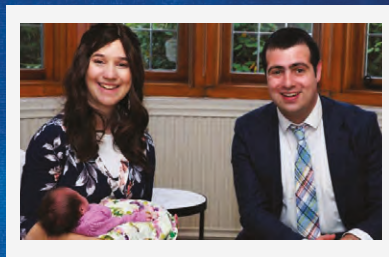
Wishing everyone a Shana Tova—a happy, healthy, and peaceful new year.

*Rabbi Mendel and Chai Cohen*



# ROSH HASHANA MESSAGE

FROM RABBI TOBY AND REBBETZEN BRACHA WEINIGER



“Rabbi Yitzhak asked: Why does one sound a long, continuous Shofar blast [*tekia*] and then a staccato series of Shofar blasts [*terua*] while the congregation is still sitting before the silent prayer, and then sound again a *tekia* and a *terua* while they are standing in the *Amida* prayer? He answers: To confuse the Satan”. Rashi explains that the double blowing of the Shofar demonstrates our enthusiasm for the Torah commandment of hearing the Shofar on Rosh Hashana, and this will confuse Satan when he prepares to bring malicious accusations against the Jewish people before the heavenly court. In turn, the Jewish people will receive a favourable judgement.

My *Rosh Yeshiva*, Rabbi Moshe Lichtenstein, proposed a parallel explanation in an unforgettable, inspiring address on Rosh Hashana. Who is this Satan we aim to confuse?

Satan is the accuser, the one who challenges the righteousness of individuals. *Iyov* (chief protagonist of the Book of Job) is blessed with tremendous wealth and comfort and is “wealthier than anyone in the East” but he is suddenly subjected to exceptional tragedy. In a single day, he loses all his children, his servants and livestock, and his property is stolen. Why did this happen? Because Satan, in his role as the accuser, challenged G-d that Job’s righteousness was due to his wealth, and were G-d to take away his wealth, Job’s righteousness would fail. In other words, Satan turned to G-d and said that the Jewish people can serve You when they are comfortable, when they are inspired, and when their circumstances suit, but not beyond that.

We first blow the Shofar during the most ritually quiet part of the service. We have finished the Reading of the Law

and the Reading of the Prophets. There is a void. And it is at this very point that we insert the piercing spiritual wake-up call of the Shofar for the very first time. Were we to have just placed the Order for the Sounding of the Shofar during the prayer service later, Satan could have turned to G-d and claimed that the Jewish people sound the Shofar simply because the melodies, the poetry, the gravitas, and the awe of the content of the prayer service on Rosh Hashana inspire them! But they could not worship You, G-d, at a time without the inspiration. Therefore, we respond to this potential claim by inserting the Shofar during the most ritually quiet part of the service. The desire to serve G-d by performing the mitzva of hearing the Shofar emanates entirely from our desire to observe this most ancient and powerful commandment.

The High Holy Days may be the spiritual climax of the calendar, but there is no such thing as a quiet period in St. John’s Wood Synagogue. Beyond our exceptional High Holy Days programme, we are eagerly anticipating the continuation of our varied, popular, and innovative menu of events, programmes, camps, trips, education, parties and services. We encourage you to join us in this excitement and try something new this year. Let’s elevate even those ‘quieter’ times of the calendar with Jewish inspiration, connection and spirituality.

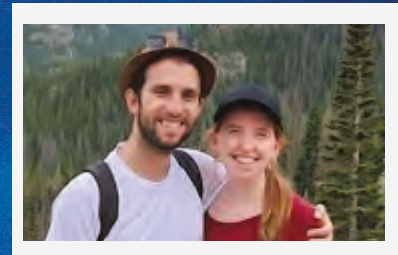
As we embark on this new year, we wish you and your family a *Shana Tova U’Metukah* – a year filled with goodness, sweetness and hope. May this year bring blessings to us and the whole of Israel.

***Rabbi Toby & Bracha Weiniger***



# ROSH HASHANA MESSAGE

FROM NADAV AND SHIFRA HACHAM



In many respects, we approach this New Year with a heavy heart. This year's professional successes, as well as personal and familial achievements, do little to ease the sense of shared fate that we feel—as we share in the suffering, sorrow, and uncertainty that too many of our brethren endure.

In the midst of global instability and uncertainty, this is a reminder from Jewish history knocking at our door, demanding we rise up to a historic mission, the mission of Jewish continuity in our generation.

The steady rhythm of our Jewish calendar demands that from time to time we pause and reflect. Specifically, during the High Holy Days, we are required to engage in the process of *teshuvah* (repentance).

But what exactly is *teshuvah*? And what are its underlying principles?

According to tradition, Rosh Hashana marks the creation of the world, to quote from the Machzor “Today is the birth of the world”. Essentially, the act of personal and collective *teshuvah* makes us partners in creation - partners who understand how complex the processes of creation and repair are, but also know they are possible.

After everything we endured this year, not only do we have the opportunity to rebuild and rehabilitate but also the duty to do so. This is true for life in Israel of course, but also for almost every aspect of our Jewish life.

How do we treat our fellow Jew who we disagree with?  
How do we express our Jewish identity in the public sphere?

And more broadly - how do we continue to build a stronger, more inclusive community for everyone, especially the next generation?

It is not about building a mass movement or making crucial decisions behind closed doors. But rather about our daily routines, the community we want to be part of and raise our children in.

Throughout this past year many young professionals started to see our community as their hub and base for Jewish and social life. Together we are creating a vibrant and relevant community – committed to modern Jewish life and facilitating both personal and professional growth. We are looking forward to a year full of creativity and engagement that foster connections between all generations of our special SJW community.

We are thankful and proud to be part of a flourishing community that is deeply invested in Jewish life, welcome and cherish the importance of Jewish continuity, and who fully mobilised and came together from the first day of the war. The incredible support for Israel, and empathy – for us personally and for the people of Israel– is the ultimate expression of “כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה” - “All Jews are responsible for one another”.

**We wish everyone a very sweet New Year – a year with less sorrow and concerns, a year where we'll do again what we do so well: build, plant, create and come together in happiness and joy.**

*Shana Tovah!*

**Nadav & Shifra Hacham**



# ROSH HASHANA MESSAGE

FROM CHAIRMAN MICHAEL ABRAHAM



As we gather for these High Holy Days, it is impossible not to reflect on the horrific events of October 7th last year, Simchat Torah in Israel. The horrors that unfolded, the war that has ensued, and the heart-wrenching reality that so many of our brothers and sisters remain captive in the tunnels of Gaza, weigh heavily on our hearts. Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with them, as we yearn for their safe return.

Over this past year, our synagogue has stood in steadfast solidarity with Israel. In the aftermath of those harrowing events, we came together as a community in grief and resolve. We hosted a memorial service in collaboration with seven other central London synagogues in the presence of several government representatives and other dignitaries; a moment where our collective mourning was palpable, yet so was our unity. Also the solidarity concert we organised, featuring some of the most esteemed chazzanim, was a powerful expression of our support, lifting our spirits and reminding us of the strength that comes from standing together.

Our commitment extended beyond words and prayers. We held collections in support of Israel, ensuring that aid reached those in need during such critical times. We introduced singing the *Hatikvah* together, at the end of

each Shabbat morning service, a poignant expression of our unwavering solidarity with Israel. These acts brought many people back to shul, some of whom had not attended for a long time, rekindling a connection to our community and to each other during these challenging times.

We also organised several Israel advocacy sessions with guest speakers to equip our members with the knowledge and tools to stand up for Israel in the face of rising hostility. Additionally, our solidarity trip to Israel was a deeply moving experience. Participants visited the kibbutzim that bore the brunt of the atrocities and saw first-hand the resilience of the Israeli people. They returned with a renewed commitment to support them and shared their experiences with the rest of the community at a special 'Israel Shabbat'.

As I reflect on this past year, my thoughts also turn to the days surrounding that fateful October 7th - October 6th and October 8th. On October 6th, Israel was grappling with profound internal divisions, particularly concerning judicial reforms and the longstanding debate about military service for Haredim. These issues not only divided Israeli society but also reverberated across the Jewish diaspora. On October 8th, as we mourned the victims and struggled to comprehend the scale of the tragedy, some



thing extraordinary happened: global Jewry united in a way that transcended those prior divisions. In last year's High Holy Days Companion, I wrote about the pressing need for unity among global Jewry. Sadly, it took a traumatic event of such magnitude - echoes of the Yom Kippur War 50 years earlier - to bring us together. In our shared grief and in our collective response, we found a renewed sense of purpose and solidarity. This unity is something we must strive to maintain, not only in times of crisis but also in our everyday lives.

As we enter this season of reflection and repentance, we must confront some existential questions: How do we, as a community, respond to the persistent rise in anti-semitism? How do we address the societal divisions that still linger, both within Israel and the Diaspora? And how do we ensure that the unity we found in the face of tragedy becomes a permanent fixture of our collective identity?

And we must do more than ask these questions; there remains a great deal that each of us can do to foster and preserve our strong community, both in our Israeli homeland and here at home. It may be participating in the shul elderly lunches, calling our neighbours to check in, organising a weekly Torah learning group, or committing to a fixed amount of time each day free of any *lashon*

*harah* (negative speech about others). It is up to each one of us to reflect on what we are currently doing to enrich our community, and on what more we can undertake.

While we pray for Israel to maintain its unity, we must strengthen our resolve to maintain ours. No anti-semitism, protestors, or external forces can define or unite us. We must do this ourselves, through words and through action. The recent riots and acts of anti-semitism in various parts of the world serve as stark reminders of the challenges we continue to face. Yet, our SJW community reminds me of the power of cohesion, of standing together as one people, bound by a shared history, a shared destiny, and an unwavering commitment to each other.

In this coming year let's try to be the best version of ourselves, both as individuals and as a community.

On behalf of the Honorary Officers, I wish you all a meaningful and reflective High Holy Days season. May 5785 be a year of health, happiness, and above all, peace for us all.

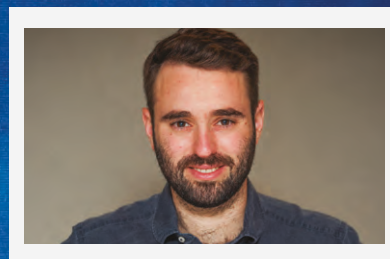
*Shanah Tovah U'Metukah, and G'mar Chatimah Tovah,*

**Michael Abraham**  
**Chairman**



# CHATAN TORAH

## MESSAGE FROM EYAL BIRAM



In August 2023, my wife, Shahar, our son Gilad, and I moved to St. John's Wood as I began my MBA at London Business School. Before embarking on this academic journey, I had the honour of serving as a commander in Sayeret Matkal, the elite unit of the IDF, often compared to the British SAS. After completing six years of military service, I founded ISRAEL-is in 2017 and served as its CEO for six years.

The inspiration for the organisation came during Operation Protective Edge in 2014 while I was fighting in Gaza. I witnessed firsthand how international media shaped the reality on the battlefield, reinforcing the need for young Israelis to be equipped to tell Israel's story. Since its inception, ISRAEL-is has impacted over 150,000 IDF veterans, turning them into informal ambassadors for Israel and the Jewish people.

I was born and raised in Israel, with my family deeply rooted in the historic cities of Jerusalem and Hebron, where we have lived for generations. One of our most cherished family heirlooms is a letter that my great-grandfather received from Winston Churchill in 1955, recognising his role in establishing the first Hebrew-language high school in Israel, the Hebrew Reali School of Haifa. This school played a pivotal role in shaping the military and political leadership of the emerging Israeli state.

Shahar, my wife, was born in Bet-Shemesh. Her family, among the first settlers of the city, came from Afghanistan, Turkey, and Poland shortly after Israel's founding. Raised in a Jewish Orthodox home, Shahar was part of a special program that allowed religious girls to serve in the IDF,

where she served in the spokesperson's unit. She is currently an intern psychologist at Schneider Children's Medical Center in Petach Tikva, Israel.



Simchat Torah last year marked one of the darkest days for the Jewish people since the Holocaust. We were tragically reminded of what happens when, for just a few hours, the Jewish people are without the ability to defend themselves. On that terrible day, I lost ten comrades, including close friends, who were sent to defend the Gaza border communities, leaving their families behind, never to see them again.

In the wake of that tragedy, I've had the privilege of contributing to our community through media appearances, protests, and missions, all aimed at raising awareness about the situation in Israel. This past year has been a stark reminder of the power and importance of community. As the streets of London became a regular place for demonstrations against Israel, our Jewish community remained a source of strength and unity.

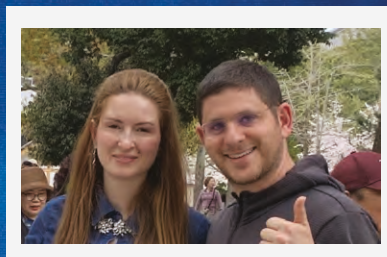
In a few months, we will return to Israel. The time we've spent here and the friendships we've formed in St. John's Wood will forever be a meaningful chapter in our lives.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to the Rabbinic team at the synagogue for their unwavering leadership and support during these challenging times.



# CHATAN BEREISHIT

MESSAGE FROM MICHAEL MAGDOVITZ



I met my wife Daniela through Chabad eight years ago, fell in love and planted roots in the St Johns Wood community. We have raised our three children, Joshua (6), Nathaniel (4) and Hanna (2) at the synagogue, attending weekly services and events. When we are not at work, Daniela and I spend our time with the children and friends, often at local Jewish events. We love to travel and speak six languages between us.

I am American, not British (alas!), but I do hail from the same street in Brooklyn, New York, as Winston Churchill's mother, Jennie. My mother is French and my father American; they met at Harvard Business School, settled in Brooklyn and had successful careers in finance. I received my BA from Cornell University in 2010 and began my career in Bogota, Colombia as a program manager at the Clinton Foundation. It was there that I met Chabad luminary Rabbi Yehoshua Rosenfeld, who inspired me to become more observant, and coal trader Gary Nagle, who inspired me to make some money. I moved to Rotterdam, the Netherlands in 2011 to begin my career at Glencore, the world's largest commodities trader, where I worked on agricultural markets. I have travelled across Asia, Europe and the Americas on crop tours to trade wheat, corn and vegetable oils. I came to London in 2017 to marry Daniela and continued my career at Rabobank, the world's leading food and agriculture financier, as an advisor to major food companies, central banks, hedge funds and traders. Earlier this year, I left Rabobank and built an agri-focused investment fund backed by several investors. For a better idea of my work, please watch the film "Trading Places".

Daniela is from the Hague, studied International Maritime Law and Arbitration in Amsterdam and London and works as an author, legal advisor and activist. She has German and Iranian ancestry, comes from a family of diplomats and spent part of her childhood in Hong Kong.

Daniela and I did not grow up orthodox but since getting married we decided to increase our observance. We have also become more involved in Jewish and Israeli causes, seeking to share our blessings with the broader community and inspire those around us to grow beautiful Jewish homes in St Johns Wood. I had the honour of serving as *Gabbai* (warden) of this shul for the last six years and am deeply grateful to the patient and forbearing Rabbinic Team who overlooked my lack of formal instruction in shul *minchag* (customs) and manners. Daniela has worked on the SJWS Eruv Committee, the board of UK Lawyers for Israel and other local pro-Israel organisations.



Over the last year, Daniela and I have turned our focus to the burgeoning youth provision where we engage with young parents and support the inspiring work of Rabbi Toby and Rebbetzen Bracha Weiniger. We want to encourage young people to come and stay in the area, and to safeguard the shul's future. In addition to our work at this synagogue, we are also big supporters of Chabad. Daniela and I want to extend our gratitude to the community and in particular the shul leadership who contribute to our blessings: Dayan Ivan and Rebbetzen Rachie Binstock, Rabbi Mendel and Rebbetzen Chai Cohen, Nadav and Shifra Hacham, Chairman Michael Abraham, Vice-Chairman Rosanna Burr and the Honorary Officers.





10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

18 September 2024

THE PRIME MINISTER

Dear Mr Abraham,

I am writing to thank you, Ms Rosanna Burr and Ms Hayley Bartman for your recent correspondence and request for a New Year message to mark the High Holy Days for the Hebrew year 5785.

I know the Saatchi Synagogue and St John's Wood Synagogue have served the local Jewish community of all ages, with distinction for many years, and will continue to do so well into the future.

I wish all your members the very best as you come together to celebrate Rosh Hashanah through prayer, reflection and of course to sound the shofar and to commemorate Yom Kippur with further reflection, prayer and fasting.

All best wishes,

Mr Michael Abraham, Ms Rosanna Burr and Ms Hayley Bartman



# Office of The CHIEF RABBI

## The Chief Rabbi's Rosh Hashanah Message 5785

During this most painful year, in addition to the trauma of the terrorist atrocities, the capture of hostages and the tragic war, we have been subjected to a constant barrage of falsehoods. Of these, none has been so insidious as the morally inverted claim of genocide, the modern-day blood libel.

On Yom Kippur, we will chant Kol Nidrei, a prayer steeped in history and emotion. Fascinatingly, historians differ on its precise origin. Many believe that it was composed as a remedy for Jews who had been forced to make oaths of conversion to Christianity. While Kol Nidre declares 'all vows' made to God null and void, it was used as a pretext by medieval antisemites to portray Jews as untrustworthy in business and other civil matters. Despite assurances that Kol Nidrei did not apply to vows between people, the lie persisted, causing deep-seated hatred.

According to an old adage, a lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is still lacing up its boots. Sadly, in the era of social media, this is truer than ever, particularly where Israel is concerned.

In just one such example, in July, a well-known medical journal published a letter on its website. The authors estimated that the total number of casualties in Gaza attributable to Israel might eventually reach 186,000, if one were to factor in the impact of secondary causes, such as lack of housing and poor healthcare infrastructure. No attempt was made to assign any responsibility to Hamas, nor to differentiate between the deaths of combatants and non-combatants, nor identify the 'Gaza Health Ministry,' on whose data its conjecture was based, as Hamas-run. Nevertheless, campaigners attributed this 'new data' to the journal itself, rather than to a letter it had received. Some claimed that the journal had 'released a study,' while others stated that the estimate was 'peer reviewed.' Before long, millions had read it and it was cited by activists, British Parliamentarians, and a UN Special Rapporteur.

Kol Nidrei is chanted during our deepest moments of personal and communal introspection. In our confession of the High Holy Days, we call out to Hashem in candour: "You know the hidden secrets of every living soul. You search the innermost chambers of the conscience and the heart. Nothing escapes You. Nothing is hidden from Your sight." This is a moment of the purest honesty.

The Torah instructs us, "Distance yourself from falsehood," because it is not enough to be truthful; we must create an environment intolerant of falsehood.

Indeed, despite the centuries of lies and hatred, Kol Nidrei has endured because we have always found solace in moments of perfect truth between ourselves and Hashem.

When we know in the deepest recesses of our souls where truth ends and falsehood begins, no lie can diminish us.

The truth will prevail. Am Yisrael Chai!



Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis KBE







Dear Friends,

I wish you a Shana 'Tova!

Every year, Rosh Hashanah offers us the chance to reflect on the past year. It offers us a moment to celebrate all that we have achieved, to cherish the happy memories and to learn from our mistakes; but this year feels different. The prospect of toasting a new year when 109 hostages continue to suffer in Gaza, and while tens of thousands of Israelis are internally displaced from their homes in northern Israel as Hezbollah's rockets threaten their communities, will be difficult for us all. So, I ask that you keep them in your thoughts as you look to the future.

It is in these dark days that we, the Jewish people, must find light and strength in one another. I have been particularly moved by the outpouring of love and support for Israel from the British Jewish community over the past year, especially in the face of your own adversity here at home in the United Kingdom. I have felt your solidarity on the streets during the rallies, in your activism online, and in your prayers. Your comradeship has been a rare highpoint over the past year. Thank you!

There is still so much uncertainty as we head into the year 5785 but, I know that with your continued to friendship and support, we will see it through.

May 5785 be the year that all of the hostages return to the arms of their loved ones. May it be an easier and sweeter new year.

Am Yisrael Chai!

Tzipi Hotovely

Tzipi Hotovely  
Ambassador for Israel to the Court of St. James's



## Rosh Hashanah Message from the President



# BOARD OF DEPUTIES OF BRITISH JEWS

ADVOCACY | DEMOCRACY | COMMUNITY

In June 2024, aged 38, I was elected as the youngest-ever President in the Board of Deputies' 264-year history. While it is certainly a challenging time to have taken up the role, my team and I have hit the ground running with pace and energy, and set five key priorities for our three-year term:

- Fight antisemitism;
- Stand up for peace and security in Israel and the Middle East;
- Defend our religious freedoms;
- Make our community more united, inclusive, and outward looking; and
- Celebrate our faith, heritage, and culture as British Jews.



Understandably, combatting antisemitism is the number one priority for most in our community right now. We will be conducting a comprehensive review of hate crime legislation, policing, and prosecution, to keep our community safe. We will conduct a sector-by-sector inquiry into the media, social media, universities, workplaces, arts and sports, to secure our wellbeing. We will tackle extremism in all its guises, whether it be from Islamists, the far-right or the far-left, to ensure our society remains cohesive. And we will expand education, training, and interfaith outreach to inoculate people against the virus of hatred.

Nearly a year on from the horrific events of 7th October, our hearts go out to the people of Israel. People who have lost loved ones, suffered a life-changing injury, or who have spent too many hours waiting to hear the fate of a kidnapped relative.

Much is made of division in our own community, particularly regarding Israel. But on so much we have been united over the last year, whether campaigning to release the hostages, pushing back against Iran and its proxies, or working and praying to bring a lasting resolution to the conflict, speedily and in our days.

Despite the challenges we must be proud to express our unique history and culture.

A key mission must be to make our community more inclusive, and we will launch a Commission on Disability Inclusion in the Jewish Community to better engage a wider range of people. The Board of Deputies' 200 member organisations run from Cornwall to Aberdeen, and we will celebrate our regional communities and heritage. As the Board's youngest-ever President, I want to connect with our next generation to ensure it is active and engaged.

We have been through some hard times in Jewish history and emerged from them with ingenuity and resilience. This last year has been uniquely challenging, but I am determined that we will come back stronger.

With your help, I know we will.

Wishing you all a Shanah Tovah uMetukah!

**Phil Rosenberg**  
President

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*Charitable activities with which the Board are identified are funded by The Board of Deputies Charitable Foundation (Registered Charity No. 1058107), a company limited by guarantee and registered in England (No. 3239086).*



# Message from the President of the United Synagogue

Generally, the only dates which matter in Judaism are those in the Hebrew calendar. Although we use the Gregorian calendar to arrange meetings and know when bank holidays are, Pesach always falls on 15th Nisan and Yom Kippur on 10th Tishrei.

There is, though, a secular date which will sadly be seared in our minds forever more: 7th October. Last 7th October, on Shemini Atzeret, terrorists murdered some 1,200 people in Israel. Hundreds of Israeli soldiers – mostly young men and women – as well as civilians have since been killed, whilst tens of thousands have been displaced from their homes.

It has been a year of horror and pain. Just three weeks after we said in shul last year, "On Rosh Hashanah it is written...who will live and who will die, who in their due time and who before...", our people suffered the largest loss of life since the Holocaust. As I write this at the end of July, more than 100 hostages are still being held in the most unimaginable conditions in Gaza. I pray their captivity will end soon.

And as if all this was not bad enough, it took just a few days for world opinion and media to turn against Israel. The Jewish state, which wants nothing more than to live in peace among its neighbours, was doubly victimised: first, by suffering the atrocities of 7th October, and then for having the temerity to fight back against those who wish to destroy it, whilst simultaneously trying to bring the hostages home.

The subsequent rise in antisemitism has left many of us feeling uncomfortable being publicly identified as Jewish. But we cannot let our lives be dictated by those who hate us. We can change the course of history by standing up for what is right and living our lives as proud Jews.

The message of the *Untaneh tokef* prayer, recited during Musaf on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and which I quoted from above, is not that Judaism is a fatalistic faith. It is not. Events are not predetermined and therefore inevitable. While God may know our thoughts, it is left to us to decide our actions.

Although we cannot change what happened on 7th October, we can choose how to respond to it. The answer is given at the end of *Untaneh tokef*: 'repentance, prayer and charity avert the evil of the decree'. By fasting on Yom Kippur, by coming together in shul to *daven*, or raising our voices at home, by giving generously to the Kol Nidre appeal and resolving to bring more Judaism into our lives and the lives of those around us, the Jewish people can, with God's help, be inscribed in the Book of Life.

May we and all of Am Yisrael merit such a verdict and may we see the hostages returned home soon to their families.

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This is my eighth and final Rosh Hashanah message as United Synagogue President. I will step down next summer and hand the reins of this wonderful charity to a new leader who will help to write the next chapter in our illustrious history, which began in 1870.

It has been a tremendous honour to lead such an important charity and I want to thank you for being part of the United Synagogue, and to thank all our volunteers, fellow Trustees, Rabbinic teams and professional staff who give so much to enable us to do what we do. Wishing you a *shana tova u'metuka* – a happy and sweet New Year to you all.



**Michael Goldstein**  
President, United Synagogue



**President:** Michael Goldstein  
**Treasurer:** Maxwell Nisner  
**Chief Executive:** Jo Grose

**Trustees:** Rachel Hartog, Claire Lemer,  
Fleurise Lewis, Simon Mitchell, Tristan Nagler,  
Nicola Rosenfelder, Saul Taylor, Jacqui Zinkin





As we congregate once more for the Yamim Tovim, we naturally reflect on the year that was. For reasons we all know, this has been one of the most challenging years for our community in recent memory. And yet here we are, standing strong together, as unified as ever.

It is our mission to facilitate Jewish life and ensure that every Jewish life in our country is protected from those who wish to harm us. But the fulfilment of this mission relies on you, our community, placing your trust in us to provide the best physical and emotional security we can.

In listening to our advice, being mindful of personal security on the streets and online, you play your part. In volunteering, ensuring that you have the tools to protect the friends

and family sitting next to you today, you play your part. In giving what you can to support us, helping us to continue and expand our vital work, you play your part.

You do your part so that we can do ours, securing more communal centres, events and gatherings across the UK than ever before. Our commitment to you is unwavering, whatever this coming year may bring, we will be here for you and we thank you for being there for us in return.

From everyone at CST, we wish you a Happy New Year, and a safe and meaningful fast.

*Mark Gardner*

Mark Gardner  
CST Chief Executive



Report suspicious activity and antisemitism to CST at [cst.org.uk/report](https://cst.org.uk/report)

**IN AN EMERGENCY** National Emergency Number (24-hr) **0800 032 3263**

**In a non-emergency** London **020 8457 9999** | Manchester **0161 792 6666** | Leeds **0113 237 1980**





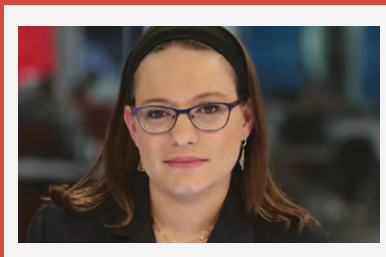
# ROSH HASHANA INSPIRATIONAL THOUGHTS

- Three things that deserve attention on Rosh Hashana by Sivan Rahav Meir
- So, to which Shul do you belong? by Rabbi Barry Marcus
- Why on Rosh Hashana are we judged BEFORE we have repented on Yom Kippur? by Rabbi Shloimeh Blondenh
- Dependent or Independent? By Rabbi Leivi Sudak
- Pardon me? Personal *Mechilah* as a tool for Personal Growth by Dr. Rachel Fryman
- The Car Thief of Bnei Brak by Rabbi Pini Dunner
- The Challenge of Jewish Repentance – Questions to ask ourselves each New Year by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks
- The Importance of Beginnings – Rosh Hashana by Rabbi Akiva Tatz



# THREE THINGS THAT DESERVE ATTENTION ON ROSH HASHANA

BY SIVAN RAHAV MEIR



Written in 2021 by Sivan Rahav Meir, media personality, journalist and lecturer (translation by Yehohsua Siskin)

1. Each minute, 70 million WhatsApp messages are sent worldwide. Every sixty seconds, \$1.5 million dollars in purchases are made on the Internet, 200 million emails are sent, and 200 thousand tweets are tweeted. And here are two more numbers that attest to the explosion of information via social media: Every minute, nearly 700 thousand stories are transmitted on Instagram, and more than 500 hours of content go up on YouTube.

This is not an information super-highway as we once called it. This is an information intifada. Welcome to the era of noise. It would appear that we produce and demand more content than ever, yet we lack the ability to follow, to filter, to prioritise and to internalise it.

Once a year, we are asked to just stop. The principal mitzvah of Rosh Hashana is not eating an apple dipped in honey or munching pomegranate seeds (although these are wonderful customs), but rather hearing the shofar. There is no need to produce anything, to make noise, or create any sound whatsoever. We need only let go - and listen. Even the blessing that we make prior to the shofar blasts is unusual: "Blessed art Thou O L-rd G-d, King of the universe, who sanctified by His commandments, and commanded us to hear the sound of the shofar." Generally, performance of a mitzvah demands that we do something: build a sukkah, light Hanukkah candles, eat matzah. Now the mitzvah is to just to be quiet for a while and to listen.

2. Okay, and after we listened, what now? The Lubavitcher Rebbe was accustomed to publish a letter on Rosh Hashana

eve in which he turned to the entire Jewish people with a critical message. One year, he warned that we are likely to waste these special days. We occupy ourselves with the world's problems and general subjects and make all kinds of ideological statements that do not obligate anyone to do anything. This is our excuse, he claimed, not to occupy ourselves with the central subject of the new year: personal change; self-improvement; resolutions that we could adopt to better our own lives. The travails of the world and of our country are significant, and it's possible to spend hours discussing important issues surrounding the pandemic, the media, and politics. Yet such discussions can also be an excellent excuse for our finishing Rosh Hashana exactly as we began it, without taking upon ourselves any actual resolution to change.

3. This is not meant to avoid the most elevated message of the day: the need for change. Just the opposite is true. On Rosh Hashana it is appropriate to recall the well-known story that a Chasid once told: "In my youth a fire burned in me and I thought I could change the world. When I got older, I despaired at changing the world and thought I could change those in my city. When I realised that this too was impossible, I thought I could change my family, and when this also failed I reached the conclusion that I had to change myself. And then, as I began to change, I saw that my family began to change, the people in my city began to change, and the entire world began to change as well."

*May we merit to be silent for a while and just listen and change ourselves and the world around us. May everyone have a good year, and may you be inscribed and sealed in the Book of Life.*



# SO, TO WHICH SHUL DO YOU BELONG?

BY RABBI BARRY MARCUS



Written in 2017 by Rabbi Barry Marcus, retired rabbi of Central Synagogue

With the advent of the High Holy Days, it may be appropriate to reflect on our modern day ‘Sanctuaries’ against the backdrop of those of old.

The spiritual contribution and impact of the Synagogue is immeasurable as unlike the Temple, it was and is not bound to any particular place, but a portable home of the spirit.

This contribution is succinctly expressed by Robert Herford – “In all their long history, the Jewish people have done scarcely anything more wonderful than to create a Synagogue”.

Over the centuries, the Synagogue became the fount of the Jewish spirit, a place where all Jews assembled for inspiration and strength, for thanksgiving and consolation, for solace and study, for prayer and moral regeneration. It was a *Beit HaTefillah* and *Beit HaMidrash* – a house of prayer and of study. It was also a *Beit HaKneset* – a house of assembly, where communal problems were discussed.

At times, the Synagogue even became a people’s court – any Jew who felt that he had a just grievance against another has the right to hold back the reading of the Torah until he gained a public promise of a just and impartial

impartial hearing. The form of appealing for justice, which may appear strange to us, was fully understood by the worshippers in the Synagogue of old. What value is there in reading the Law if the congregation will tolerate an injustice?

This was the Synagogue to which all Jews belonged and the spirit which permeated every phase of Jewish life. It was the spiritual, social and cultural reservoir and dynamo of the Jewish community. Belonging to the Synagogue did not mean for Jews through the centuries membership in a particular Synagogue, determined by paying a stated amount of annual dues, as is the normal criterion of Synagogue affiliation today.

There is a fundamental difference, and in this difference we see the greatest and gravest challenge to the quality of Jewish life today and to our very survival as Jews. Not only do we have a large number of Jews unaffiliated with the Synagogue in any sense of the word, but a great many of those who do consider themselves Synagogue members belong only in a superficial sense. Belonging to a Synagogue means more than paying dues – it means primarily commitment. When one’s connection with the Synagogue is only fiscal, then his relationship to it is simply like that of a stock-holder in a business corporation. The corporation belongs partly to him – he does not belong to the corporation. The historic relationship between Jew



Jew and his Synagogue was not that the Jew possessed the Synagogue but rather the reverse. The Synagogue possessed him: he was possessed by its spirit which guided, inspired and strengthened his life as a Jew.

It is no wonder many complain that they get little out of “belonging to the Synagogue”. The fact is that they do not belong to the Synagogue – they want the Synagogue to belong to them. They do not want to get much from the Synagogue; they only give something to it, and what they give is not their hearts and minds but only some gold. While there is a record of gold making a calf, we do not know of a case where mere gold made a man.

Fortunately, we do have congregants who belong to the Synagogue in the historic sense and turn to it for sincere worship, for learning and for inspiration, seeking spiritual improvement in their own lives.

As I travel through Eastern Europe and visit the forlorn and empty Synagogues, I am filled with sadness at the terrible loss of once vibrant communities but equally grateful and humbled that we in the UK are privileged with the opportunity to regenerate Jewish life in freedom – but what is our relationship with our Synagogue?

Do we regard it as something belonging to us, or do we belong to it? Is it another one of our possessions, or does it possess us? Are we merely giving it our dues, or are we willing to accept the duties and doctrines which it offers us?

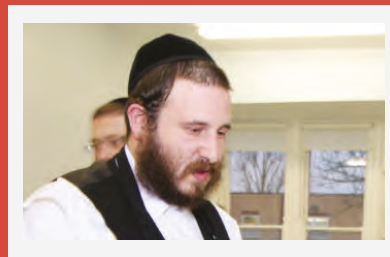
On the threshold of a New Year, may we find the courage to answer these questions sincerely and the desire to re-connect to the fortress of our faith – the Synagogue.





# WHY ON ROSH HASHANA ARE WE JUDGED BEFORE WE HAVE REPENTED ON YOM KIPPUR?

BY RABBI SHLOIMEH BLONDEH



By Rabbi Shloimeh Blondeh, Director of the Chicken Soup Shelter

The order of these festivals is utterly perplexing. First comes Rosh Hashana, also known as the Day of Judgement (*Yom HaDin*) – where we pray that our names are inscribed in the Book of Life and where G-d assigns our sustenance for the year. Yet, on this day, we don't even mention our sins or ask for forgiveness! We don't pray for our personal needs and sustenance. (That's actually why we eat the '*Simanim*', the traditional foods of Rosh Hashana, like apples dipped in honey. It's only at the first festive meal that we sneak in some personal requests like the "*Yehi Razton*" we say as we dip the apple in the honey: May it be Your will our G-d and the G-d of our forefathers that You renew for us a good and sweet New Year.) So, what are we doing for all those hours at shul while every soul passes before G-d like sheep passing before their shepherd?

Ten days later, we spend the day fasting, confessing, and hoping for atonement. Isn't that a bit late? Has the horse not bolted? Has the ship not already set sail?

## Answer:

Doing *teshuva* (repentance) on Rosh Hashana would be like rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic. This apparent reversal of logical order has some very deep implications for how to achieve personal transformation, how to stick to our resolutions, and how to start a new chapter and a New Year that's truly new.

80% of change is driven by our subconscious, and this is where self-limiting beliefs can wreak havoc on even the best plans. If we don't truly believe transformation is

possible we will struggle to move forward. We have to work on our mindset – and this is ongoing work, it's a muscle that we consistently build, not a switch that we turn on once. It's helpful to become aware of the things we believe and learn how to reframe and replace unhelpful beliefs. We are all aware that drinking water is healthy. But awareness is not enough to start a daily practice.

On a practical level, whatever change we seek to make in our lives has to be connected to our purpose and this is supported by our mindset. Purpose is the highest motivator for human beings; the reason behind the goal we are trying to achieve. So, for example, if our goal is to exercise five days a week, and we buy some brand-new running shoes and awesome athleisure clothing we are excited to wear, this may motivate us for a few days – while they still feel new – but, when it's cold and dark and rainy, that's not enough to get us out of bed. For that, we need purpose. Purpose keeps our actions aligned with our goals.

**Rosh Hashana is thus, first and foremost, a mindset shift. It's all about purpose, direction, and goals** for achieving the changes we want to see in our lives. The details and strategies of how to do that – those come later. And this is the open secret behind all change: first, we need the will, the desire, and the mindset – start with the end in mind.

On Rosh Hashana we crown G-d as King. By making our relationship with G-d real, recognising Him as the Source of everything in our lives, we shape the mindset we need to become our best selves, to better serve Him.



# DEPENDENT OR INDEPENDENT?

BY RABBI LEIVI SUDAK



Written by Rabbi Leivi Sudak, Director of Lubavitch of Edgware

The Animal World is full of marvel and mystery. Some people devote their lives to studying animals and their behaviour, and do not cease to be amazed by what animals can do. Each species of animal, bird, fish, or insect, has amazing capabilities. They use these instincts and talents in order to achieve their food, protection, and shelter.

What is more amazing is that invariably these Creatures can achieve everything they need on their own. They do not rely on 'team spirit', although it sometimes helps them achieve their aims.

There is however, one exception. Man.

Man cannot survive alone. Man is dependent on assistance from another in almost every sphere of his life. From the food that we eat, or the clothes that we wear, to the shelter and warmth that we depend upon, we need the contribution of others and we depend on them.

In spite of our remarkable advantage over all other Creatures; we can think, design, and develop, and we can even build amazing structures and achieve great feats; we are still dependent on the support of others.

Of course, we pay for what we get, and we get paid for what we do. The money is just a means of 'fair distribution' by which we exchange the value of something that we have done for another, in order to obtain from them what we desire. In other words, the money that we earn and spend

is just a discipline through which we share and pool our efforts. Because each of us is interdependent with others.

The obvious question is 'Why'? Why did G-d create us in such a way that we almost completely depend on others, whilst virtually the entirety of Creation can exist independently?

The answer is to teach us to care for another being without receiving anything in return.

By reducing us to the point that we depend on others, G-d compels us to consider the other in his / her own right.

Caring is a particularly Human quality. True, other Creatures may display beautiful expressions of care for a fellow creature, but that is usually limited to an individual from their own pack or group. On the other hand, Man is supposed to care for every other Human Being, whoever and wherever they may be.

Our interdependence and social care for all is a Divine Quality. It follows G-d's pattern, as the verse says " His mercy is upon all that He created". This is a quality that is uniquely Divine, the Angels do not possess it. In His infinite wisdom, He chose to share it with us.

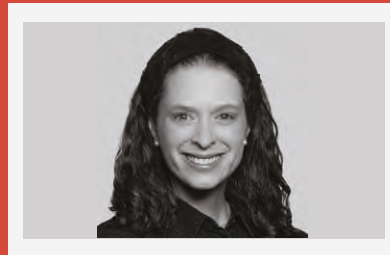
As Rosh Hashana approaches, and as we eagerly look forward to a New, Good, and Sweet Year 5785, we need to refocus our interpersonal relationships and repair any blemishes that we may have in that part of our lives.

This way, we will all be blessed with a Positively Sealed Inscription in the Book of Life for a Truly Good and Sweet Year.



# PARDON ME? PERSONAL MECHILAH AS A TOOL FOR PERSONAL GROWTH

BY DR. RACHEL FRYMAN



Written in 2022 by Dr. Rachel Fryman, Assistant Professor at the Wurzweiler School of Social Work of Yeshiva University.

*Mechilah* (forgiveness) is more than a temporary reprieve to spare the sinner of punishment. It can also be a powerful psychological tool to end the cycle of self-doubt, anxiety, and sadness that we often face when confronting our flawed past.

In the weeks approaching the Yomin Noraim (High Holy Days), we often think about *mechilah* as something we seek from others. As Chazal teach us, *teshuvah* (repentance) cannot grant us atonement for wrongs committed against others until we first make amends and seek *mechilah* from them. So it has become commonplace in our communities to ask for *mechilah* from our family members, friends, neighbours, and colleagues. *Mechilah* is the tool we use to repair our spiritual relationships with others.

But what about our relationship with ourselves? When it comes to our personal shortcomings throughout the last year – the goals we set but didn’t meet, the bad habits we promised to end but didn’t – we need *mechilah* from ourselves too. Without the ability to forgive ourselves, we remain psychologically stuck, unable to move forward on a growth-oriented trajectory. As Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks put it:

“.....if there was no forgiveness, we would always be slave to the past, we would never be able to wipe the slate clean, every sin we committed would be an indelible stain, we

would be imprisoned in our past. Because there is forgiveness the slate can be wiped clean. We can begin again and write a new and different story in our lives.”

*Mechilah* is more than a surface-level forgiveness. In describing the process of seeking *mechilah* from others, the Rambam’s language is instructive:

“.....But sins between man and man, for instance, one injures his neighbour, or curses his neighbour or plunders him, or offends him in like matters, is ever not absolved unless he makes restitution of what he owes and begs the forgiveness of his neighbour. And, although he makes restitution of the monetary debt, he is obliged to pacify him and to beg his forgiveness.”

It’s insufficient to merely repay the person for the damage caused. Making them whole is only the first step. *Vi-ratzaihu* means we have to assuage him. It implies comity and social harmony. We must do whatever we can to renew the sense of friendliness or congeniality that our sin severed. *Teshuvah* demands that we address the emotional aspect of sin.

Self-forgiveness demands no less.

Personal *mechilah* sets the stage for a new beginning. It offers a chance to truly and completely forgive ourselves, freeing us from the shackles of the past, and allowing us to begin the hard work of true, lasting, personal growth. Psychologist and Holocaust survivor Edith Eger says about her clinical work with patients:



“.....I can’t heal you – or anyone – but I can celebrate your choice to dismantle the prison in your mind, brick by brick. You can’t change what happened, you can’t change what you did or what was done to you. But you can choose how you live now. My precious, you can choose to be free.”

One question we can ask ourselves is, How do we dismantle the prison of our minds not to be a slave of the past?

When these unhelpful cognitions of self-doubt and self-deprecation begin to reinforce our negative beliefs about ourselves and others, it becomes difficult to engage in accurate self-reflection, further limiting our ability to develop healthy relationships with ourselves, others and G-d.

The *Yamim Nora'im* (High Holy Days) call upon us to be active participants in self-forgiveness. Personal *mechilah* provides a mechanism to identify how our conscious negative thoughts about ourselves adversely impact our perception of life, both in the present and the future (consistent with teachings in cognitive behavioural therapy). According to rational emotive behaviour therapy, negative thought patterns lead to negative associations, further causing us to have a critical attitude towards ourselves and others. This cycle of reinforcing negative patterns similarly impedes opportunities to fully engage in healthy constructive *teshuvah*.

Only when we psychologically give ourselves the gift of *mechilah* – a free pass so to speak – true *teshuvah* can begin.

Personal *mechilah* starts with self-compassion. Many who struggle with excessive negative thinking have difficulty speaking about themselves compassionately. According to Rav Nachman of Breslov, self-compassion is a religious imperative:

“.....Likewise, a person must find (some good point) within himself. It is known that a person must take care to always be happy and to keep very far away from depression.”

Practising self-compassion, allowing ourselves to see the good in ourselves, makes us more empathetic to others.

Rav Nachman continues:

“.....Psalms 37:10 says: This is the aspect of ‘in yet a little bit the wicked man is not; you will reflect upon his place and he will not be there’.

That is, Scripture warns to judge everyone favourably. Even if you see that he is completely wicked, you must search and seek the little bit of good in him, wherein he is not wicked. We cannot forgive others until we first forgive ourselves”.

How can we go about this healing process? What do we do after weathering the storm of a past year – personal failures, psychological and physical illnesses, separations and divorces, breakups and broken engagements, infertility and pregnancy losses, unpredictable financial and emotional upheavals, or simply feeling unfulfilled? The first step is asking ourselves for *mechilah*. The simple act of requesting *mechilah* from ourselves is a powerful statement of our belief in the ability to change.

The Torah’s approach to *teshuvah* reflects the scientific belief in neuroplasticity, that we are always capable of change – deep, profound, long-lasting change.

Through hardship, we build resilience. Post-traumatic growth is possible after a crisis. But it is only possible when we give ourselves permission through personal *mechilah*, when we stop ruminating about our own faults and judge ourselves with the same compassion with which we are taught to judge others. Just as we are only entitled to atonement for sins committed against others after we first seek out their forgiveness, so too we cannot expect G-d to wipe our slates clean until we’ve sought – and granted – forgiveness from ourselves.



# THE CAR THIEF OF BNEI BRAK

BY RABBI PINI DUNNER



Written in 2023 by Rabbi Pini Dunner, senior rabbi of the Beverly Hills Synagogue

I heard this great story from Rabbi Yerachmiel Milstein. It's hilarious, it's moving – and it's very, very powerful. More importantly, it encapsulates our goals for Rosh Hashana.

There's this fellow in Israel, he's not a religious man, and he's got a really strange way of making a living – he's a car thief. That's right, he's a professional, full-time, car thief. That's how he pays the rent, and that's how he supports his family. I don't know how many cars a week he needs to steal, but whatever that number is – he does it, and he has never got caught.

One day, he breaks into a car in – of all places – Bnei Brak. He does what he needs to do to get into the car, sits in the driver's seat, and he's about to jump start the car and drive off – when suddenly he hears a baby crying in the back seat. It was a blistering hot day, and the parents had left their baby in the back of the car. They forgot the baby in the car. He turns around, he sees the baby, and the baby is hardly breathing – it's purple in the face. Obviously, the baby is in great danger.

So, what does he do? If it was the United States of America, and some random car thief is stealing your car – if he sees a baby in the back seat, he'll hightail it out of there, and find another car, right? But this is a Jewish car thief, in Israel! He says, OMG, there's a baby in the car that's in danger. The baby's dying. I've got to do something, and I've got to do it now! He quickly hotwires the car, the car starts, and he zooms to the nearest hospital. He brings the baby into the

ER, they bring out a team of nurses and doctors, and they try to revive the baby. Thank G-d, after a few minutes, the baby's totally fine.

After about 45 minutes or an hour, they come out to where the car thief is sitting, in the waiting room, and they tell him: "*Baruch Hashem*, your baby is going to be fine. But here's some of the things we want to tell you about, so you know how to take care for the baby as time goes on." The guy is lost for words. "It's not my baby," he stammers. They look at him as if he's nuts. "What do you mean it's not your baby? Who's baby is it?"

He's thinking on his feet. He needs to make up a story so that he doesn't get arrested. So he says, "I went past this car, I saw a baby in distress in the back seat – and in the army I learnt how to get into a locked car and how to jump-start a car. I opened up the car and I started it, and I rushed to the nearest hospital – and I did it so that I could save the baby's life. But: I'm not the baby's parent or relative – I'm just a random guy off the street".

The hospital staff don't know what to do. Who does the car belong to? Who does the baby belong to? The car thief says: "I have an idea – let me go to the car and see if there's any information there." He runs back to the car, and he finds the insurance card, with all the information about the owner. They look up the number, and the hospital staff call the people – and the people are crying on the phone. They don't know where their baby is – they are sure their baby died or was kidnapped. They realised the baby was left in the car, and they are panicking.



A few minutes later they run into the hospital, and the hospital staff tell them – there’s the man who saved your baby, he’s a very wonderful man. He brought the baby to the hospital. *Baruch Hashem*, because he brought the baby, the baby’s fine.

“Which guy? What are you talking about?” The hospital staff point out the car thief. This is a true story, it’s totally nuts! And it gets nuttier.

The parents run over to the man – and they hug him, and they kiss him. “You’re such a *tzaddik*, you saved our baby’s life, you’re a model human being”.

He says to them, “No, no, I did what any person would do!”

“Nonsense,” they insist, “you are a hero, we want to give you a reward!”

“Reward? Definitely not! I don’t need a reward – I refuse to take anything from you! I’m a Jew, I’m a Jew, and that’s why I did it.” So ironic. He was going to steal their car, but now he wouldn’t take a penny from them.

They wouldn’t let him go. At least, if you won’t take the reward, they said, then come to us for Shabbes. We won’t take no for an answer. Just to get away from the hospital, and from this nightmare, he agreed.

So, the next Shabbes he comes to their apartment in Bnei Brak for Shabbes. He arrives Friday afternoon. Come Friday night, he had no idea: they’d invited the entire neighbourhood to their home to a celebration especially to thank him. It’s like a *Sholom Zochor* on steroids. Off the charts.

The father stands up, gets everyone quiet – “*Moreye Verabosey*: this is the hero that saved our baby’s life!” And they’re all talking to him and thanking him.

Somehow, he gets through Friday night. The next day, Shabbes, he goes to shul – they’ve put on a massive

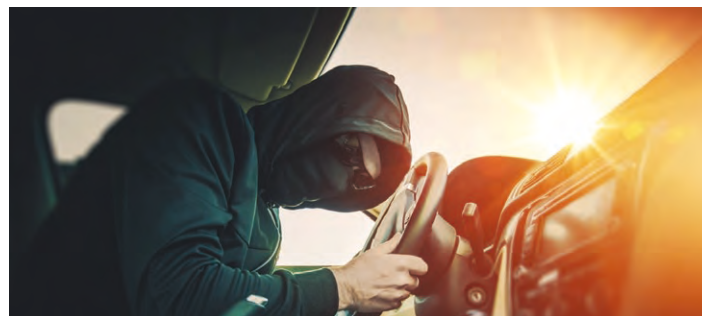
kiddush in his honour. The rabbi speaks, and in front of everyone, he tells the car thief what a *tzaddik* he is. You saved the baby’s life!

By this time, the thief wants the ground to open underneath him and swallow him up, like *Korach*! It’s a complete nightmare!

Then, before Shabbes goes out, the father of the baby tells him: “Listen, I want to take you to see my Rebbe. He’s a massive Rebbe, and he wants to meet you”.

“Give me a break, I just want to go home!”

“No, no, he says he needs to meet you”.



Shabbes goes out, and they go to the Rebbe. Crowds of chasidim have gathered to witness the man who saved the baby going to meet the Rebbe. He’s whisked inside to see the Rebbe.

Finally, the thief has had enough. He says to the baby’s father, “Please, can you leave me alone with the grand rabbi for a few minutes”.

The father goes out, and the thief looks at the Rebbe. And he lets it all out. “Rabbi, this whole thing is a mistake! I’m not a hero, I’m a thief”. And he tells the Rebbe the whole story. He’s crying. “Rabbi, please help me, I don’t know what’s going on over here. I don’t know what to do anymore. You’ve got to help me out!”



The Rebbe is quiet – he strokes his beard, and he closes his eyes.

“You’re a thief?” he asks.

“Yeah.”

“And you saved the baby’s life?”

“Yeah.”

The Rebbe bangs on the table. “Do you know what you are? You are a true *tzaddik*! Saving a life is one of the holiest things anyone can ever do! I’ve lived my whole life, and I’m an old man – and I’ve never saved a baby’s life! And you – a thief – you saved this baby’s life. Which means you must have done something special in your life, and G-d wanted you to know you’re a *tzaddik*. You have a very low opinion of yourself, but really you must be special. What have you done in your life that is so special that G-d thinks you are worthy of saving a baby’s life?”

“What do you mean? I’m a thief. I steal cars. I’m not a good person, I’m a bad person. I never do anything good!”

“No!” The Rebbe is adamant. “Think harder!”

He thinks and he thinks. Suddenly, something comes to mind. “There’s this one thing that I do. Maybe it’s a good thing.”

“So, nu, what is it?”

The thief smiles nervously. “When I break into a car to steal it, I always rifle through the glove compartment. The insurance cards give the owner’s insurance number, but they also say what type of insurance you have. I always check the type of insurance – do they have basic liability, or do they have fire and theft comprehensive, which means that if I steal the car, they won’t be out of pocket. I don’t want some guy to be out of pocket because I stole his car. The insurance company, I don’t care – but some guy who can’t afford to lose the money, I feel bad. So, if they only

have basic liability, I don’t steal the car – I go out and I find another car”.

The Rebbe sighs. “You see, my friend – you’re a good person – you don’t want people to suffer. *Hashem* wanted to show you that are a good person – that you don’t need to be a car thief. You can save lives. You are a lifesaver. All you need to do is realise what potential you have, and you can soar to the greatest heights. G-d bless you. I am so proud to have met you.” And the Rebbe stood up and shook the thief’s hand.

The thief was so taken by this encounter, and everything that happened, that he decided to change his life around – but more importantly, he decided to tell everyone his story. He became a religious Jew. He doesn’t steal cars anymore. He keeps Shabbes. He *davens* every day. And he is an inspiration to us all.

My friends, we may not be car thieves – but, do you know what? We all run ourselves down. We act as if what we do means that we are **not** *tzaddikim*. And guess what, that’s just us rationalising as to why we don’t do better. We are so much more than we are ever willing to admit to ourselves.

On Rosh Hashana, in the presence of the King, and with the shul bedecked in white – we have the opportunity to look at ourselves differently. The shofar blows – piercing the air with its clarion call. It sounds like the baby crying in the back seat of the car. We turn around, and suddenly we are transformed from what we think we are to what we really are. It’s as simple as that.

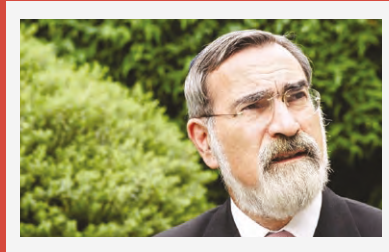
G-d is telling us, loud and clear: you are a hero, you are a lifesaver, you do so much for others – and you need to realise what you really are and to be self-aware.

Don’t ever allow yourself to sink into a self-defeating quagmire of “I’m not a *tzaddik*!” Because – as Maimonides says clearly in *Hilchot Teshuva*, without any equivocation – everyone has the capability of being as great as *Moshe Rabbeinu* (Moses). Even the car thief of Bnei Brak.



# THE CHALLENGE OF JEWISH REPENTANCE - QUESTIONS TO ASK OURSELVES EACH NEW YEAR

BY RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS



Written in 2017 by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks and reprinted by kind permission of The Rabbi Sacks Legacy.

The Ten Days of Repentance are the holy of holies of Jewish time. They begin this Wednesday evening with Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year, and culminate 10 days later with Yom Kippur, our Day of Atonement. At no other time do I feel so close to G-d, and I suspect the same is true for most Jews.

These days constitute a courtroom drama like no other. The Judge is G-d Himself, and we are on trial for our lives. It begins on Rosh Hashana, with the sounding of the shofar, the ram's horn, announcing that the court is in session. The Book of Life, in which our fate will be inscribed, now lies open. As we say in prayer, "On Rosh Hashana it is written, and on Yom Kippur it is sealed, who will live and who will die". At home, we eat an apple dipped in honey as a symbol of our hope for a sweet new year.

On Yom Kippur, the atmosphere reaches a peak of intensity in a day of fasting and prayer. Repeatedly we confess our sins, whole alphabetical litanies of them, including ones we probably had neither the time nor the imagination to commit. We throw ourselves on the mercy of the court, which is to say, on G-d Himself. Write us, we say, in the Book of Life.

And at the end of a long and wrenching day, we finish as we began 10 days earlier, with the sound of the ram's horn - this time not with tears and fears but with cautious yet confident hope. We have admitted the worst about ourselves and survived.

Beneath the surface of this long religious ritual lies one of the more transformative stories of the human spirit. The

sociologist Philip Rieff pointed out that the movement from paganism to monotheism was a transition from fate to faith. By this he meant that in the world of myth, people were pitted against powerful, capricious forces personified as gods who were at best indifferent, at worst hostile, to humankind. All you could do was try to propitiate, battle or outwit them. This was a culture of character and fate, and its noblest expression was the literature of Greek tragedy. Jews came to see the world in a completely different way. The book of Genesis opens with G-d making humans "in His image and likeness". This phrase has become so familiar to us that we forget how paradoxical it is, since for the Hebrew Bible, G-d has no image and likeness. As the narrative quickly makes clear, what humans have in common with G-d is freedom and moral responsibility.

The Jewish drama is less about character and fate than about will and choice. To the monotheistic mind, the real battles are not "out there," against external forces of darkness, but "in here," between the bad and better angels of our nature. As the religion writer Jack Miles once pointed out, you can see the difference in the contrast between Sophocles and Shakespeare. For Sophocles, Oedipus must battle against blind, inexorable fate. For Shakespeare, writing in a monotheistic age, the drama of "Hamlet" lies within, between "the native hue of resolution" and "the pale cast of thought."

The trouble is, of course, that faced with choice, we often make the wrong one. Given a second chance, Adam and Eve would probably pass on the fruit. Cain might work a little harder on his anger management. And there is a straight line from these biblical episodes to the destruction left by Homo sapiens: war, murder, human devastation and environmental destruction.



That is still our world today. The key fact about us, according to the Bible, is that uniquely in an otherwise law-governed universe, we are able to break the law - a power that we too often relish exercising.

This raises an acute theological dilemma. How are we to reconcile G-d's high hopes for humanity with our shabby and threadbare moral record? The short answer is forgiveness.



G-d wrote forgiveness into the script. He always gives us a second chance, and more. All we have to do is to acknowledge our wrongs, apologise, make amends and resolve to behave better, and G-d forgives. It allows us to hold simultaneously to the highest moral aspirations while admitting honestly our deepest moral failings. That is the drama of the Jewish High Holy Days.

At the heart of this vision is what the post-Holocaust writer Viktor Frankl called our "search for meaning." The great institutions of modernity were not constructed to provide meaning. Science tells us how the world came to be but not why. Technology gives us power but cannot tell us how to use it. The market gives us choices but no guidance as to which choices to make. Modern democracies give us a maximum of personal freedom but a minimum of shared morality. You can acknowledge the beauty of all these institutions, yet most of us seek something more. Meaning

comes not from systems of thought but from stories, and the Jewish story is among the most unusual of all. It tells us that G-d sought to make us His partners in the work of creation, but we repeatedly disappointed Him. Yet He never gives up. He forgives us time and again. The real religious mystery for Judaism is not our faith in G-d but G-d's faith in us.

This is not, as atheists and skeptics sometimes claim, a comforting fiction but quite the opposite. Judaism is G-d's call to human responsibility, to create a world that is a worthy home for His Presence. That is why Jews are so often to be found as doctors fighting disease, economists fighting poverty, lawyers fighting injustice, teachers fighting ignorance and therapists fighting depression and despair.

Judaism is a supremely activist faith for which the greatest religious challenge is to heal some of the wounds of our deeply fractured world. As Frankl put it: The real question is not what do we want from life but what does life want from us.

That is the question we are asked on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. As we ask G-d to write us in the Book of Life, He asks us: what have you done with your life thus far? Have you thought about others or only about yourself? Have you brought healing to a place of human pain or hope where you found despair? You may have been a success, but have you also been a blessing? Have you written other people in the Book of Life?

To ask these questions once a year in the company of others publicly willing to confess their faults, lifted by the words and music of ancient prayers, knowing that G-d forgives every failure we acknowledge as a failure, and that He has faith in us even when we lose faith in ourselves, can be a life-changing experience. That is when we discover that, even in a secular age, G-d is still there, open to us whenever we are willing to open ourselves to Him.



# THE IMPORTANCE OF BEGINNINGS - ROSH HASHANA

BY RABBI AKIVA TATZ



Written by Rabbi Akiva Tatz, Senior Lecturer at the Jewish Learning Exchange

As the energy of time cycles through its phases, it reaches peaks which are specific to its seasons. The energy which lends itself to inspiring and re-vitalising the “point of beginning” peaks at Rosh Hashana, the New Year. One who wishes to elevate and amplify his power of new creation, his ability to be always new and self-generating, should utilise the spiritual power of Rosh Hashana to the full.

Rosh Hashana is the beginning of the year. The spiritual forces operating at moments of beginning are unique. “*Hakol holech achar harosh* - Everything goes after the beginning:” the entire course of any process is determined by its beginning. A beginning is a conception; conception represents the laying down of the genes which are the blueprint for *everything* which is built later. The spiritual rule is that the closer to the moment of conception, the more potent and critical the forces: a small injury to the human body may not be of major significance in an adult; a fetus during its development is much more sensitive to such an event, and a minute change to the genes may have the most far-reaching results imaginable.

At the moment of conception all details are being coded most potently; it is therefore the most critical moment.

No subsequent moment can ever have the intensity and significance of that first moment. The flash of conception contains everything, all later development is simply a revelation of what was created during that first flash.

Rosh Hashana is the conception of the year and the next ten days are its gestation. That is why these days are so critical to the whole year. That is why a person is judged for *the entire year* as he appears on Rosh Hashana - the personality as it exists then is the core; it will take supreme effort later to change. Change on Rosh Hashana is much easier - one can manipulate the “genes” of one’s character then. People of spiritual knowledge take extreme care to live perfectly on Rosh Hashana - the year is being conceived. Many have a custom not to sleep at least during the morning hours; they wish to lay down the genes of the year in consciousness, not oblivion.

**What is the source of this special energy? The first Rosh Hashana ever, which of course must represent its true nature most powerfully, was the day of the Creation of the human. That day of Creation was the world’s first Rosh Hashana and its climactic event was the Creation of the human being. That is why the day always retains its power to re-create us. The day has the power to energise real change and help a person become unrecognisably different.**



The service of the day reflects this idea of reaching for the root. The order of prayer is based on *Malchuyos* (kingship), *Zichronos* (memory) and *Shofaros* (shofar-blowing).

*Malchuyos* (kingship) represents the effort of renewing the root of all Creation and all service - establishing that G-d's rule is absolute and primary. *Before* accepting the yoke of specific *mitzvos* we must accept G-d's kingship in general. This realisation is the most primary of all on Rosh Hashana and it requires a delving into the deepest level of *ratzon* (desire) during the prayer service to reach the consciousness and desire for G-d's complete rule.

*Zichronos* (memory) represents the idea of remembering in spiritual depth the points of origin of the world and of the Jewish people and its destiny. This deep form of memory is a re-entering of the phase of conception - to go back to the initial flash or spark and re-live it vividly and literally. The root of *zachor*, "remember," is identical with *zachar*, "male." Maleness is exactly that: a carrying over of the distilled essence of all previous generations in a seed which will form the next generation. The seed is a "memory" of the past. In fact the word *zikaron*, "memory" and *zera*, "seed" are numerically equivalent. The work of memory, re-living the flash of creation, is perfectly fitting and necessary for Rosh Hashana.

*Shofaros* (shofar-blowing) indicates reaching for the root of the *neshama* and the personality. The essence of the

*shofar* is that it has a voice but no words. The voice is the root of speech and contains far more than the individual finite words. Words may convey information, but the voice conveys the person. This is why prophecy is referred to as "voice," not words: when G-d tells Avraham to listen to Sarah's prophetic advice the verse says "*Shma b'kola* - Listen to her *voice*, not "Listen to her words."



G-d tells the prophet "*Kra b'garon, al tachsoch* - Cry out in your *throat*, do not hold back;" prophecy is not from the mouth, the origin of words, but from the throat, the origin of raw sound (the end of that verse is: "*k'shofar harem kolecha* - raise your voice like a *shofar*"). The *shofar* is a raw cry, and that is why it has the power to open the *Neshama* (soul). All the words in the world cannot convey the emotion of a scream of a child in the night. The *shofar* is that scream.

Rosh Hashana should open an energy so great that the rest of the year can be lived not as a continuation but as a constant experience of newness. Being alive today because one was alive yesterday is called dying. Being really alive means that one's life is generated today, not as a passive result of the past but as an explosion of newness now and always.





**Please support this year's Kol Nidre Appeal  
from St Johns Wood & Saatchi Synagogue.**

This year we have chosen to support Peace of Mind as the recipient of our Kol Nidre Appeal.

A programme of Metiv – The Israel Psychotrauma Center, Peace of Mind invites Jewish communities around the world to host units of IDF veterans as they process their combat experiences in a safe space with specially trained facilitators. The purpose of this eight-day workshop is to strengthen veterans' emotional and mental wellbeing, enabling healthier transitions from military to civilian life. Thousands of combat veterans have participated in this programme and we have been privileged to host past workshops. There is currently a waitlist of over 150 IDF units, and as a result of the ongoing war in Gaza, it will no doubt grow significantly. Now more than ever we want to offer our support.

Our goal is to bring at least one unit to our community so that we can show our respect and appreciation for the IDF's dedication and service to our spiritual homeland. We will have the opportunity to engage with the unit and hear directly from them about their experiences. We hope to host the unit in March 2025.

This initiative needs your support. Please help us show Israeli veterans that our community is their community.

[WWW.KOLNIDRE.ORG.UK/SJW](http://WWW.KOLNIDRE.ORG.UK/SJW)



# YOM KIPPUR

## INSPIRATIONAL THOUGHTS

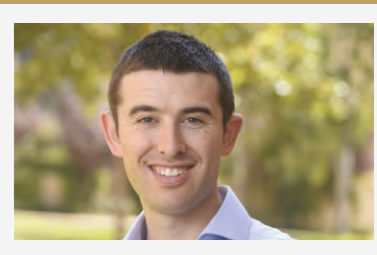
- *Elokai Ad Shelo Notzarti* – What is our legacy? by Michael Rainsbury
- A special *Kol Nidre* by Sivan Rahav Meir
- Yom Kippur 5785: Nothingness and Worthiness by Rabbi Rashi Simon
- We all need to confess our sins by Dr Erica Brown
- Yom Kippur – *Teshuvah, Tefillah*, but let's not forget *Tzedakah!* by Shira Joseph
- Stops Along the Way by Rabbi Pini Dunner
- Why did the Ninevites listen to Jonah? By Rabbi Rafi Zarum
- Jonah and Yom Kippur – Why is the book of Jonah read on the Day of Atonement? By Rabbi Meir Soloveichik
- The Courage to Admit Mistakes by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks





# ELOKAI AD SHELO NOTZARTI: WHAT IS OUR LEGACY?

BY MICHAEL RAINSBURY



By Michael Rainsbury, Head of Adult Learning at London School of Jewish Studies (LSJS)

If Yom Kippur is meant to shake our soul to its core, make us ask difficult questions of ourselves and face uncomfortable truths, it is exemplified by this searing sentence that we say in this prayer unique to this day:

“My G-d, before I was formed I was unworthy, and now that I have been formed it is as if I had not been formed. I am dust while alive, how much more so when I am dead”.

A good dose of humility can be a good thing – but is this going too far? Does Judaism view me as merely a worthless piece of dust, full of shame and guilt?

Rabbi Kook has a radically different interpretation:

“Before I was formed I was unworthy”:

G-d has pre-determined a time and a place for every human being to live, so that we will fulfil our inner potential and bring goodness into the world. If we had been born at a point in the past or the future, we would not have been worthy of our place. Rather, our responsibility to the world lies in the here and now, and we have been born into a specific time and place in order to achieve our personal potential.

“Now that I have been formed it is as if I had not been formed”:

All too often, we neglect to think about our true purpose in life. We spend our time trying to be someone we are not and doing things that are inconsequential. And when that happens, we are not achieving our goal, meaning that the state of affairs before we existed still applies.

“I am dust while alive, how much more so when I am dead”:

From every angle, Yom Kippur screams at us one thing: take the time to consider what our mission in life truly is. We are physical beings (i.e. made of dust) and our physical needs will not be relevant after our death (when we return to dust), so our legacy in life will only come from our deeds, our relationships, our influence and our impact.

For me, this perspective is transformational. Both the plain meaning of the text and Rabbi Kook’s radical reappraisal of it can both be true at the same time. The Hebrew word for humanity, ‘Adam’, comes from the word ‘*adama*’ (ground) and ‘*adameh*’ (I will compare), and the latter is frequently used in relation to G-d.

Yom Kippur gives us the opportunity to reflect on our very essence as individuals and humanity. But whilst dwelling on theoretical philosophy of existence is important, our main goal of the day is to find our mission, craft our legacy and leave the world in a better state than before we existed..



# A SPECIAL KOL NIDREI

BY SIVAN RAHAV MEIR



Written in 2019 by Sivan Rahav Meir, media personality, journalist and lecturer

An Israeli journalist, Moshe Erlanger, tells the following story: "Several years ago, I was compelled at the last minute to spend Yom Kippur in Frankfurt, Germany. I rented a room in a hotel next to the main synagogue in Frankfurt, put together the pre-fast meal, and went to pray with a feeling of longing for Israel and regret for what I would be missing there.

"The main synagogue was a luxurious building with 2,000 people in attendance, the majority of whom did not pray there at any other time during the year. The chazan began with the *Kol Nidrei* prayer, and it was evident that he was caught up in a huge storm of emotions. He choked as his voice broke, then rose and fell. The entire crowd was moved together with him.

"At the conclusion of the service, I approached him. 'It's a pleasure to meet you. My name is Tzadok Greenwald,' he said. I asked him why he became so emotional during *Kol Nidrei* and he answered as follows: nd place in order to achieve our personal potential.

'For many years, I have been the chazan here during the High Holy Days. As the offspring of Holocaust survivors, it is a great privilege to be a chazan, particularly here, upon this godforsaken land. Several years ago, I had an extraordinary encounter as I was leaving the synagogue at the close of Yom Kippur. The last of the crowd had already gone home to break the fast. The caretaker had locked the main gate

and I was leaving by a side door, tired and hungry. Near the main gate, I saw an elderly man with a white kippa pinned to his hair. He turned to me: 'Why are the gates of the synagogue locked. When does *Kol Nidrei* begin? Please, answer me. Why are the gates locked?' I was silent. My heart was suddenly torn inside me. 'My dear friend, listen to me; *Kol Nidrei* was last night; Yom Kippur was today,' I stammered. 'The crowd has gone home; *Kol Nidrei* will come again next year.' The man grabbed my hands and began to cry like a little boy. 'I never missed *Kol Nidrei*. I promised my father, may his memory be blessed, that I would go every year to hear *Kol Nidrei* in a synagogue. This is the only connection I have with my father.'

"I knew what I had to do. 'My dear friend, you missed nothing,' I told him. 'I am the chief chazan of this synagogue, come with me to hear *Kol Nidrei*.' I opened the side door, I sat him down in a chair, I gave him a prayer book, and I wrapped myself in a tallit. I began to pray *Kol Nidrei*. This was the most powerful prayer I had ever prayed in my life. Thousands of empty chairs and just me, him, and the Holy One Blessed be He. I forgot about the fast. I was focused only on the connection between a disconnected Jew and his father, which may just as well have been the connection between me and my father – that is, our Father in heaven.

"I never saw that man again but each time I pray *Kol Nidrei* I think about him, and about a million other Jews like him, and about the side door through which everyone, in the end, can enter".



# YOM KIPPUR 5785: NOTHINGNESS AND WORTHINESS

BY RABBI RASHI SIMON



By Rabbi Rashi Simon, the Founding Director of Keshet/The Learning Connection

The venerable Rabbi entered the shul an hour before *Kol Nidrei* to prepare himself for the Holy Day. Seeing a sunbeam fall on the *Aron Kodesh* (the Ark) he was overcome with fear of Heaven and awe for the approaching Holy Day. Immediately he fell to the ground and began to call out tearfully, “I am nothing, I am nothing!”



A few minutes later the Chazan, a pious servant of the community, entered the room. Seeing the rabbi proclaiming, “I am nothing, I am nothing!”, he too prostrated himself and repeated in sonorous, heartfelt tones, “I am nothing, I am nothing!”

Then the Shammash arrived. Seeing the Rabbi and the Chazan on the floor before the Ark, he too fell to the ground and repeated loudly, “I am nothing, I am nothing!” At which point the Rabbi turned to the Chazan and said,

“Hey, look who’s nothing now!”

Like much humour (and especially Jewish humour), an important message underlies this apocryphal tale: It takes a man or woman of genuine stature (unlike the supercilious savants in the story) to be truly humble. This is the implication, too, of Churchill’s famous bon mot regarding Clement Attlee: “He is a modest man, with much to be modest about.”

Perhaps more so than on any other day of the year, it is on Yom Kippur that we confront our nothingness. We delve deep within ourselves to confront and confess our sins and our failings. This can be a cleansing, revitalising process leaving us renewed and energised as we enter the New Year. There is, however, a downside and a danger to all this self-reproach: It can erode our sense of worth and even push us toward despair. For this reason, I believe that the subtext of the *Viduy* (confession) must be not so much “I have sinned!” but rather “I can do better!” As the Slonimer Rebbe (Rabbi Shalom Noah Brezovsky) writes “My son, despise not the rebuke of G-d” should be understood as: “The rebuke of G-d is: ‘You are My son! How, then, can you act despicably?’”.

As we face our nothingness, we must also consider our worthiness, and the potential for genuine greatness latent within each of us.

May we and all of Israel be inscribed in the Book of Life for peace, health, contentment and prosperity, in matters of both Heaven and Earth.



# WE ALL NEED TO CONFESS OUR SINS

BY DR ERICA BROWN



Written in 2016 by Dr Erica Brown, Vice Provost for Values and Leadership at Yeshiva University

Many Jews have admitted to me that they secretly wish we had a confession box, a shadowy dark space to unburden ourselves of our own dark deeds in anonymity. A priest friend who listens to confessions about 10 hours a week (by the way, that's a small part-time job) says anonymity is not easy when you work in a community and most of your confession box visitors are repeat offenders.

Instead, we Jews gather in synagogues with hundreds of co-religionists on Yom Kippur and very publicly recite a "sin script." We beat our chests - it's not a real beating, just a small guilt tap, really - and the confessional prayers we recite are pre-prepared and in the plural. Maimonides writes in his Laws of Repentance that we should go through a personal change process that includes confession, regret/shame and then a pledge not to do it again. But, since most of us are crazy busy, we wait until Yom Kippur for introspection and what we need to tackle as individuals collapse into the fast-paced choreography of the service, washing right over us.

Every year in this season, I find myself in adult classrooms trying hard to create a reflective space. I ask people to customise their sin list according to their work, home life or volunteer commitments. I never ask for more



than three" *al chets*" – "For the sin of..." I do ask participants to use the traditional text framework. Sin is a loaded word and doesn't fit neatly into the lexicon of modern sensibilities.

But I find that it is a powerful word because it labels rather than sanitises our own human failings.

I might meet a group of Jewish lay leaders at a board meeting and ask them to write down two of their own leadership sins and one for their board on a small index card. They don't have to share, but many of them find relief in sharing their struggles and hearing those of others.

## Common leadership sins I've heard over the years:

- For the sin of impatience
- For the sin of micro-managing
- For the sin of not trusting others enough
- For the sin of expecting people to be grateful



**I've done this exercise with university students who have their own distinctive and often idiosyncratic culture:**

- For the sin of wasting time
- For the sin of not being a good enough friend
- For the sin of procrastination
- For the sin of partying too much
- For the sin of not sticking up for Israel on campus

**I particularly love engaging with parents in this challenge:**

- For the sin of hating to do homework with my children
- For the sin of being overly protective
- For the sin of losing my temper
- For the sin of looking at a screen when my kid is talking to me

A few years ago, I went to America's Deep South to study with a group of rabbis in preparation for the High Holy Days, hoping to spark sermon inspiration. I gave them each an index card and invited them to share their customised rabbinical sin list, should they wish to, with their colleagues in the spirit of personal growth. I can't remember them all, but two confessions linger. One rabbi, with a straight face, read his card: "For the sin of praying that none of my congregants die on my day off." I laughed out loud until I saw every other rabbi in the room nodding in agreement. He expressed what many were afraid to say. This job can be really hard. Establishing boundaries isn't easy when you're a rabbi.



Another rabbi read his card and his confession hovered in a pool of silence before the conversation resumed: "For the sin of gravitating towards congregants I like because I am the rabbi of my entire congregation." With striking honesty, this rabbi understood that it is his duty to reach out to everyone, not only those who are easy or pleasant or open to spiritual change.

It is not enough to write a wrong. For change to happen, the articulation of wrongdoing has to be the beginning of a commitment to a new self, as the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein wrote, "A confession has to be part of your new life."

We're probably not going to get it right this year either, but index cards are pretty cheap. I highly recommend buying a pack in the next few days and spending a few quiet minutes alone.



# YOM KIPPUR – TESHUVAH, TEFILLAH, BUT LET’S NOT FORGET TZEDAKAH!

BY SHIRA JOSEPH



By Shira Joseph, Programme Director of the GIFT charity

A few years ago, on Yom Kippur, I was in Synagogue, returning to the service after checking on my children, when the Assistant Rabbi asked if I could do him a favour. Mrs Cohen, who lived right opposite the shul, was feeling a bit fragile, and he wondered if I could help her get home. I agreed, and as we crossed the main road together, Mrs Cohen and I had a pleasant chat about her life and her experiences growing up in Lithuania. I dropped her off at her home to her carer, and on my return, a thought struck me... I had just helped a little old lady safely cross the road. On Yom Kippur! Could there be a better deed to do on this holy day?

At this time of year, as we await the outcome of our fate for the coming year and strive to merit a favourable judgement, we repeat one key phrase several times throughout the service:

*“Teshuvah, Tefillah and Tzedakah remove the evil decree”.*

Having spent four years in the St John’s Wood community during the *Yamim Noraim* (High Holy Days) while my husband Rafi and I were involved in the Youth and Young Professionals’ activities, I felt the sense of awe in the community during this period in the calendar. Beyond the impressive fashion and hats worn by the women and the incredible choir, it was clear that the services were taken seriously by all, with a strong focus on Repentance

(*Teshuvah*) and Prayer (*Tefillah*). But what is it about Charity (*Tzedakah*) that makes it part of this important trifecta? And why is it particularly significant at this time of year?

Often giving to charity is seen as something only the exceptionally good people do. We may strive to be good Jews, refraining from certain foods etc, but giving to charity is often viewed as an extra bonus, something to be done only if it’s convenient. People in the charity sector often lament that when the cost of living rises, the first thing to go are charitable donations—even from those who are still taking multiple luxury holidays!

To reframe this perspective, we need to better understand the word *Tzedakah*. It comes from the root ‘*Tzedek*,’ which means justice. Giving to charity isn’t just an admirable act; it actually brings about justice in the world and is part of our obligation as Jewish people.

Recently, an 18-year-old JFS student called me. He’s been involved with volunteering for GIFT for some time and is football-mad. He explained that he had been working as a football referee, saving up 10% of his earnings, and now had enough to purchase a football shirt. He asked if I knew of any recipients of the GIFT foodbank who wouldn’t otherwise be able to afford a football shirt, as he wanted to buy one for them. I immediately thought of a 14-year-old girl who loved Arsenal, but for whom owning any team merchandise was an unimaginable luxury. I told the boy what size and shirt to order, and he had saved enough to



to get one with her favourite player (Saka) on the back. Despite being a Spurs fan, he ordered the top, dropped it off at my house a few days later, and even took the time to wrap it up for her. When I received it, I thanked him repeatedly and told him how amazing it was that he had saved up to do this for someone else. He stopped me mid-sentence and said, 'Please don't thank me. I'm not doing any more than what is expected of me. I'm just lucky enough to have started earning some money, and deciding how to give my 10% to charity was actually the most exciting part.' The way he explained this was so matter-of-fact and natural to him—a true testament to his parents' attitude towards giving to charity.

To understand the importance of charity further, we need to consider what happens in a society where charity is absent. Our Rabbis explain that this was the primary reason G-d wanted to destroy the city of Sodom. The people there treated each other with selfishness, and there was a complete absence of kindness in that city. We saw how inhospitable they were to visitors. This lack of charity and kindness was the ultimate reason G-d did not allow them the opportunity to repent, as He did with the city of Nineveh in the story of Jonah. Once a person or society has lost the element of charity, becoming solely focused on themselves, it becomes very difficult to open up to others and, by extension, to G-d.

You may be familiar with the parable of the two seas. It discusses the River Jordan, which flows into the Sea of Galilee (Kinneret), where the surrounding area is green and teeming with fish and wildlife. The River Jordan also flows into another body of water in Israel. This sea is a stark contrast to the Sea of Galilee—there's no fish, no greenery, and no drinkable water.

What is the difference between the two seas? The Sea of Galilee receives water from the River Jordan and constantly gives back, allowing the water to flow through it. For every drop it takes, it gives. The other sea, however, does the opposite. For every drop that flows into it, it keeps. This sea gives nothing back, and so it is called the Dead Sea.

At this time of year, we reflect on our ultimate purpose and plead for our lives and for the year ahead. We remind ourselves what we are living for. I once heard the Holocaust survivor Pearl Benisch speak about the horrors she experienced in the concentration camps and the acts of kindness she witnessed. She said something powerful:



"As long as you give – you live".

*Teshuvah* and *Tefillah* are crucial to focus on, but let's also remember our obligation to care for those around us. Let's not forget the importance of *Tzedakah*!

I cannot guarantee there will be little old ladies waiting to cross the road, but I can guarantee that if you open your eyes, you'll see countless opportunities to make a difference to those around you and these acts, in turn, will make a difference to you as the giver. Through these acts of kindness, may we all be written and sealed in the Book of Life.



# STOPS ALONG THE WAY

BY RABBI PINI DUNNER



Written in 2023 by Rabbi Pini Dunner, Senior Rabbi of the Beverly Hills Synagogue

At *Neilah*, we stand at a pivotal juncture in our spiritual voyage. To be absolutely clear: we are not at the end of our voyage, we are very much still on our voyage. Life is always much more about the path than the destination



The way I always put it is that preparing and anticipating a vacation is generally far more exciting and exhilarating than the vacation itself. Not that one doesn't enjoy the vacation, but in a sense – being on vacation means that all the hopes and expectations are now at an end.

Many see *Neilah* as an end. But it is not an end. It is a station along the way. But maybe, like a train journey, we are about to change trains. And while we are at the station, we all have a moment to consider our varied experiences, our diverse paths, and our unique moments of introspection – so that the onward journey is more meaningful.

For some of us, the journey until now commenced with the clarion call of the shofar at the onset of Elul, with each blast signalling a new period of self-reflection and reconnection to our heritage. Each morning we were getting a wake-up call – Rosh Hashana is nearly here! Get ready! Some began the journey with *Motzei Shabbos selichos* and the morning selichos. Others began on Rosh Hashana. And then there are those who began the journey last night at *Kol Nidrei* – a little late to the party, but – as we know in Judaism: it's never too late.

Each stop along the way: Elul, Shofar, *Selichos*, Rosh Hashana, *Aseres Yemei Teshuva*, *Shabbos Shuva*, *Kol Nidrei*, Fasting – each one of these stations serves as a milestone, shaping our collective psyche. And each one of these stations is meant to stir within us the powerful need that humans have to introspect, to reflect, to self-improve, and to up our game.

And as we get closer to the destination – it's like getting to the top of the mountain – suddenly you see that it's not the summit at all, but that the real summit was obscured, and you can only see it once you get to what you thought was the top.

One of my life heroes is Sir Winston Churchill. He was such an impressive man. But what impresses me most about him is that he was always setting himself new



goals. Each time he achieved his goals it turned out that it was just a step along the way. Initially, Churchill sought to make a name for himself in the military. He took part in several campaigns and excelled as a military tactician. He could have remained in the British Army, but that was just a station along the way.

After his military expeditions, Churchill set his sights on politics. At the age of 26, he was already a Member of Parliament. He switched political parties, faced multiple defeats, and held various government posts, slowly but surely advancing as a serious political contender.

During the First World War, Churchill was appointed First Lord of the Admiralty, effectively overseeing the vast Royal Navy – at that point in history the largest military navy in the world. He was forced to resign from that position, as a result of the disaster at Gallipoli, and many thought his political career was over. But for Churchill – this was just another station along the way.

He went back to the Army, to the Western Front, and successfully served as a battalion commander. Then, after the war, he returned to politics. During the 1930's Churchill turned to writing – his political career had not recovered – but his writing career took off, and he wrote books and articles, and became a renowned public speaker. He was so famous that he became the chief spokesman for the group in Great Britain that foresaw the grave threat from Hitler and fascism and wanted to re-arm Britain. Yet another station along the way.

By the time that World War II began, Churchill was well into his 60's – a time when most people are considering retirement. Nothing could have been further from his mind.

The rise of Nazi Germany and the outbreak of war saw Churchill become the beacon of hope for Britain. His goal: the survival and victory of Britain against the odds. And he achieved it, with his rousing speeches, his incredible stamina, his irrepressible optimism, and his unyielding spirit. But this wasn't the end – it was just another station along the way.

After winning the war, Churchill was in for a horrible shock. He lost the post-war national elections and was ousted as Prime Minister. But Churchill didn't retire. He didn't get off the train. This was just another station along the way. He set himself a new goal, which was to lead his party back to power. And by 1951, he was Prime Minister again.

You'd think that was enough. Well, it wasn't. Even after finally retiring from politics, Churchill didn't stop setting himself goals. He dedicated himself to writing, producing the multi-volume series *The History of the English Speaking Peoples* and *The Second World War* – and more.

I'm not sure if you know: Sir Winston Churchill won the Nobel Prize – but not the Nobel Prize for Peace, which is what you'd think he won. No. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1953, at the age of 78. Literature! Another station along the way.

What an inspiration! Sir Winston Churchill understood to his very core that life is a journey. And, you never reach your destination. You never reach the top of the mountain. Each station is a station along the way, and new and better stations lie ahead.



The High Holy Days is a microcosm of this idea. The narrative of Rosh Hashana pivots from Sarah's ecstasy at the promised birth of Yitzhak (Isaac) to the complexities of her emotions. And then we have the *Akeida* – the binding of Isaac. We have the story of Chana and Shmuel. These stories prompt us to have questions about our faith. When should we yield? When should we question? The answers are stations along our faith journey.

Following Rosh Hashana, the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* encourage us to strive for betterment, each day another station, and they culminate in Yom Kippur. This sacred day pushes us to confront our imperfections and, in particular, to embrace forgiveness. We might not have been ready to forgive earlier on in the journey, for example: on Rosh Hashana – but now we are ready.

Towards the end of Yom Kippur, we have the story of Yonah. This story exemplifies the journey from the particular to the universal, urging compassion not just for “our people,” but for all of humanity. Even last night, at the *Kol Nidrei* station, we might not have been ready for that. But now, after a full day at the Yom Kippur station, we've scaled new summits, and we are ready for the next summit, the next station along the way.

And do you know what *Neilah* is? *Neilah* becomes the springboard for all our goals going forward. Where are we going from here? Where will the next station be? In our Jewish calendar, it is Sukkot – when we put ourselves at the mercy of the elements and when we display joy and contentment. But more generally, the next station is the winter – shorter days, and longer nights. And colder weather – or at least, for us in California, slightly colder weather. At this station, we need to make sure we load up with everything we need to get us through the winter journey that lies ahead.

Whether you began this sojourn with Elul or just stepped onto the train today, your desire to connect, your desire to be part of this grand narrative, your desire to be on this journey, is genuine, and it is cherished by G-d. As we begin *Neilah*, signalling the end of Yom Kippur, just remember: the journey is not over – on the contrary, it has only just begun.

Staying with the train journey theme, let me end on a slightly lighter note.

Three people—a scientist, a mathematician, and a Jewish businessman—are travelling in Scotland on a train. As they pass through the countryside, they spot a single black sheep grazing on a hill.

The scientist remarks, “Ah, I see that Scottish sheep are all black.”

The mathematician corrects him, “No, not at all, all we can conclude from this black sheep is that statistically, SOME Scottish sheep are black.”

The Jewish businessman chimes in, “Actually, from a business standpoint, what this black sheep is telling us is that there's a demand for black wool in Scotland – which presents us with a business opportunity. Would either of you like to invest in my new business?”

My friends, the journey ahead is full of opportunity – let us all use those opportunities and invest with everything we have. The reward will be wonderful, and the future will be bright.



# WHY DID THE NINEVITES LISTEN TO JONAH?

BY RABBI DR RAPHAEL ZARUM



By Rabbi Dr Raphael Zarum, Dean of London School of Jewish Studies (LSJS)

“In forty more days, Nineveh will be overturned!”. So proclaimed Jonah to the people of Nineveh when he finally accepted his divine mission. But why did the Ninevites take him seriously? Remember that “Jonah son of Amitai” was just a minor Jewish prophet from the northern kingdom of Israel. This kingdom was an insignificant realm in comparison to the mighty Neo-Assyrian Empire, of which Nineveh was its premier city. Also, how would the Ninevites have even understood Jonah? He spoke Hebrew while their language was Akkadian. All in all, it is hard to understand why the residents of this immense metropolis would have immediately “declared a fast, dressed themselves in sackcloth”, and repented wholeheartedly in response to a few words from Jonah. Especially when to them he was an unknown incomprehensible foreign preacher, six thousand miles from home, with zero credibility.

This question threatens to undermine the entire book of Jonah. To answer it, we need to appreciate the story’s historical context and delve into the traditional commentaries.

The Neo-Assyrian Empire lasted for 1400 years. It only ended in 609 BCE when conquered by the Babylonians. At the time of the Jonah story, probably around ninth century BCE, it was the largest empire the world had

ever seen. It stretched from Tarsus (today, southeast Turkey) in the west to Babylon (central Iraq) in the east. The Assyrians were early adopters of iron weaponry and military tactics that gave them a formidable army. And so, within a few years they had conquered Phoenicia, Israel, Egypt, Kush, the Arabian Peninsula, Medea and Persia.

Nineveh then became the capital of the Neo-Assyrian Empire and world’s greatest city. Its ornate palace was twenty metres high with more than eighty rooms. The foundations comprised two and half million cubic metres of brick. The ruins of Nineveh are still there today, on the outskirts of Mosul in Iraq. Given the grandeur of this empire, why was Jonah even given a moment’s notice?





When G-d gave Jonah the mission to go to Nineveh, he fled instead, boarding a ship from the port at Jaffa “bound for Tarshish”. But, as we know, Jonah never made it there because G-d sent a great tempest that almost destroyed the ship. When Jonah told the sailors about his mission he said, “cast me out into the sea and it will be still for you, for I know it is on my account that this great storm has come upon you”. Being well-travelled, the sailors would have been multi-lingual and understood Hebrew. As soon as they threw Jonah overboard the sea grew calm. They were so overawed by this that “they made offerings and vows to the L-rd”. We all know that a big fish then swallowed Jonah, but what happened to the sailors?

With valuable cargo on board, they would no doubt have resumed their journey to Tarshish. Note though, Tarshish is the Hebrew equivalent of the above-mentioned Tarsus which was part of the Neo-Assyrian Empire at the time. So, when they reached the port, the sailors would have been met by the local Assyrian authorities and told them of their traumatic experience in which a strange Hebrew passenger had averted their deaths by sacrificing himself. They would have described Jonah’s mission to the wicked Nineveh that his G-d was intending to destroy. The sea calming after they threw Jonah out would have convinced the sailors that he was speaking the truth. And they would have surmised that if the G-d of Israel had enough power to cause such a tempest then, even though Jonah was gone (so they thought), this mighty deity would surely be sending more prophets to deal with Nineveh. In which case, they thought, the city must be doomed!

Of course, the Assyrian authorities in Tarsus could simply have dismissed the fantastical story, but why take the risk? According to the commentaries of Rabbi Abraham ben Meir Ibn Ezra (11<sup>th</sup> century) and Rabbi David Kimchi (12<sup>th</sup> century), the sailors were transported to Nineveh so that they could give a report first-hand. Getting from Tarsus to Nineveh takes about three days hard riding. Simultaneously, Jonah had been in the belly of the big fish for three days before repenting, agreeing to resume his mission, and being spewed up onto dry land near Nineveh.

Just imagine, then, the surprise of the sailors when they arrived at the very moment Jonah pitched up! Kimchi suggests the sailors themselves would have vouched for the veracity of Jonah’s prophetic claim. No doubt they elaborated on his words and gave compelling personal accounts of G-d’s tremendous might. This is why the Ninevites believed Jonah - he had form.

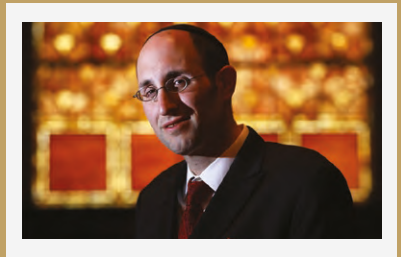
In 722 BCE the Neo-Assyrians invaded the northern kingdom of Israel and wiped it out completely. Ten tribes were lost forever. And so, the Neo-Assyrians were hated by our ancestors. This makes the book of Jonah even more surprising. For if even our worst enemies can be forgiven for their sins, then so can we.

The great city of Nineveh is no more. All that is left are a few broken and worn stone reliefs from the palace, housed in the British Museum. But its population has been immortalised by the dramatic story of an errant Hebrew prophet. **It teaches us that if repentance is sincere, then G-d forgives all.** That is why we read the book of Jonah every Yom Kippur.



# JONAH AND YOM KIPPUR - WHY IS THE BOOK OF JONAH READ ON THE DAY OF ATONEMENT?

BY RABBI DR. MEIR Y. SOLOVEICHIK



Written in 2010 by Rabbi Dr. Meir Y. Soloveichik, senior rabbi of Congregation Shearith Israel in Manhattan NY

“Shipmates, this book, containing only four chapters - four yarns - is one of the smallest strands in the mighty cable of the Scriptures. Yet what depths of the soul does Jonah’s deep sealine sound! what a pregnant lesson to us is this prophet! What a noble thing is that canticle in the fish’s belly! . . . But WHAT is this lesson that the book of Jonah teaches?”

Thus Melville’s Father Mapple passionately preaches in the book Moby Dick. His question has been pondered by Jews throughout the centuries. Read in its entirety in the synagogue on the afternoon of Yom Kippur, Jonah is the only multi-chapter book of the Bible to be so honoured. Indeed, Rabbi Yitzhak Etshalom has suggested that if the brief Torah reading preceding Jonah has little to do with the day, but merely continues where the morning reading left off, this may be precisely in order to emphasise that, in a departure from the usual priorities, the *haftarah*, or prophetic portion, is in fact the critical text for the occasion.

What, then, makes it so significant, and what lesson does it teach about Yom Kippur?

At first glance, the lesson could not be clearer. Sent to the Assyrian city of Nineveh to foretell its destruction, Jonah, despite himself, ends up inspiring its denizens to repent, and the city is spared. This is precisely the outcome that Jonah himself had most feared - he wanted the sinners to suffer G-d’s punishment, and had acquiesced in his assignment only after having first tried to flee and been forced to endure an underwater ordeal. So Jonah himself had to be taught a lesson - about G-d’s mercy and forgiveness - and at the end of the book this lesson is conveyed by G-d Himself in so many words.

Is that the reason why Jonah is read on Yom Kippur: namely, to focus our minds on the power of repentance? That is certainly part of the explanation. But numerous other prophetic passages dwell on the same theme, and all of them have the virtue of being briefer. Is the reason then that the book of Jonah emphasises not just repentance and atonement but the repentance and atonement of Gentiles living in a faraway land? Some, including Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik and the essayist Milton Himmelfarb, have suggested that this is indeed the case, and that the point is for Jews to approach the conclusion of their own day of atonement on a universalist note. But wouldn’t Rosh Hashana, with its emphasis on the entire world’s standing in judgment,



make a better occasion for such sentiments than Yom Kippur, when the stress is on the Almighty's merciful love for His people?

What each of these discussions tends to overlook is not the end of Jonah but the beginning. For, if the rest of the story makes Jonah a prime candidate for reading on Yom Kippur, the very first chapter makes it the perfect candidate for the day's conclusion.

Let us recapitulate. Seeking to escape G-d's command by fleeing the Holy Land, Jonah boards a ship bound for Tarshish. When the ship is struck by a storm, the sailors attempt to puzzle out the source of their ill fortune. And here we are presented with the book's most problematic passage:

"And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; what is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou? And he said unto them, I am Hebrew; and I fear the L-rd, the G-d of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land. Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? **For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the L-rd, because he had told them.** [emphasis added]"

They knew? Because he had told them? But if they knew from the beginning that he was fleeing from G-d, why now were they mystified as to the cause of the storm, and why, when the lot fell on Jonah, did they need to know his biography?

In considering this puzzling passage, we should observe that Jonah does not answer all of the sailors' questions about his identity. The only fact he supplies is "*ivri anokhi*," I am a Hebrew. But that is evidently enough.

In his own analysis of the book's first chapter, Rabbi Yoel Bin-Nun notes that in the ancient Near East, most people believed in territorial divinities: local gods who exercised tyrannical rule over a country's inhabitants but were powerless beyond its borders. As far as the gods were concerned, an area that was not part of any particular realm was no man's land, a place where one could do whatever he wanted. In the Bible, by contrast, the G-d of the Hebrews is a G-d whose power is everywhere. Thus, when Moses informs the Egyptian Pharaoh that the "G-d of Israel" has demanded the release of His people, and Pharaoh parries by claiming that the deity of a non-Egyptian land is of no relevance to him, Moses proceeds to instruct him otherwise. "The G-d of the Hebrews has sent us," he declares: that is, a G-d whose writ is not contained by borders.

A hint to Moses' meaning may lie in the very term "Hebrew," which derives from the verb *la'avur*, to cross over. Abraham is the first to be called *ivri*, no doubt because he crossed over to the land of Canaan from the other side of the Jordan. But there is a theological



corollary to this point: Abraham crossed over because the G-d who addressed him in Mesopotamia told him to, assuring him that He would be with him on the other side. For this is a G-d who is not attached to one country because He existed long before countries, a G-d who rules the universe because He created the universe. The name “*ivri*” thus connotes one who, believing in this G-d, asserts that no place on earth is devoid of His presence and providence.



Back to the first chapter of Jonah. It would seem that Jonah told his fellow sailors from the start that he was seeking to flee his G-d. If this did not disturb them, it was because they were sailing into international waters where the territorial gods had no power. Then, as the storm hits, each cries out to his own god—in the vain hope, perhaps, that the various deities thus summoned

might get together and mount an international rescue operation. When that fails, when the lot falls on Jonah, and when they demand to know who he really is—and he tells them—then, stunned and awed, the men finally grasp the true gravity of their situation. The rest of the story, starting with their casting Jonah into the sea, follows in logical progression.

And so we return to what the rabbis may have had in mind in choosing the book of Jonah as the final scriptural reading on Yom Kippur. The sun is beginning to set, and worshippers are scant hours away from returning to their regular lives, where G-d's presence is not so easily apprehended as it is in the synagogue on the year's most sacred day, and where every temptation exists to gerrymander the divine out of one's daily experience. Here, in Jonah, is the only place in the Bible where the essence of Jewish identity is so succinctly and powerfully summarised.

*Ivri anokhi!* G-d is to be found anywhere, at any time. In the words of the American founder John Adams, this doctrine - “of a supreme, intelligent, wise, almighty sovereign of the universe,” which Adams took to be “the great essential principle of all morality, and consequently of all civilisation”—constituted the gift of the ancient Hebrews, who alone “had preserved and propagated [it] to all mankind.” It is the lesson taught by the book of Jonah, and its message to all who hear it on Yom Kippur is that we must live our lives accordingly.



# THE COURAGE TO ADMIT MISTAKES

BY RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS



Written in 2015 by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks and reprinted by kind permission of The Rabbi Sacks Legacy.

Some years ago I was visited by the then American ambassador to the Court of St James, Philip Lader. He told me of a fascinating project he and his wife had initiated in 1981. They had come to realise that many of their contemporaries would find themselves in positions of influence and power in the not-too-distant future. He thought it would be useful and creative if they were to come together for a study retreat every so often to share ideas, listen to experts and form friendships, thinking through collectively the challenges they would face in the coming years. So they created what they called Renaissance Weekends. They still happen.

The most interesting thing he told me was that they discovered that the participants, all exceptionally gifted people, found one thing particularly difficult, namely, **admitting that they made mistakes**. The Laders understood that this was something important they had to learn. Leaders, above all, should be capable of acknowledging when and how they had erred, and how to put it right. They came up with a brilliant idea. They set aside a session at each Weekend for a talk given by a recognised star in some field, on the subject of “My biggest blooper.” Being English, not American, I had to ask for a translation. I discovered that a blooper is an embarrassing mistake. A gaffe. A faux pas. A bungle. A boo-boo. A *fashla*. A *balagan*. Something you shouldn’t have done and are ashamed to admit you did.

**This, in essence, is what Yom Kippur is in Judaism.** In Tabernacle and Temple times, it was the day when the holiest man in Israel, the High Priest, made atonement, first for his own sins, then for the sins of his “house,” then for the sins of all Israel. From the day the Temple was destroyed, we have had no High Priest nor the rites he performed, but we still have the day, and the ability to confess and pray for forgiveness. It is so much easier to admit your sins, failings and mistakes when other people are doing likewise. If a High Priest, or the other members of our congregation, can admit to sins, so can we.

I have argued elsewhere (in the Introduction to the Koren Yom Kippur Machzor) that the move from the first Yom Kippur to the second was one of the great transitions in Jewish spirituality. The first Yom Kippur was the culmination of Moses’ efforts to secure forgiveness for the people after the sin of the Golden Calf. The process, which began on 17<sup>th</sup> Tammuz, ended on the 10<sup>th</sup> Tishrei – the day that later became Yom Kippur. That was the day when Moses descended the mountain with the second set of tablets, the visible sign that G-d had reaffirmed His covenant with the people. The second Yom Kippur, one year later, initiated the series of rites set out in this week’s parsha, conducted in the *Mishkan* (sanctuary) by Aaron in his role as High Priest.

The differences between the two were immense. Moses acted as a prophet. Aaron functioned as a priest. Moses was following his heart and mind, improvising in response to G-d’s response to his words. Aaron was following a



precisely choreographed ritual, every detail of which was set out in advance. Moses' encounter was ad hoc, a unique, unrepeatable drama between heaven and earth. Aaron's was the opposite. The rules he was following never changed throughout the generations, so long as the Temple stood.

Moses' prayers on behalf of the people were full of audacity, what the Sages called *chutzpah kelapei shemaya*, (audacity toward heaven), reaching a climax in the astonishing words, "Now, please forgive their sin – but if not, then blot me out of the book You have written". Aaron's behaviour by contrast was marked by obedience, humility and confession. There were purification rituals, sin offerings and atonements, for his own sins and those of his "house" as well as those of the people.

The move from Yom Kippur 1 to Yom Kippur 2 was a classic instance of what Max Weber called the "routinisation of charisma", that is, taking a unique moment and translating it into ritual, turning a "peak experience" into a regular part of life. Few moments in the Torah rival in intensity to the dialogue between Moses and G-d after the Golden Calf. But the question thereafter was: how could we achieve forgiveness – we who no longer have a Moses, or prophets, or direct access to G-d? Great moments change history. But what changes us is the unspectacular habit of doing certain acts again and again until they reconfigure the brain and change our habits of the heart. We are shaped by the rituals we repeatedly perform.

Besides which, Moses' intercession with G-d did not, in and of itself, induce a penitential mood among the people. Yes, he performed a series of dramatic acts to demonstrate to the people their guilt. But we have no evidence that they internalised it. Aaron's acts were different. They involved

confession, atonement and a search for spiritual purification. They involved a candid acknowledgment of the sins and failures of the people, and they began with the High Priest himself.

The effect of Yom Kippur – extended into the prayers of much of the rest of the year by way of *tachanun* (supplicatory prayers), *vidui* (confession), and *selichot* (prayers for forgiveness) – was to create a culture in which people are not ashamed or embarrassed to say, "I got it wrong, I sinned, I made mistakes." That is what we do in the litany of wrongs we enumerate on Yom Kippur in two alphabetical lists, one beginning *Ashamnu*, *bagadnu*, the other beginning *Al cheit shechatanu*.

As Philip Lader discovered, the capacity to admit mistakes is anything but widespread. We rationalise. We justify. We deny. We blame others. There have been several powerful books on the subject in recent years, among them Matthew Syed, *Black Box Thinking: The Surprising Truth About Success (and Why Some People Never Learn from Their Mistakes)*; Kathryn Schulz, *Being Wrong: Adventures in the Margins of Error*, and Carol Tavris and Elliot Aronson, *Mistakes Were Made, But Not By Me*.

Politicians find it hard to admit mistakes. So do doctors: preventable medical error causes more than 400,000 deaths every year in the United States. So do bankers and economists. The financial crash of 2008 was predicted by Warren Buffett as early as 2002. It happened despite the warnings of several experts that the level of mortgage lending and the leveraging of debt was unsustainable. Tavris and Aronson tell a similar story about the police. Once they have identified a suspect, they are reluctant to admit evidence of his or her innocence. And so it goes.



The avoidance strategies are almost endless. People say, It wasn't a mistake. Or, given the circumstances, it was the best that could have been done. Or it was a small mistake. Or it was unavoidable given what we knew at the time. Or someone else was to blame. We were given the wrong facts. We were faultily advised. So people bluff it out, or engage in denial, or see themselves as victims.

We have an almost infinite capacity for interpreting the facts to vindicate ourselves. As the Sages said in the context of the laws of purity, "No one can see his own blemishes, his own impurities." We are our own best advocates in the court of self-esteem. Rare is the individual with the courage to say, as the High Priest did, or as King David did after the prophet Nathan confronted him with his guilt in relation to Uriah and Batsheva, *chattati*, "I have sinned."



Judaism helps us admit our mistakes in three ways. First is the knowledge that G-d forgives. He does not ask us never

to sin. He knew in advance that His gift of freedom would sometimes be misused. All He asks of us is that we acknowledge our mistakes, learn from them, confess and resolve not to do them again.

Second is Judaism's clear separation between the sinner and the sin. We can condemn an act without losing faith in the agent.

Third is the aura Yom Kippur spreads over the rest of the year. It helps create a culture of honesty in which we are not ashamed to acknowledge the wrongs we have done. And despite the fact that, technically, Yom Kippur is focused on sins between us and G-d, a simple reading of the confessions in *Ashamnu* and *Al Chet* shows us that, actually, most of the sins we confess are about our dealings with other people.

What Philip Lader discovered about his high-flying contemporaries, Judaism internalised long ago. Seeing the best admit that they too make mistakes is deeply empowering for the rest of us. The first Jew to admit he made a mistake was Judah, who had wrongly accused Tamar of sexual misconduct, and then, realising he had been wrong, said, "She is more righteous than I".

It is surely more than mere coincidence that the name Judah comes from the same root as *Vidui*, "confession". In other words, the very fact that we are called Jews – *Yehudim* – means that we are the people who have the courage to admit our wrongs.

**Honest self-criticism is one of the unmistakable marks of spiritual greatness.**



# GREETINGS FROM OUR MEMBERS

Wishing all friends and  
members of Wizo in the Wood  
a healthy and peaceful  
New year  
- Miriam Falk

Wishing the community a sweet  
New Year filled with joy, health,  
and prosperity. May this Rosh  
Hashanah bring peace to Israel  
and the safe return of all  
hostages. - With love, Amanda,  
Daniel & Blair

Wishing the community a happy,  
healthy and peaceful New Year.

- Nathan, Jeremy & Gemma,  
Axelle and Michel Sznajer.

Michael & Sylvia  
Abraham, Gidi &  
Hannah, Joel and  
Gabriella wish the  
entire community a  
Shana Tova and G'mar  
Chatima Tova.

All good wishes for a  
Peaceful and Happy  
New Year  
- Deanne and Malcolm Coleman

Wishing the entire community a  
happy, healthy and prosperous  
5785. Shana Tova Umetuka.

- Caline and Marcos Chazan  
and Family

Wishing the SJW  
community a good and  
sweet New Year, and  
praying for peace in  
5785 – Rosanna Burr  
and Family





FORTHCOMING EVENTS  
AT  
SJWS

UPCOMING EVENTS - REMEMBERING OCTOBER 7TH





# Forthcoming Events

## September

<b>Sunday 22nd September</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Rosh Hashana Funday - 11.30am-1.30pm</b></li> </ul>
<b>Monday 23rd September</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Evening of Pre RH Inspiration &amp; Education - 8.15pm-9.15pm</b> For the whole community</li> </ul>
<b>Wednesday 25th September</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ladies Guild Art Lecture &amp; Visit National Gallery Van Gogh</b></li> <li>• <b>Soul Service - 7.45pm</b> An evening of song reflection &amp; soul with Rebbetzen Rachie &amp; Rebbetzen Chai. Music led by Rebbetzen Elisheva Tatz.</li> </ul>
<b>Thursday 26th September</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Young Professionals Theatre Night: Cable Street - 7.45pm</b></li> <li>• <b>Lessons on War &amp; Inflation from Governor Amir Yaron - 7pm-9pm</b></li> </ul>
<b>Saturday 28th September</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Kumsitz - 9.30pm &amp; Choral Selichot - 11.30pm</b></li> </ul>
<b>Sunday 29th September</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Young Professionals Sephardi Selichot Social with Chazak - 7pm</b></li> <li>• <b>Pre Rh Challah Bake for 12+ with Rebbetzen Chai - 10.30am</b></li> </ul>

## October

<b>Wednesday 2nd October</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Community Rosh Hashana Dinner - 7.45pm</b></li> </ul>
<b>Thursday 3rd October</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Young Professionals 2nd Night Rosh Hashana Dinner - 7.45pm</b></li> </ul>
<b>Friday 4th October</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Young Families RH BBQ Lunch - 1pm</b></li> </ul>
<b>Sunday 6th October</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Young Professionals Sushi Making Social - 7pm</b></li> </ul>
<b>Monday 7th October</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Remembrance Service for Israel</b></li> <li>• <b>Young Professionals 7th October Memorial Evening - 7pm</b></li> </ul>
<b>Shabbat 12th October</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Yom Kippur - The Big Debate - 2.45pm</b></li> </ul>
<b>Wednesday 16th October</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Community Succot Dinner 7.15pm</b></li> </ul>
<b>Thursday 17th October</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Young Professionals Succot Dinner</b></li> </ul>
<b>Monday 21st October</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Simchat Beit Hashoeva &amp; BBQ Yr 10+ - 8pm</b></li> </ul>
<b>Thursday 24th October</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Young Families Dinner &amp; Hakafot - 5pm</b></li> </ul>
<b>Friday 25th October</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Simchat Torah Celebrations</b></li> </ul>



# Forthcoming Events

JOIN US FOR THE 1ST NIGHT

## ROSH HASHANA DINNER

Wednesday 2nd October 2024

SERVICES 7:00 PM ★ DINNER 7:45 PM

BOOK A TICKET AT [SHULINTEWOOD.COM/RHD](http://SHULINTEWOOD.COM/RHD)

ADULT £70 (EARLY BIRD\*)  
CHILD UNDER 12 £25

\*PRICE INCREASES TO £75 AFTER 20TH SEPTEMBER

SAATCHI ST JOHN'S WOOD

## YOUNG FAMILIES Rosh Hashanah BBQ LUNCH

2ND DAY ROSH HASHANA FRIDAY 4TH OCTOBER

🕒 13.00 £20 ADULT  
£10 CHILD

SHABBAT 5TH OCTOBER

## yom kippur 101

SHIUR BY TOBY & BRACHA

Why do I have to fast?  
What does the davening mean?  
Is there a point repenting if I know I will do it again?  
Should I ask for forgiveness if the other person doesn't know I offend them?

6.00PM - 6.40PM  
(HOT MEATY FOOD IN THE BRIDE'S ROOM)

SUPPORTED GENEROUSLY BY THE FAMILY MADDORTZ ANNUAL GRANT FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH PROGRAMMES

SAATCHI ST JOHN'S WOOD

## CHILDREN'S & YOUTH PROGRAMMES

Rosh Hashana 2024/5785 3rd & 4th October

<p><b>TOTS SERVICE 0-3</b> 11.00AM - 12.00PM SAPLING CLASSROOM</p> <p><b>RECEPTION - YR 2</b> 11.00AM - 12.00PM DORA FREEDMAN HALL</p> <p><b>YR 3-6</b> 11.00AM - 12.00PM BLOSSOMS CLASSROOM</p> <p><b>ALL PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN</b> 12.00PM - 12.30PM DORA FREEDMAN HALL</p> <p>Both Days: Shofar Service, Kiddush &amp; Rosh Hashana Challenge led by Bracha</p>	<p><b>SECONDARY SCHOOL YEAR 7+ - CARTER CLUB</b> 11.00AM - 11.30AM YOUTH CHILL ZONE Games &amp; Discussions led by madrichim</p> <p><b>TEEN SERVICE</b> run by Rabbi Toby Weiniger 11.30AM - 12.30PM Keynote Speaker at 11:45 Day 1: Keith Breslauer Day 2: Pamela Crystal Followed by Shofar Service</p> <p>Year 7+ Kiddush Day 1 - Chinese Takeout. Day 2 - Waffles &amp; Ice-Cream Bar</p>
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SAATCHI ST JOHN'S WOOD

## CHILDREN'S & YOUTH PROGRAMMES

Yom Kippur 2024/5785 12th October

<p><b>TOTS SERVICE 0-3</b> 11.30AM - 12.30PM SAPLING CLASSROOM</p> <p><b>RECEPTION - YR 2</b> 11.30AM - 12.30PM DORA FREEDMAN HALL</p> <p><b>YR 3-6</b> 11.30AM - 12.30PM BLOSSOMS CLASSROOM</p> <p><b>ALL PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN</b> 12.30PM - 1.00PM ARON THE HIGH PRIEST: THE MUSICAL DORA FREEDMAN HALL</p>	<p><b>SECONDARY SCHOOL</b> 11.30AM - 12.30PM YOUTH SERVICE RUN BY RABBI TOBY &amp; BRACHA</p> <p><b>KEYNOTE SPEAKER 11.45AM</b> EYAL BIRAM FORBES 30 UNDER 30 AND FORMER CAPTAIN IN IDF</p> <p>CHILDREN'S LUNCH IN THE DORA FREEDMAN HALL AT 1:00PM</p>
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# Forthcoming Events

## ARBA MINIM SALE

Please order your Arba Minim/Lulav & Etrog sets before Sunday 13th October at 11am

Price:  
£65.00 (Grade 1)  
£40.00 (Grade 2)

For any specific questions,  
please contact Rabbi Mendel Cohen  
on [rnc@shulinthewood.com](mailto:rnc@shulinthewood.com)

*All sets come with an eco friendly box*



## SUCCOT DINNER

HOSTED BY RABBI TOBY & BRACHA WEINIGER, CHAZZAN AVREIMI KIRSHENBAUM & FAMILY

JOIN US FOR A RUACH FILLED  
INSPIRATIONAL EVENING  
UNDER THE STARS IN THE  
SHACK FAMILY SUKKAH  
ON THE 1ST NIGHT OF SUCCOT

WEDNESDAY NIGHT  
**16TH  
OCTOBER**  
SERVICE 6.30PM  
COMMUNITY DINNER 7.15PM

ST JOHN'S WOOD SYNOGOGUE  
SAATCHI  
תלמוד תורה

SPACES LIMITED | BOOK YOUR PLACE AT [WWW.SHULINTHEWOOD.COM/SUCCOTDINNER](http://WWW.SHULINTHEWOOD.COM/SUCCOTDINNER)

## SIMCHAT BEIT HASHOEVA & BBQ

STRICTLY  
YEAR 10+

LIVE MUSIC  
SURPRISE GUEST SPEAKER

MONDAY NIGHT OCT. 21  
20:00-21:30

PRIVATE SJW LOCATION  
TICKET ESSENTIAL FOR SECURITY PURPOSES

SIGN UP VIA RSVP TO 07587 183450  
OR ONLINE AT  
[SHULINTHEWOOD.COM/SIMCHATB](http://SHULINTHEWOOD.COM/SIMCHATB)

"THIS EVENT IS AIMED FOR  
CHILDREN UNDER 5"

## שבת תורה

SIMCHAT TORAH  
THURSDAY 24TH OCTOBER

5:00PM  
BUFFET DINNER

5:30PM  
FAMILY HAKAFA

5:45PM  
ENTERTAINER

6:30PM  
COMMUNITY HAKAFOT

OPTIONAL DONATION: £10

A time to dance

## SIMCHAT TORAH

CHILDREN'S & YOUTH PROGRAMME  
FRIDAY 25TH OCTOBER

11:00 AM Children's Hakafa in Main Shul

11:10 AM Children's Entertainment, led by Toby, Bracha & SJW teens in Carter Club. Win prizes, play games, answer quiz questions

11:30 AM Kol Hanearim in the Main Shul children's call up to the Torah!

12:15 PM Simchat Torah Gameshow Year 7+ in Carter Club

SAATCHI  
תלמוד תורה





**ST JOHN'S WOOD**  
SYNAGOGUE

37-41 GROVE END ROAD, LONDON NW8 9NG

**COMMUNITY LUNCH CLUB**

SJWS requests the pleasure of your company at our

**COMMUNAL LUNCH**

on

**Tuesday 24th September**

**Tuesday 8th October**

**Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> October**

**Tues 5<sup>th</sup> November**

**Tues 19<sup>th</sup> November**

**Tues 3<sup>rd</sup> December**

**Chanukah Lunch on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> December**

12:30 pm drinks

1.00 pm lunch served

*£10 for synagogue members and £12 for non-members*

**Booking essential to**

**[welfare@shulinthewood.com](mailto:welfare@shulinthewood.com) or**

**Gillian 020 7586 0156 or 020 7286 9810 / Lucy 07881 838657**

37-41 Grove End Road, NW8 9NG

Transport available if essential  
(for members only)



# Remembering 7th October

## *A Time to Mourn and a Time to Dance*

As we approach the first anniversary of the terrible massacre of the 7th October/Simchat Torah, we are deeply conscious of the conflicting emotions of this time. Simchat Torah, one of the most joyous days of the Jewish calendar, has been marred by enormous tragedy. The St. John's Wood community will be memorialising the victims and celebrating Simchat Torah in the following ways:

**7th October:** civil anniversary.

There will be a Cross-Communal Memorial Service hosted at St John's Wood Synagogue.

**Yom Kippur:** Special Yizkor Prayer for the victims of 7th October.

**Shemini Atzeret:** Jewish anniversary. Special Yizkor Prayer for the victims of 7th October.

**Simchat Torah:** The Hakafot, circling the Bima, will be led with a Sefer Torah clothed in a mantle embroidered with the name of one of the victims of 7th October. The first Hakafa in the evening will be a procession, without any dancing, in respect for those who were killed. We will then switch to Simchat Torah mode and continue with the Hakafot and dancing as usual. We will not forget what happened on Simchat Torah last year, but we are determined to dispel the darkness with light. Am Yisrael Chai!







# THE PAST YEAR AT SJWS

A LOOK BACK INTO OUR ACTIVITIES OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS





# Children & Youth





# Children & Youth

WITH RABBI TOBY & REBBETZEN BRACHA WEINIGER

Our Youth activities have been fantastic in the last year and both children and teenagers have been joining in the fun and education in their droves.

We have weekly shabbat morning services for 4 different age groups from Toddlers to Teenagers, and on shabbat afternoons we have the weekly Bnei in the Wood group.

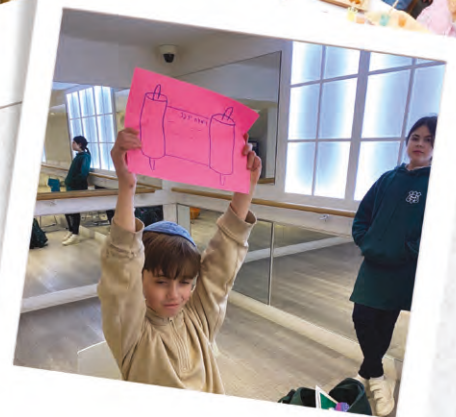
Our festival fun days for Rosh Hashana, Chanukah and Purim are hugely popular and great enjoyment for all. And our two weeks of Summer Camp had over 130 children from ages 4 to 14 in a packed schedule of outings and activities.

The Bar and Bat Mitzvah program provided a social, educational and spiritual environment to support over 20 of our 11 and 12 year olds as they prepared for their move to Jewish adulthood.





# Babes, Kindergarten & Cheder





# Babes, Kindergarten & Cheder

Our Mimi Dwek Hebrew School is now 10 years old and in September 2024 we will have over 100 children enrolled for classes on Sundays and Tuesdays.

And the Kindergarten in the Wood has had another year of growth with 43 children enrolled from 3 months to 5 years enjoying our nurturing educational program.

Our Babes in the Wood is a weekly group during term time that partners with Hartbeeps for a multi sensory, music movement and drama for babies and toddlers ages 0-2 years.

## INSPIRE EXPLORE CREATE

A Premier Boutique Nursery Experience

### St John's Wood Synagogue Nursery

We have 4 Classrooms open

Monday to Thursday

8am-6pm

Friday

8am-12pm

Seedlings (nursery room)

3 months-18 months

Sprouts (nursery room)

18 months-2 years

Saplings

2-3 years

Blossoms

3-5 years

Nursery Manager: Mary De Costa

Nursery Director: Chai Cohen

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nursery@shulinthewood.com



AGES  
3M-5YRS

**HEBREW SCHOOL**

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Interactive Classes

Hebrew Reading

Jewish Identity

Kids Kabbalat Shabbat at Friday Night Dinner

**SUNDAYS**  
9.45am - 11.45am

**TUESDAYS**  
4.15pm - 5.50pm

**INFORMATION & REGISTRATION**  
We welcome students from many schools and nationalities, regardless of level of knowledge or religious background.

**REGISTER NOW AT**  
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TO ST JOHN'S WOOD SYNOGOGUE

WEDNESDAYS  
10.15 - 11.55am Baby Group  
10.30 - 11.55am - Heartbeeps Session  
11th 18th 25th September  
2nd 9th 16th October

PRICING: £13 PER SESSION  
£72 FOR ALL 6 CLASSES

**Hartbeeps**



# Young Professionals

In September 2023 Shifra and Nadav Hacham joined the SJW community from Israel with the exciting opportunity of building a Young Professionals program in our shul. As you can see, they have achieved this with many social events, shabbat hospitality, Israel advocacy education and so much more!



Shifra & Nadav





# Young Professionals

WITH NADAV AND SHIFRA HACHAM

**MORE THAN 30 BIG EVENTS  
BETWEEN SEPTEMBER 2023-24**

**In addition to:**

- 8 Classes
- 10 weeks of Shabbat Social
- Weekly Shabbat Meals
- Wintertime late Kabbalat Shabbat

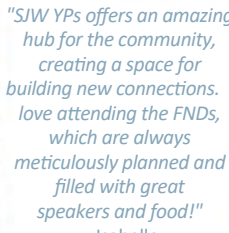
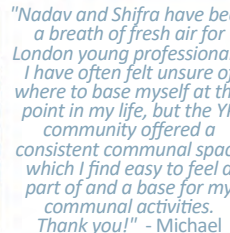
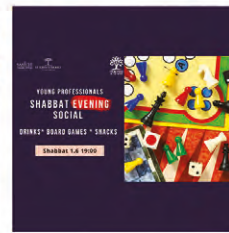
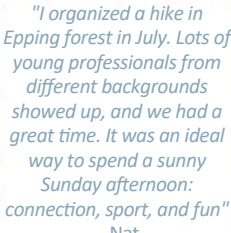
**OTHER STATS**

- 5 events with more than 100 participants
  - 30+ YP's who sponsored events
  - 20+ Countries of origin
- Largest Event**
- Purim Party - 430 participants

**1,251 ANNUAL EVENT PARTICIPANTS**

**Among them:**

- 85 Recurring participants (3+ events)
- In addition to:**
- 200+ YPs hosting for Friday Night Dinner
  - Dozens of young families hosted for Shabbat Lunch







## The Ladies Guild

**Art Classes**  
Gentlemen and Ladies welcome!  
**SPRING TERM ART CLASSES 2024**  
COMMENCING 8TH JANUARY 2024  
TUESDAYS 10.15AM - 12.30PM  
January 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th  
February 6th, 13th, 20th, 27th  
March 5th, 12th, 19th, 26th  
May 7th, 14th, 21st  
June 4th, 11th, 18th, 25th  
July 2nd, 9th  
Information ladiesguild@shulintthewood.com  
£150 donation

ST. JOHN'S WOOD SYNAGOGUE LADIES GUILD AND ARTS CLUB  
- CAROLINE GILLIS -  
**MY CAREER IN ART MANAGEMENT**  
THURSDAY, 25TH JANUARY

**ST JOHN'S WOOD SYNAGOGUE**  
37-41 GROVE END ROAD, LONDON NW8 7NG  
**COMMUNITY LUNCH CLUB**  
SJWS requests the pleasure of your company at our  
**COMMUNAL LUNCH**  
on  
Tuesday 17th October  
Tuesday 31st October  
Tuesday 14th November  
Tuesday 28th November  
Tuesday 12th December - CHANUKAH  
12.30 pm drinks  
1.00 pm lunch served  
£12.00 for non-members

ST. JOHN'S WOOD SYNAGOGUE LADIES GUILD VISIT TO  
**HEIGHTON HOUSE**  
12 HOLLAND PARK RD, LONDON, W54 8LZ  
THURSDAY, 3RD AUGUST, 2023  
We have arranged for a lecture in the Synagogue by Anne Haworth at 11.00am with a  
snack lunch at 12.15pm, followed by tour visit to Leighton House.

**DUPLICATE BRIDGE CLUB**  
DONATION: £10 INCLUDING REFRESHMENTS  
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**HELD EVERY MONDAY 12.45PM - 4.00PM**  
SATCHEL BRIDGE CLUB ST. JOHN'S WOOD SYNAGOGUE

**Chanukah Party**  
TUESDAY 12TH DECEMBER 2023  
SJWS LADIES GUILD INVITES YOU TO OUR  
Chanukah Party  
TUESDAY 12TH DECEMBER 2023  
CHANUKAH PARTIES

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REQUESTS THE PLEASURE OF YOUR COMPANY AT A  
**COMMUNAL LUNCH**



# 2024: A Thriving Year for the Ladies Guild

This year has been an exceptional one for our Ladies Guild, with each week bringing new opportunities for our community to come together, learn, and celebrate. Our Monday Bridge Club has become a centrepiece of our weekly activities, drawing between 60 and 90 participants every week. The club's growth has been remarkable, making it one of the largest in the United Synagogue. It's heartening to see both members and non-members alike enjoying this classic game and the camaraderie it fosters.

On Tuesday mornings, our synagogue buzzes with creativity during the art classes run by Hampstead School of Art. These sessions have been a hit for several years, with attendees producing beautiful works that are as varied as they are inspiring.

Our communal lunches, held every other Tuesday, have been a tremendous success, with 40 to 60 people attending. These gatherings offer much more than a meal—they provide a vital sense of connection and community. This year, we've enhanced these lunches with occasional entertainment, making these events special. We've also had the honour of celebrating several milestone birthdays.

The festive season was no exception to our year of thriving activities. Succot saw our Succah beautifully decorated by our volunteers, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere for the St John's Wood community

and their guests. Our Chanukah celebrations were equally memorable, with over 60 attendees enjoying a splendid opera concert and then a delicious meal. The highlight of the afternoon was the nursery children's delightful performance of Chanukah songs, followed by Dayan Binstock lighting the menorah, filling our synagogue with light and joy.

In addition to these regular activities, we have an Arts Club where we have had lectures, visits to galleries and other interesting places.

Our dedicated volunteers have been invaluable this year, offering their support with lunches, welfare calls, and home visits. We truly couldn't have managed without them. We are always looking for new volunteers who can help with our activities.

If you are not already a member, we warmly invite you to join the Ladies Guild. We're always eager to welcome new members who can bring fresh ideas. and lend a hand with our activities.

Wishing you all a happy and healthy New Year  
Gillian Burr, Lucy Collins, Jane Prevezer  
& Elizabeth Shasha

**Contact 020 7586 0156**  
**for more information.**



# Women's Events





# Women's Events & Classes

WITH REBBETZEN RACHIE BINSTOCK & REBBETZEN CHAI COHEN

## Education

- In the last year there have been many inspirational shiurim on shabbat mornings and festivals by our wonderful Rebbetzen Rachie Binstock, Rebbetzen Chai Cohen and Shifra Hacham
- And Rebbetzen Chai's Monday lunchtime Tanya Class has become a regular event for around 15 women in person and several more remotely.

## Social

- We held a very popular and enjoyable Women's Cookery Demonstration last Autumn and in October we hosted an amazing Challah Bake in Solidarity with Israel with over 100 women from Central London shuls.
- We honoured 2 exceptional women of our community, Caroline Gillis and Sandra Sebbah at the annual Women's Shabbat with guest speaker Shira Joseph.
- And informally several women in our community socialise together fortnightly as the Walkers in the Wood group led by Sylvia Abraham; and over 80 women share views and news through the SJW Womens Shul Shmooze WhatsApp group led by Beverley Calvert. Please contact either of them if you would like to join.

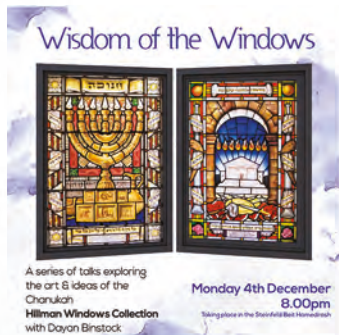




# Community Education

This year the SJW Community ran a wide range of adult educational programs including:

- Sunday mornings after Shacharit Dayan Binstock ran weekly shiurim over a bagel breakfast on the Sefer HaChinuch called "Start the Week."
- Rabbi Mendel Cohen ran several series of JLI courses - focusing on the philosophical topics of "Faith & Resilience" and "The Dilemma - Modern Conundrums, Talmudic Debates, Your Solutions"
- Dayan Binstock continued his series of talks on the beautiful Hillman stained-glass windows in the shul
- Dayan and Rachie Binstock jointly ran a Kashrut Course looking in depth at the principles and applications of the laws of Kashrut
- Alex (Shmaya) Grunfeld continued to give 3 weekly Gemara shiurim on Shabbat, Monday evening and Friday morning
- Dayan and Rachie, Rabbi Mendel and Chai, Rabbi Toby and Bracha presented a Pre-Pesach Roadshow kindly hosted by shul members in their homes
- Members of the community joined the rabbinical team in giving shiurim on Shavuot night.



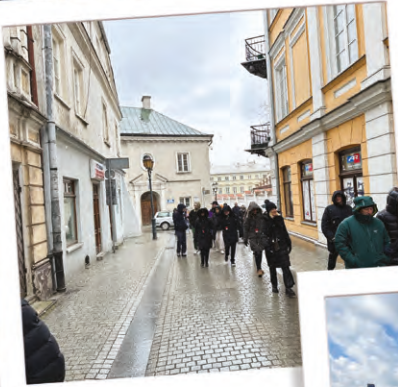


Additionally we held our annual Baby Blessing which was wonderful with a large number of new babies born into the community this year. We also celebrated the Eruv and honoured the individuals (Andrew Mainz and Charles & Elizabeth Wigoder) who gave key donations to establish this important infrastructure for Jewish life in SJW. And of course we held our annual Remembrance service in November with many dignitaries from the Westminster and Maida Vale wider community.





# Poland & Israel Trip





# Poland & Israel Trip

- In February we joined with Lauderdale Road Sephardi shul on a 3 day visit to Israel led by Rabbi Mendel Cohen and Rabbi Joseph Dweck. We visited Southern Israel to see first hand the devastation of Kfar Aza and other communities and then went to Hostage Square in Tel Aviv to meet families of the hostages. We also volunteered on a farm and met with the injured, soldiers and other leading Israeli figures including a previous Israeli Ambassador - Daniel Taub.
- In March 2024, Rabbi Mendel and Rebbetzen Chai Cohen, along with Rabbi Barry and Rebbetzen Naomi Lerer, and Holocaust survivor Mala Tribich, led 60 members of the St. John's Wood and Central communities on an emotional and uplifting journey through Poland. The group visited key historical sites, including Chelmno, Lodz, and Auschwitz-Birkenau, uncovering the history of Jewish life and the tragedies of the Holocaust. A particularly moving moment was Mala Tribich guiding the group through her hometown of Piotrkow, sharing her personal story and memories, which added a powerful, personal connection to the trip. The experience brought everyone closer together, offering moments of deep reflection and inspiration. It was a powerful reminder of the strength and resilience of the Jewish people, leaving everyone feeling connected to their history and each other in a meaningful way.

**St John's Wood & Saatchi Synagogue  
ARE GOING TO POLAND**

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BUILD THE FUTURE...

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Sunday 17th - Tuesday  
19th March 2024

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Wolbrom  
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Krakow

Join Rabbi Mendel and Chai Cohen  
together with  
**Holocaust Survivor Mala Tribich MBE**  
and led by J Roots educator Tzvi Sperber  
on this meaningful journey.

This trip will also be joined by Central Synagogue

TO REGISTER YOUR INTEREST PLEASE CALL  
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LAUDERDALE ROAD & ST. JOHN'S WOOD &  
SAATCHI COMMUNITY INVITE YOU TO JOIN US ON A

## SOLIDARITY TRIP TO ISRAEL

**20th - 22nd February 2024**

The three day itinerary will include:

-  Visit Kfar Aza and other affected communities in the south.
-  Families of hostages, evacuees, the injured, and ones who have lost relatives.
-  Visit Soldiers on the front line and hear from leading Israeli figures.
-  Volunteer at evacuee center and agricultural plantation.

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# HEBREW SCHOOL

## SJW CHEDER & MDHS

**SUNDAYS** 9:45-11:45am  
(Nursery - Year 7 & Year 9/10 GCSE)

**TUESDAYS** 4:15-5:50\*pm  
(Nursery - Year 7)

### ABOUT US

Since 2014, Mimi Dwek Hebrew School has become a trend-setting Jewish educational experience for children from Nursery to year 7. Through interactive classes and exclusive Hebrew-reading methodologies, our dynamic dedicated staff provide outstanding Judaic and Hebrew language studies. We passionately believe that your child's experience of Jewish learning should be fun, upbeat, inspiring, and interactive. With a high attendance rate, we ensure that your child will enjoy coming and have a positive attitude toward the sessions. Central to your child's Jewish identity is social interaction and community, we aim to integrate your child into Synagogue community and events.

We are excited to be extending our offering on Sunday to include all age groups, Nursery - Year 7. (Subject to demand)

We have special dates in the diary including our Friday night dinner, featuring a Kabbalat Shabbat led by the children which is always a highlight.

## PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

### NURSERY

This offering ensuring the tender development stage is covered we are offering a hands-on sensory and musical class.

### RECEPTION

Our reception class provides a creative environment for children to learn the Aleph-Bet, about festivals, Prayer and Jewish songs.

### YEARS 1-7

Our curriculum goals and outcomes ensure that the students are engaged, intellectually stimulated and creatively expressing a strong sense of knowledge and love of Judaism. Specialty areas include: The Jewish Home, Jewish Heroes, Jewish Life Cycle and Tefilah-prayer.

### GCSE YEARS 9-10

Our GCSE AQA Jewish Studies syllabus begins another two-year course, on Sundays, this September. For students in year 9 or year 10. The program offers an understanding to all aspects of Jewish learning, as well as debates in theological and contemporary issues. Students also acquire skills in essay writing and taking exams.

### INFORMATION & REGISTRATION

We welcome students from many schools and nationalities, regardless of level of knowledge or religious background.

**REGISTER NOW AT**  
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AGES  
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**Friday**

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**Seedlings** (baby room)  
3 months- 18 months

**Sprouts** (toddler room)  
18 months - 2 years

**Saplings**  
2 -3 years

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A still life image featuring a basket of red apples, a loaf of braided bread, and a bowl of honey with a honey dipper.

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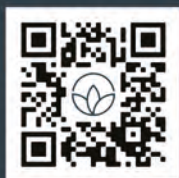


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# IMMANUEL COLLEGE'S RESPONSE TO THE CRISIS

BY MRS ALEXIS GAFFIN, HEAD OF IMMANUEL COLLEGE PREP SCHOOL



The catastrophic events in Israel on 7 October 2023 changed all Jewish lives forever. We may have looked the same, but none of us were the same.

Immanuel College's leadership quickly saw what needed to be done. In addition to security and the worrying matters of many staff and student families still in Israel, they also focussed on how, as the only 4 to 18 mainstream independent Jewish school in the United Kingdom, they could provide a safe and healthy environment. They understood that, as leaders, they needed to respond to a new reality.

## Coming Together for Israel

Cherishing the Jewish value of unity, we came together as *Am Echad B'Lev Echad* (One People with One Heart). We held Assemblies -- one in the Prep School (Reception to Y6) and one in the Senior School (Y7 through Y13) -- in which we spoke about what had happened in age-appropriate ways and added extra *tefillot* to our daily prayers.

*We recognised that our status as an independent school put us in a unique position, We could do more and therefore we simply had to do more.*

## Welcoming British-Israel Children to Our School

Within five days of 7 October, we received an email from parents who had rushed to the UK from Israel, asking if we had space in school to accommodate their children. The next day, we began the admission process for this family and decided to commit ourselves to helping families coming to the UK find school places, regardless of their financial resources.

As Mrs Alexis Gaffin, Head of Immanuel College Prep School, puts it *'By getting the children into school swiftly, we are bringing much needed normalcy to their lives. Straight away the new British-Israeli pupils are playing happily with their new friends here at ICPS.'*

By the end of that week, the College launched a fully-funded Fast Track Admissions Programme for British-Israelis. The school ensured the children would get uniforms and equipment they needed along with support to access the curriculum and individual Art Therapy sessions, in conjunction with Arts Therapies for Children.

On the following Monday, more pupils arrived.

**The programme continues to this day, along with the school's wider bursary programme, as does our never-ending connection to Israel.**



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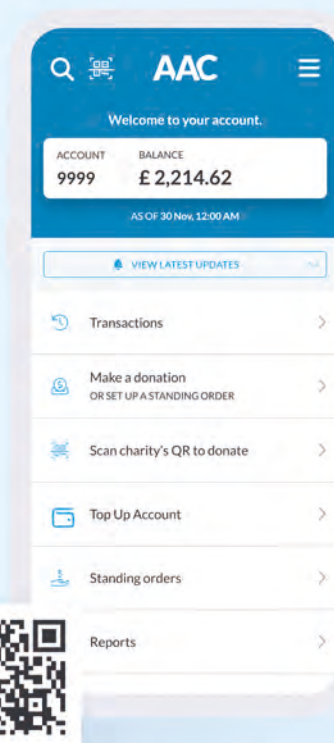
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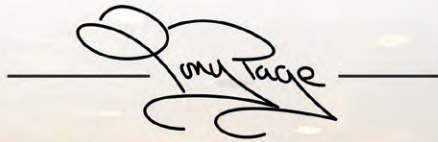


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With a 22% increase in demand since the war and a decrease in surplus food available, Leket is purchasing food to redistribute to high-risk populations. Leket's focus is on intensifying food rescue efforts and supporting Israeli farmers in maintaining operations and recovery. In 2024 so far:

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**1,250,672**

**Hot Meals**



1,787,000 rescued;  
513,000 purchased  
during the war

**58,627,529 lbs.**

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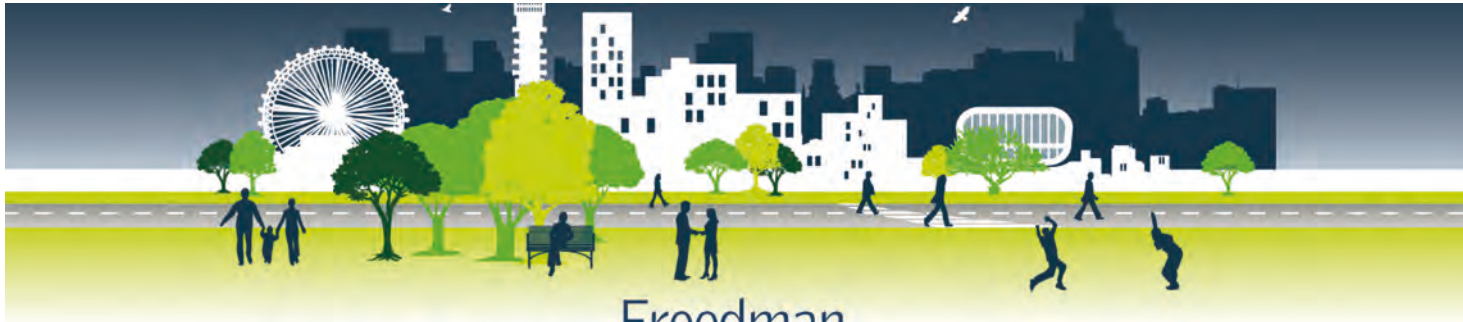
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