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ANTISEMITISM, JEWISH UNITY, AND  
THE TIMELESS LESSONS OF POWER

FAITH, FAMILY, AND LAW:  
A CONVERSATION WITH CHIEF  
JUDGE MATTHEW SOLOMON ON  
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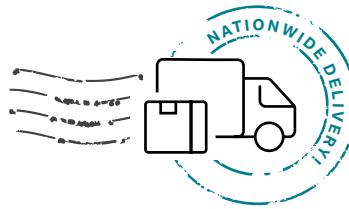


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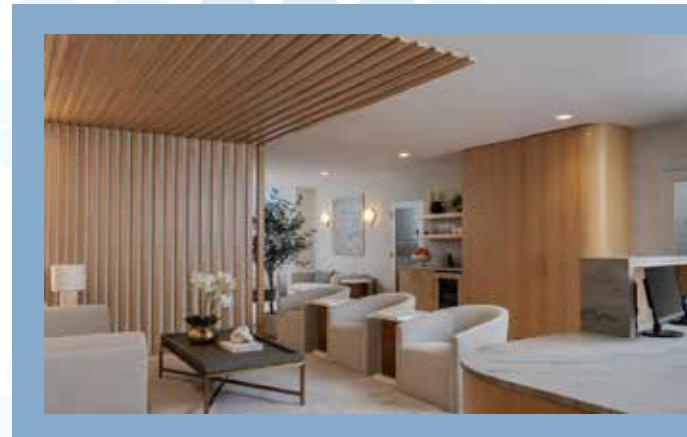
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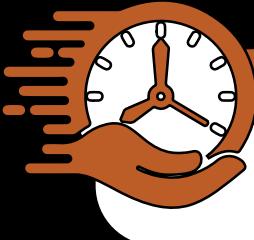
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*Life's True Meaning Through the Lens of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur*



**RABBI AARON LOPIANSKY,**  
ROSH YESHIVA, YESHIVA OF GREATER  
WASHINGTON-TIFERES GEDALIAH

## I. Life and Hashem

Life – the theme of the Yamim Nora'im. It is the crux of the “three books” that are opened on Rosh HaShanah and the essence of the plea, “*Zachreinu lechayim...*”, which we add to the Shemoneh Esrei prayer.

The reason for the prominence of life in *tefillah* is obvious. It is the most basic necessity, and no gift can be given to a person save through the medium of life. But is that all? Is life merely the tray upon which the riches of this world are spread out?

This cannot be, for Hashem Himself is called “*Keil Melech Chai*,” “*Chai*,” “*Elokim chayim*,” etc. If life was but a means to other ends, we would not crown HaKadosh Baruch Hu with these titles. It is obvious that life is meaningful in itself. Moreover, the Rambam (*Yesodei HaTorah* 2:6, at the end of “*Shemoneh Perakim*”) emphasizes that the concept of “life,” as used with regards to Hashem, is not to be understood as an addendum to HaKadosh Baruch Hu but rather is bound up with His essence. Thus, we say “*chai Hashem*” (with a *pasach*) and not the second version, “*chei Hashem*” (with a *tzeirei*), the possessive form, which would mean “a life possessed by Hashem.” This is impossible, states the Rambam. Hashem and His life are one and the same. Thus, we see that life is not simply a synonym for “existence” but something more.

## II. Life and the Yamim Nora'im

What is life? In order to consider this point, let us ponder two references to life with regards to the Yamim Nora'im. The first concerns the gemara that says that *tzaddikim* are written in the Book of Life and the wicked are immediately written in the

Book of the Dead. *Tosafos (Rosh HaShanah 17b)* explains that this does not mean that they die instantly but at some time in the future.

This is strange. Doesn't everyone die at some time in the future? If it means that a person's life is shortened if he does not succeed in his judgment, then why doesn't the gemara state, “His life is shortened”? The words “immediately written in the book of the dead” have a ring of finality that befits either a person whose life is to be brought to an end at once or one who was destined to be immortal and is now declared mortal.

Secondly, during the ten days of repentance we add the paragraphs of “*Zachreinu...*,” “*Mi chamocha...*,” etc. The place where they are inserted in Shemoneh Esrei is strange. We know that the first three blessings are reserved for praise to Hashem, the last three for thanking Hashem, and the middle ones for requests. Never are any requests made in the first or last three blessings. “*Nacheim...*,” “*Aneinu...*,” and various *yehi ratzons* are recited only within the middle blessings. Yet here we have four such requests inserted into the part of Shemoneh Esrei reserved for HaKadosh Baruch Hu's attributes.

## III. The Dynamic Process

The Rambam (*Moreh Nevuchim*) states many times that this world is a world of “*havayah vehf'sed*” (becoming and destruction). He explains that everything in creation is in an unnatural complex form and will eventually degenerate into its simpler components: a relentless march toward disintegration.

In science, this dynamic process is called

entropy, where every form of energy keeps falling into a less organized, more useless form until it is totally dissipated. Atomic energy may be converted into electrical energy, which is then made into mechanical energy. But if energy can never be destroyed, where is the final energy? The answer is that it has been transformed into heat, dispersed and useless for any work. The “natural history” of the world is a tale of erosion, extinction, and destruction.

But there is an exception, and that is life. Life is a complex organization of elements that is diametrically opposed in direction to the process of entropy. (This, indeed is one of the most difficult problems with the theory of evolution.) Life functions in a way that seems to place it outside the realm of destruction and disintegration. Self-preservation is the reigning drive. The lowliest amoeba forages incessantly for food, extracts its necessities from that food, and rebuilds itself constantly. It does everything to avoid danger and extinction.

This is doubly true for man, for not only does man rebuild himself, he actually reverses the disintegration raging in the universe. He terraces hills, weeds fields, improves the species of crops. It is as if creation consists of two mutually opposing forces: entropy versus life.

There is a flip side to this paradox. If life is constantly renewing itself, how does death take place? If almost every single cell is replaced every few weeks or months, why are we not all young and sprightly? If a person were to replace every single component of his car every three months, would he not always have a new car? Human death could conceivably occur through violence or

through a sudden, fatal mutation. But how do we understand aging?

This is one of the core problems that modern biology grapples with. If every cell in the body is but a few months old, who announces the eightieth birthday? And each and every cell is fully aware of the fact that it is eighty years old!

These two paradoxes, the paradox of life and the paradox of death, have their root in one of the most complex secrets of creation.

#### IV. Dead While Still Living

The key to understanding this point lies in the Maharal, who explains the meaning of the words, "*Reshaim aflu b'chayeihem nikraim meisim*" – The wicked are described as dead even while they live:

*That the wicked are considered as dead is an awesome statement of Chazal. For "life" is something that has no end. This is the meaning of "chayim" as used in "mayim chayim," for it alludes to the uninterrupted flow of a wellspring. And, because the wicked eventually die, they are considered dead already, for their life has an ending to it, and that is not considered "life" by definition; whereas the righteous are called "living" even whilst they are seemingly dead, for, since they are going to come alive again eventually, they are still considered "alive."*

– end of *parshas Noach*, Gur Aryeh

The Maharal reveals that life is synonymous with eternity. Life is that which defies the *havayah vehf'sed* aspect of the material world around us. Therefore, the one who is going to die eventually (i.e., the wicked man) is already considered dead. It is like trying to equate a windup toy with a perpetual-motion machine. The windup toy may hop around and blink its lights furiously, but its "motion" and "life" are an illusion.

In order for something to exist eternally, it must be able to draw its existence from within itself. That which is dependent on some outside force is never eternal, for its existence simply hinges on another's existence.

There is only one force that can be so described, and that is Hashem. His eternity and existence are one and the

same. In order for man to be endowed with life, he cannot be "given" life. Rather, he was inspired with life, as Chazal state, "*M'ain d'nofach midileinofach*" – He who expires a breath, expires a part of himself with it.

A kernel of the Divine was implanted in every person, and that is "life" in its most intrinsic meaning. This kernel of life is the lowest tip of an umbilical cord that has its base in HaKadosh Baruch Hu. Every pulse of Divine eternity echoes itself in man. Is it any wonder that he is not subject to entropy?

Is this not the tremendous depth in the seemingly dry halachah that states, "*Chai nosei es atzmo*" – That which is living carries itself"? Doesn't this halachah tell us that man is the only being who can lift himself up by his own bootstraps?

But this rosy picture is not the entire story. Man did not content himself to be of God. He reasoned (assisted by the serpent's wise counsel) that since he was self-sufficient, he could go at it himself. He would be like God, rather than of God. But when he snapped the umbilical cord, he realized, too late, that he was living only because of Hashem. The "self" that was self-sufficient was that kernel of *Elokus* that made him a part of the greater whole. When he rejected that, he was as mortal as all physical beings.

The first man died essentially on the day he ate of the *eitz hada'as*. True, he walked and talked for almost another millennium, but this was the motion of a windup toy using up its stored energy. By the Maharal's definition, he was dead on the day he was declared mortal, for *chayim* is synonymous with eternity. The ephemeral is never defined as *chayim*. (Perhaps this is why *chayim* is always written in the plural as a noun, for "life" can never be an isolated point.)

The question is raised about the *eitz hachayim*: Why is this tree not called *eitz hachayim hanitzchit'im* or *olami'im* if eternity is its property? The answer is, of course, that the word "*chayim*" already makes clear the element of "*vechai la'olam*" for they are one and the same. If Adam had eaten from the *eitz hachayim* he would have lived eternally.

#### V. Decree of Life

Let us return again to the Yamim Nora'im. On the Day of Judgment, the books of life and death are opened up. The wicked are declared dead immediately; and, indeed, they immediately "die." True, they might still walk and talk, but this represents the expenditure of stored-up energy. They are as alive as the windup toy is alive. They fit the definition of "*Reshaim aflu b'chayeihem nikraim meisim*."

This explains the point of our prayers on Rosh HaShanah. On that day, HaKadosh Baruch Hu inspired us with life. He made us part of His great self, and we thereby lived. Hashem is not referred to as the "giver of life" but rather as *makor hachayim* (the source of life). HaKadosh Baruch Hu is the source, and we are an extension. So long as nothing wedges itself between the source and the extension, life continues to flow.

On Rosh HaShanah we sinned and severed the knot that tied us to HaKadosh Baruch Hu. On the day mankind both came to life and died, we are once again judged; books of life and books of death are opened up again.

By asking for life, we are not asking just for what we desire. We are confirming our yearning to retie that knot that bound us to Hashem.

Therefore, this prayer does not belong in the middle part of Shemoneh Esrei, for the middle portion deals with our existence: our wealth, our might, our wisdom – things one may not ask for in the first or last part of Shemoneh Esrei. But life, in its true sense, deals with the point where our own existence ceases, and the "*Nafach mizlayei*" of Hashem takes over. This plea for life is a praise of God. It is the ultimate fulfillment of "*Al kol neshimah u'neshimah tehallel Kah*" – "Let us praise Hashem with every breath!"



**Rabbi Aaron Lopiansky**, Rosh Yeshiva of the Yeshiva of Greater Washington-Tiferes Gedolah, has authored over 20 seforim and brings decades of Torah scholarship shaped at the Mir Yerushalayim, carrying forward the legacy of his rebbeim and his father-in-law, Rav Beinish Finkel zt"l, as well as the influence of Harav Moshe Shapiro zt"l. In Silver Spring and the Greater Washington DC region, the Rosh Yeshiva's leadership has become a source of strength, unity, and inspiration, instilling pride in the community and uplifting generations. His seforim and shiurim continue to inspire worldwide and are available at [www.eshelpublications.com](http://www.eshelpublications.com).

# From Dust to Greatness: Man's Mission on the Day of Judgment



RABBI YOSEF SALTZMAN

Rosh Hashana differs fundamentally from the other holidays we celebrate throughout the year. Pesach, Shavuos, and Sukkos all celebrate aspects of the formation of the Jewish people. Pesach marks the redemption from Egypt, Shavous marks the giving of the Torah, and Sukkos celebrates the way Hashem watched over the Jewish people in their journeys in the desert. Purim and Chanuka also celebrate miracles the entire people experienced, whether in the form of a physical threat or a spiritual one. Rosh Hashana, however, deals with man himself. "This is the birthday of the world," a quote from the Rosh Hashana musaf prayer, refers to the birthday of Adam. Since G-d created man on Rosh Hashana, He judges him every year at that point.

We know there are spiritual energies that exist at different times of the year, enabling us to strengthen ourselves by using these spiritual flows at the right time. If Pesach helps us appreciate our freedom and Shavuot gives us an opportunity to relive the Sinai experience, then logically Rosh Hashana provides us time to explore man's role in the world. G-d judges us on this Day of Judgement, and we therefore must re-evaluate ourselves and our commitment to see if it is in line with His plan. On Rosh Hashanah we ought to ask ourselves: What is man's essence, and consequently, his mission?

Kuzari breaks up everything in the world into four categories. Inanimate objects, such as rocks, are the simplest and most basic group. Things that grow, such as plants or grass, constitute the second group. All animals, which move, eat, and communicate, belong in the third group. Human beings, which can communicate through speech, are the highest category. Ultimately, man's mission is to exercise his free will to utilize all the things in the other three groups appropriately to serve Hashem.

In his commentary on the verse that describes G-d's creation of man (Bereishis 2:7), Rashi points to three differences between people and animals. Since the word "vayeetzer" (meaning "He fashioned") is spelled with two 'yud's, Rashi says it refers to two creations of man, one in this world and one in the World to Come. By contrast, since animals are neither judged nor resurrected, the word "vayeetzer" (which describes G-d creating them) has only one 'yud.' We see from here that it is part and parcel to the essence of man that G-d holds him responsible and accountable for his actions. Rashi then cites another Midrash describing that when the Torah says "He blew into him the soul of life," it is telling us man has a part of him that comes from the higher spiritual worlds. Of all created things, man stands out as the only one that has both a physical component, which comes from the lower parts of the world and a spiritual part that comes from the higher parts of the world. Thirdly, Rashi comments, based on Onkelos, that man was given the gifts of intelligence and speech, faculties that animals do not possess. On Rosh Hashana we reflect and contemplate. Are we living up to our mission as human beings or just living like animals? Are we in tune with our souls and working to develop our spiritual potential, and are we using the uniquely human gifts of intelligence and speech the way G-d wishes?

The very name Adam hints to man's ability to either live basely or to become great. Adam is derived from 'adama,' the earth from which G-d took dust in order to create man.

Yet, says Shelah, it also can

refer to the expression '*adameh la'elyon*,' meaning "I will resemble G-d." Shelah explains if man connects to G-d and emulates Him by the way he acts, then he is crowned with the description of "I am like G-d," but if he lives disconnected to the Infinite Source then he remains a mere product of the earth.

Furthermore, the Talmud (Sotah 5a) speaks very harshly about arrogant people, and in that context says that Adam is an acronym for *efer*, *dam*, and *marah* (dust, blood, and bile). Rashi says if a person becomes haughty, he must be reminded that he is a finite being who will eventually be buried in the dust of the earth. However, R' Wolbe explains that as long as one remains humble in his everyday behaviour and interactions, it is healthy to focus on his spiritual essence and potential for greatness. The Talmud is simply telling us the lowliness of the egotistical person.

In light of the above, we can understand a section of the Rosh Hashanah musaf more deeply. In the moving "*unesaneh tokef*" passage, we end "Man is like a broken shard, like withering grass, like a fading flower, and like flying dust...but You are the King, the living and eternal G-d." It seems like we are beating up on ourselves. Why do we say this? We are not ignoring our potential for greatness and for becoming like G-d, *adameh la'elyon*. Rather, in order to gain favor in G-d's eyes on this day we work to become humble and submissive before Him. As the Kotzker Rebbe said, "There is nothing more complete than a broken heart." We don't mention our finite, earthly limitations in a vacuum, as we say in the very next line that G-d is eternal. The implication of this prayer, as in many of the Rosh Hashana prayers, is that our wish is to connect to this infinite Source and that then we will be living up to our noble status as sons of Adam.



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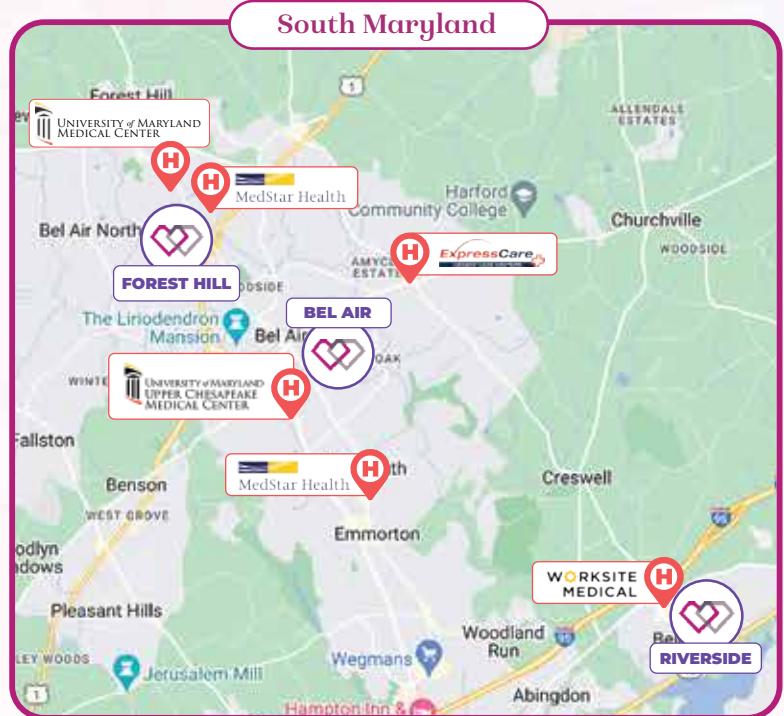
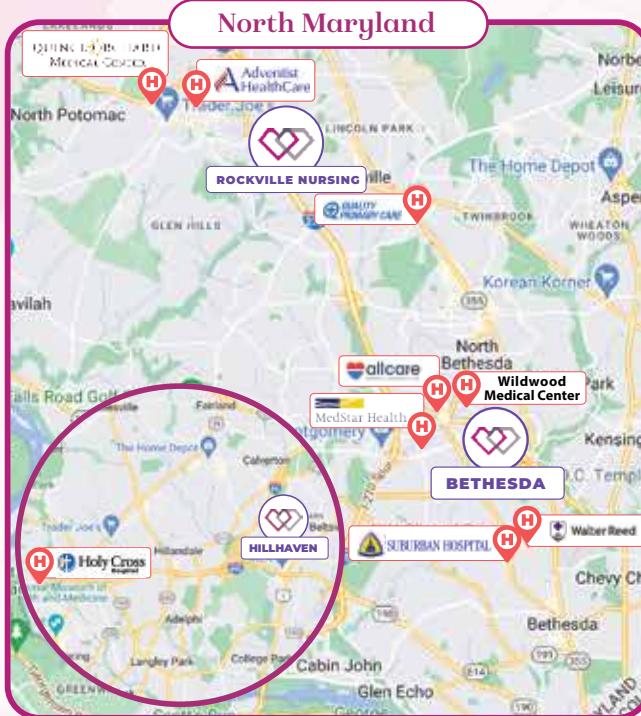
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## SHACHARIS

6:15 AM	Young Israel Shomrai Emunah	M-F
6:20 AM	Silver Spring Jewish Center	M, Th
6:25 AM	Southeast Hebrew Cong., Knesset Yehoshua	M-F
6:30 AM	Beth Shalom Congregation	M-F
	Chabad of Silver Spring	M-F
	Ohev Shalom Talmud Torah OLNEY	M-F
	Silver Spring Jewish Center	TW, F
	Young Israel Shomrai Emunah	S
	YGW	M, Th
6:35 AM	Ohr Hatorah	M, Th
6:40 AM	YGW	S, M, Th
6:45 AM	Kemp Mill Synagogue	M, Th
	Ohr Hatorah	T, W, F
	Young Israel Shomrai Emunah	M, Th
	Magen David Sephardic Congregation	M-Th
6:50 AM	Woodside Synagogue/Ahavas Torah	M, Th
	Silver Spring Jewish Center	S-F
6:55 AM	Young Israel Shomrai Emunah	T, W, F
7:00 AM	Chabad of Upper Montgomery County	M-F
	Kemp Mill Synagogue	T, W, F
	Southeast Hebrew Cong., Knesset Yehoshua	S
	Woodside Synagogue/Ahavas Torah	T, W, F
	Young Israel Ezras Israel of Potomac	M-F
7:05 AM	Kesher Israel	M, Th
7:15 AM	Kemp Mill Synagogue	M, Th
	Kesher Israel	T, W, F
	Ohev Shalom Talmud Torah/The National	M-F
	Synagogue	
	Ohr Hatorah	S
	Young Israel Shomrai Emunah	M-F
7:30 AM	Chabad of DC	M-F
	Chabad of Potomac	M-F
	JROC	M-F
	Kemp Mill Synagogue	T, W, F
	Southeast Hebrew Cong., Knesset Yehoshua	M-F
	Young Israel Shomrai Emunah	S
	Young Israel Shomrai Emunah (Sardi)	S-F
7:35 AM	Young Israel Shomrai Emunah	S-F
7:45 AM	YGW (Yeshiva Session Only)	S
7:50 AM	Magen David Sephardic Congregation	F
8:00 AM	Beth Shalom Congregation	S
	Kemp Mill Synagogue	S
	Kesher Israel	S
	Magen David Sephardic Congregation	S
	Ohev Shalom Talmud Torah OLNEY	S
	Southeast Hebrew Cong., Knesset Yehoshua	S
8:00 AM	Ezras Israel Congregation of Rockville (Days of Mussaf)	
	Woodside Synagogue/Ahavas Torah	S
	YGW (High School; School-Contingent)	S
	Young Israel Ezras Israel of Potomac	S
	Young Israel Shomrai Emunah	S
8:05 AM	Ezras Israel Congregation of Rockville	M, Th

8:15 AM	Ezras Israel Congregation of Rockville	S-F
	Ohr Hatorah	M-Th
	Silver Spring Jewish Center	M-F
8:20 AM	Ohr HaTorah	M-F
8:30 AM	Beth Joshua Congregation / Berman Hebrew Academy	S-F
	Chabad of DC	S
	Chabad of Potomac	S
	Chabad of Upper Montgomery County	S
	JROC	S
	Ohev Shalom Talmud Torah/The National Synagogue	S
	Silver Spring Jewish Center	S
	YGW (Summer Only)	S-F
8:45 AM	Young Israel Shomrai Emunah	S-F
9:00 AM	Chabad of Silver Spring	S
	Kemp Mill Synagogue	S

## MINCHA

1:00 PM	Silver Spring Jewish Center	M-Th
1:50 PM	YGW	Summer
2:20 PM	YGW	School Days
2:45 PM	YGW	S-Th
4:30 PM	Ohev Shalom Talmud Torah OLNEY	S-Th

## MINCHA/MAARIV Before Shkiah, S-TH

Beth Shalom Congregation	
Chabad of Potomac	
Chabad of Silver Spring	
Chabad of Upper Montgomery County	
Ezras Israel Congregation of Rockville	
JROC	
Kemp Mill Synagogue	
Kesher Israel	
Magen David Sephardic Congregation	
Ohev Shalom Talmud Torah/The National Synagogue	
Ohr Hatorah	
Silver Spring Jewish Center	
Southeast Hebrew Congregation, Knesset Yehoshua	
Woodside Synagogue/Ahavas Torah	
Young Israel Ezras Israel of Potomac	
Young Israel Shomrai Emunah (Asheknaz)	
Young Israel Shomrai Emunah (Sefaradi)	

## MAARIV

8:15 PM	OSTT (OLNEY)	S-Th
	SHC, Knesset Yehoshua	M-Th
8:45 PM	YGW	
9:00 PM	Silver Spring Jewish Center	Fall/Winter
9:30 PM	YGW	Summer
	Silver Spring Jewish Center	Spring/Summer
9:45 PM	Ohr Hatorah	M-Th
10:00 PM	YGW	

BETHESDA  
Magen David Sephardic Congregation [A]  
1215 Woodlawn Dr, North Bethesda, MD 20852Ezras Israel Congregation of Rockville  
Ring House TV Room  
1801 East Jefferson St, Rockville, MD 20852Yeshiva Gedola of Greater Washington (YGW)  
1216 Arcola Ave, Silver Spring, MD 20902WASHINGTON  
Chabad of DC [A]  
210 Leroy Pl, NW, Washington, DC 20008VIRGINIA  
Chabad of Northern Virginia  
3939 Prince William Dr, Fairfax, VA 22033GAITHERSBURG  
Chabad of Upper Montgomery County [A]  
11520 Dorsetown Rd, Gaithersburg, MD 20878JROC  
13304 Old Georgetown Rd, Rockville, MD 20852Young Israel Shomrai Emunah  
[Ashk + S] 1132 Arcola Ave, Silver Spring, MD 20902Kesher Israel  
1136 Street, NW Washington, DC 20007Chabad Tysons Jewish Center  
2107 Chain Bridge Rd, Vienna, VA 22182OLNEY  
Ohev Shalom Talmud Torah (OSTT)  
18320 Georgia Ave, Olney, MD 20832Chabad of Silver Spring [A]  
519 Lomberton Dr, Silver Spring, MD 20902Chabad of Aspen Hill  
1341 Arctic Avenue, RockvilleOhev Shalom Talmud Torah/  
The National Synagogue  
1600 Jonquil St NW, Washington, DC 20012Chabad of Alexandria-Arlington  
1307 N Highland St, Arlington, VA 22201POTOMAC  
Beth Shalom Congregation  
11925 Seven Locks Rd, Potomac, MD 20854Kemp Mill Synagogue  
11910 Kemp Mill Rd, Silver Spring, MD 20902Chabad of Great Laurel  
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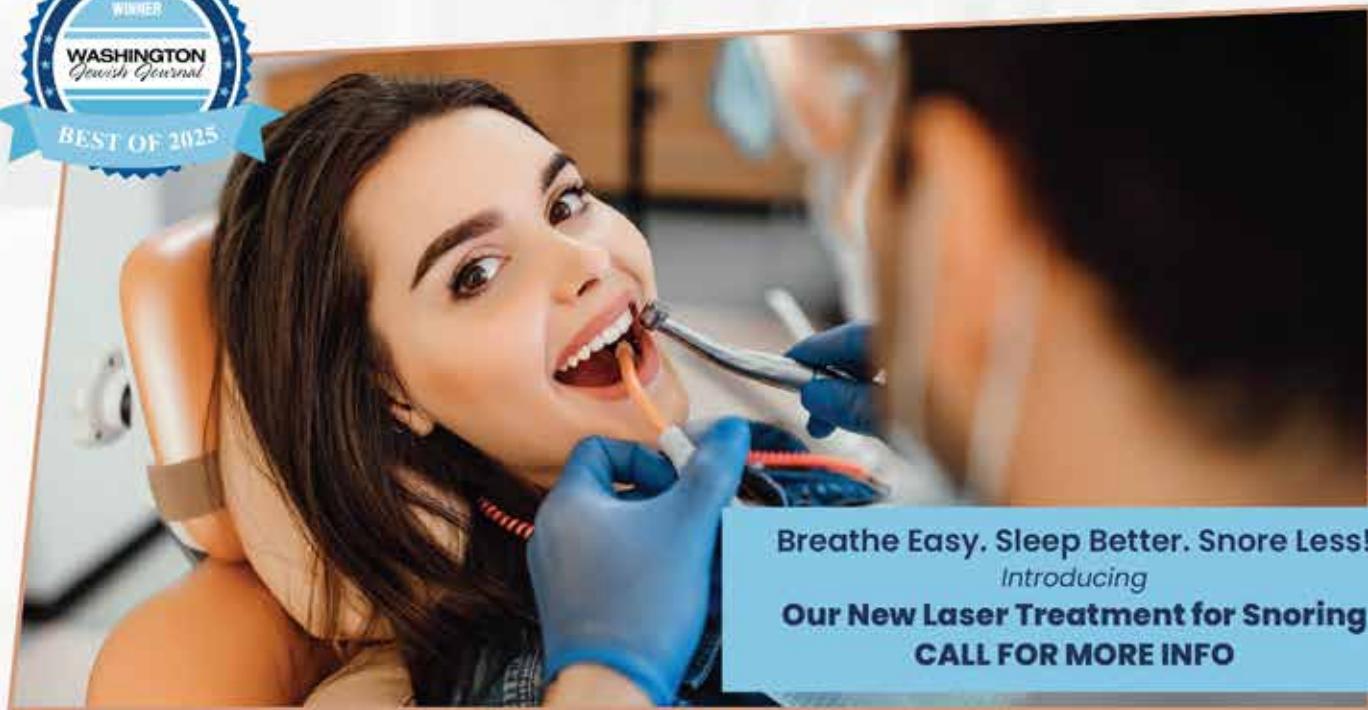


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# Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur



RABBI YITZZY FOX

# Q & A

## Rosh Hashana

### 01 What was created on the first Rosh Hashanah (first of Tishrei) of all time?

Animals, Adam, and Chava. Even according to Rabbi Eliezer, who says that the world was created in Tishrei (*Rosh Hashanah* 10b-11a), the first day of creation was on the twenty-fifth of Elul and man was created on the sixth day of creation, which was a Friday and the first of Tishrei, i.e., Rosh Hashanah.

### 02 Which days of the week can't the first day of Rosh Hashana fall out on nowadays?

Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday. After Hillel (II) Nesiah created a fixed nineteen-year calendar cycle which adjusts for differences between the solar and lunar years, the Rabbanan made it so that Rosh Hashanah cannot begin on a Sunday, Wednesday, or Friday.

### 03 Which three women did Hashem remember on Rosh Hashanah?

1. Sarah, 2. Chanah, and 3. Rachel were remembered by Hashem on Rosh Hashanah, and their sons were conceived shortly thereafter (*Rosh Hashanah* 10b). We mention these events in the zichronos section of Mussaf.

### 04 From which animal is a shofar generally taken? Which animals do not produce kosher shofars?

a) A ram b) Cows, most wild animals, and any non-kosher animals (*Shulchan Aruch* 586:1).

### 05 Why don't we recite *Hallel* on Rosh Hashanah?

The Gemara in *Arachin* 10b says because it's not appropriate to be singing while the King (Hashem) sits on the throne of judgment and the books of life and death are open before him. Similarly, the *Rambam* (*Megillah/Chanukah* 3:6) says Rosh Hashanah is a day of seriousness and repentance and not a time of excessive happiness.

### 06 How many of the shofar blasts are required *mid'Oraiysa*?

**Thirty blasts.** Although technically only one set of nine blasts (*tekiah-teruah-tekiah*) is required, since we are unsure what exactly a teruah is, we blow three sets (*tekiah, shevarim, and shevarim-teruah*), which equal thirty blasts that we consider the primary mitzva *mid'Oraiysa*. (*Rosh Hashanah* 33b; *Shulchan Aruch* OC 590:1-2).

### 07 Where was the first recorded shofar blowing in history? From where was that shofar obtained?

At Har Sinai to signal to B'nei Yisrael that they can approach the mountain. The shofar was obtained from the ram at *akeidas Yitzchak* that Avraham brought as a sacrifice to Hashem (*Shemos* 19:13, *Rashi*; see *Ramban*).

## Yom Kippur

### 01 What are the four primary steps to teshuvah?

The *Rambam* (*Teshuvah* 2:2) enumerates four basic steps: 1. Stop doing the sin (*azivas hacheit*). 2. Remorse of the sin (*charatah*). 3. Accepting to never return to that sinful behavior (*kabbalah ahl ha'asid*). 4. Confession of the sin (*viduy*). Some commentators add the need to ask for forgiveness.

### 02 On what day of the year is there a mitzvah *mid'Oraiysa* to eat heartily the entire day?

Erev Yom Kippur (*Shulchan Aruch* 604:1; see *Mishnah Berurah* and *Magen Avraham*).

## 03

### For which types of sins does Yom Kippur not atone?

*Bein Adam L'chaveiro.* One must receive forgiveness by appeasing the person whom he/she wronged. Only then will Hashem grant a person full atonement for those sins (OC 606:1).

## 04

### Why do we blow the shofar at the end of Yom Kippur?

**1.** As a remembrance for when they used to blow the shofar to free all slaves on the Yom Kippur of a *yovel* year (*Tosafos Shabbos* 114b). However, he rejects this explanation because the *yovel* shofar-blowing happened every fifty years. Perhaps it also symbolizes our own freedom as we are now no longer burdened by our sins.)

**2.** *Tosafos* gives another reason, from the *Ri*, that the shofar-blowing was to signal that it is time to prepare for the post-Yom Kippur festive meal.

**3.** *Be'er Heitev* (623:6) says that the shofar-blowing represents Hashem's Shechinah leaving us as Yom Kippur concludes. This is similar to the shofar-blowing that took place at Har Sinai when Hashem gave B'nei Yisrael the *Aseres Haibros*. (See *Beis Yosef* OC 624 from *Semag*.)

## 05

### How many times is one required to ask someone for forgiveness? Who is the exception?

Three times (in front of three people). b) A Rabbi is able to hold back forgiveness even after three requests from a student. Therefore, a student must continue to ask for forgiveness (OC 606:1).



**Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz** serves as a Rabbi at Berman Hebrew Academy and is a member of the Chofetz Chaim Kollel at the Silver Spring Jewish Center. His newly released sefer, *The Ultimate Parashah Challenge*, presents thought-provoking questions and discussions designed to enhance the Shabbos table experience. **The sefer is available for purchase** at [RabbiYitzchakBreitowitz.com](http://RabbiYitzchakBreitowitz.com) or through Mosaica Press. For questions, feedback, or to subscribe to the weekly Parashah Q&A newsletter, please email [rabbiyitzchakbreitowitz@gmail.com](mailto:rabbiyitzchakbreitowitz@gmail.com).



**WHO**

IN THE TORAH HAD  
"SUPER-SPEED"?



**WHERE**

DID YAakov TAKE  
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WAY TO EGYPT?



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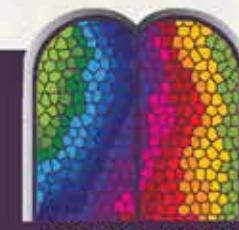
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FOX



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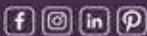


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# Walking Into the Unknown, Together With Faith



RABBI DOVID ROSENBAUM

**The Akeidah's Timeless Lesson:**  
*Embracing Hashem's plan with joy, even when the path is hidden.*

The *Torah* event we reflect on most on *Rosh Hashanah* is *Akeidas Yitzchak*, when *Avraham* was prepared to bring his son *Yitzchak* as an offering to G-d. We are rightfully proud of the total devotion of our Patriarch, but exactly what are we trying to evoke? Because he was ready to do something great we should be blessed with a good year? Alternatively, are we suggesting there is something *Avraham* demonstrates in the story that is indicative of who we are or what we have experienced?

The *Chasam Sofer* explains that there is one aspect of the conduct of *Avraham* that we all can and should apply to our daily lives. As father and son are on their way to the mountain the *pasuk* states "and both of them went together." What is the significance of emphasizing they went together? *Rashi* explains that despite the fact that *Avraham* knew what

the tragic result of this journey was intended to be he was able to

go with the same joy as his son *Yitzchak*, who did not yet comprehend the intended result. *Avraham* was about to lose the greatest reward of his life, the ability to create a legacy for generations to come, and yet he was able to go with joy! From here we learn that the faith of *Avraham* was not only manifest in his actions, but even his outlook.

The task of living our lives with faith, always accepting our lot and mission, is daunting, but very meaningful to think about on *Rosh Hashanah*. Surely we have things for which we hope and pray. However, we turn to *Hashem* on this holy day and evoke memories of *Akeidas Yitzchak*. We are reminding G-d, and ourselves, that whatever plan He has for us in the year to come will be fully accepted by us. If He sends us blessings, we will endeavor to find ways to channel them towards His service. If he sends us challenges, we will accept them as yet another opportunity to grow and serve Him.

Ironically, the more we accept whatever judgements He renders for us, the more likely we are to merit the blessings for which we so fervently. Once we have achieved this outlook and perspective He can shower us with His blessings with confidence that we will

apply them appropriately. This concept is uniquely meaningful as we enter the month of *Elul*, 5784. How many questions do we have regarding the events of the past months? How much confusion? Nevertheless, the coming weeks are an ideal period to build our inner faith, reminding ourselves that come what may, we are ready to serve Him.

May all of *klal Yisrael* merit a *kesivah vechasimah tovah* and may we have the strength and perspective to greet whatever the new year brings with joy in the opportunity to serve our Maker, as was the way of our father *Avraham*. In that merit, may *Hashem* bring a personal salvation to every individual and family impacted by these past months, and may all of the Jewish People celebrate the ultimate redemption speedily in our days.

**Rabbi Dovid Rosenbaum** became the Rabbi of YISE in 2010 after having served as the Assistant Rabbi under Rav Gedaliah Anemer, zt"l, for the previous five years. In addition to his responsibilities at YISE, Rabbi Rosenbaum has played an extensive role in the broader Greater Washington Orthodox Jewish community, serving, among other positions, as President of the Vaad Harabanim of Greater Washington from 2013 to 2015. Rabbi Rosenbaum is currently the Gittin Administrator for the Vaad, coordinating halachic divorce for couples in the community. He also acts as a halachic resource for a number of organizations in the community.

# 81 Kids Found Joy This Summer. Here's How Our Community Made It Happen.



Picture this: It's a sunny Tuesday morning, and while most children head to traditional summer camps, something extraordinary is happening for the Silver Spring community. Children courageously battling serious illnesses are splashing in pools, creating art, and forming lifelong friendships, all just a short bus ride away.

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This year, 81 boys and girls from the Mid-Atlantic region experienced the magic of Camp Simcha Without Borders right here in their own community, discovering that illness doesn't have to steal childhood joy.

But this incredible summer program is just the beginning of a much larger story happening right in your neighborhood.

## Meet Your Neighbors' Lifeline

Behind those joyful camp moments is Chai Lifeline Mid-Atlantic, quietly working with over 160 local families impacted by illness, crisis and loss.

When a child receives a devastating diagnosis, everything changes instantly. Hospital stays become routine, medical bills pile up, and normal life feels like a distant memory. This is where Chai Lifeline steps in, not as strangers offering sympathy, but as an extended family offering hope and practical support.

## All Encompassing Support

Simcha Without Borders is just one of the many ways Chai Lifeline supports families. From children in treatment to parents, siblings, and the wider community, every program is built to ease burdens, restore normalcy, and bring hope.

For the Child	For the Family	For the Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Case Management</li><li>• Hospital Respite</li><li>• Trips &amp; Special Events</li><li>• Camp Simcha</li><li>• Tutoring</li><li>• Transportation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Counseling Services</li><li>• Meals to Hospital &amp; Home</li><li>• Volunteer Support</li><li>• Insurance Advocacy</li><li>• Family Days &amp; Retreats</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Big Brother/Big Sister</li><li>• i-Shine Afterschool Programming</li><li>• Emergency Financial Assistance</li></ul>

### 81 of Our Own.

The families of Chai Lifeline are your neighbors, community members, and children who attend local schools, and in a community like ours, no family faces the unthinkable alone.

To learn more about Chai Lifeline Mid-Atlantic or get involved, visit [chailifeline.org/midatlantic](http://chailifeline.org/midatlantic)

# Worthy or Unworthy? How Should We Approach Davening?



# RABBI MICHOEL FRANK KEHILLAS OHR HATORAH

There are two thoughts we can have, going into Selichos, Rosh Hashanah, and Aseres Yemay Teshuvah. Are we worthy of Hashem's love or not? One way to approach the Tefillos and Selichos is to demonstrate our claim to Hashem's love. But perhaps we should consider ourselves unworthy, and fully reliant on the mercy of Hashem. It is fascinating how although these two things seem to be mutually exclusive – after all, you can't be worthy and unworthy at the same time – nonetheless, we take both approaches in Selichos and in davening!

But in the introductory paragraph of the *Yud Gimel Middos*, that every Selichos begins with, we take a different approach:

– גדלות רחמי' וחסדי' רצ' זכרו' היום לזרע ידיד'ך

Your great mercy and kindness, remember today to the children of Your beloved friend, (meaning Avraham Avinu, who is referred to as אבינו' in Tanach.) We finish with a very clear demand: תחאצין שאותנו ות' – קשיב לנו מאמך our expression!

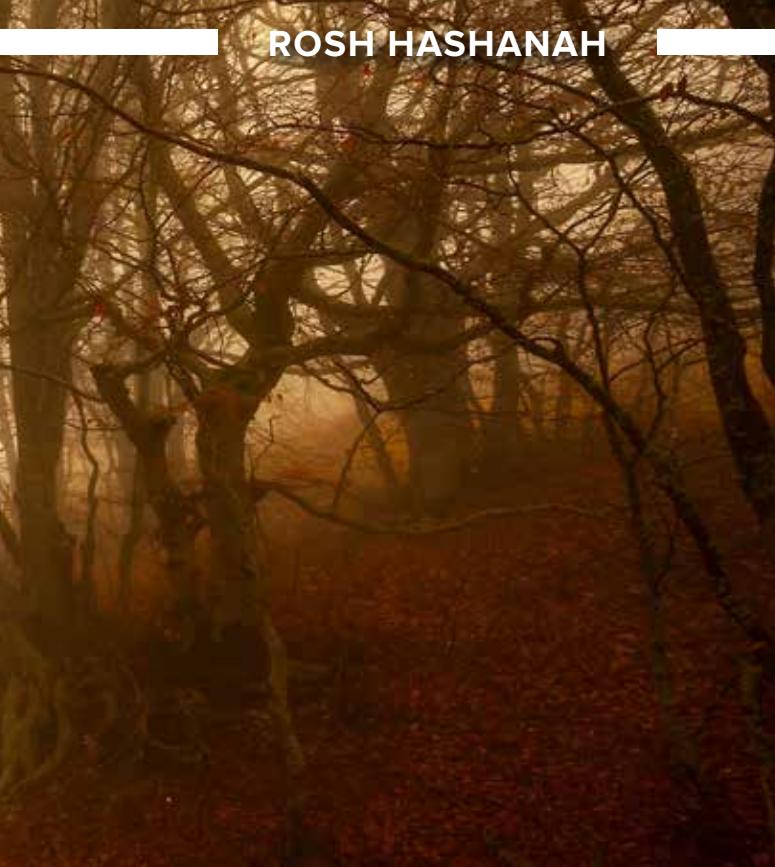
Before we say *Shemah Kolainu* and then *Viduy* at the end of *Selichos*, we preface with a long paragraph, quoting all the reasons that Hashem should have mercy upon us and forgive us. It is a long succession of different variations of – זכור ברית אבות因为你 – remember! זכור ברית אבות因为你 remember the covenant with Avos, זכור ברית הראשונים – remember the covenant with Klal Yisrael when You took them out of Mitzrayim, אהבת הקדמונים, the love for our ancestors, and remember, זכור חבת ירושלים remember Your love for Yerushalayim. Then, עשה מה שהבטחתנו – do with us as You promised. We seem to be quite confident that we are worthy of all those guarantees! Are we דילים ורשימן who have nothing to show for ourselves, no leverage or merits, or are we Klal Yisrael who can point to the Avos, the covenants and guarantees He has given us, and demand that we are listened to, forgiven, and redeemed?

When I was in Eretz Yisrael, there was another bachur I knew, he was in my chavrusa's apartment, who wanted to see the Gerer Rebbe. His grandfather had been the current Gerer Rebbe's rebbe.

in elementary school in Europe, and he knew that the Rebbe would remember his grandfather, and give him some preferential treatment as a result. [I don't know exactly what he wanted, maybe a good place to sit in the huge Gerer Beis Medrash?] However, to get in to see the Gerrer Rebbe, who has a huge Chassidus with thousands of people waiting to speak to him, is no simple matter. He knew once the rebbe would identify him, getting in wouldn't be an issue, but how to get to that point? If he told the Gabbai all about his connection, the Gabbai would undoubtedly laugh at him, or not believe him, (he was a very *Litvishe* non-chassidic bachur, after all!) So, he waited on line like everyone else, and eventually got into the Rebbe. Of course, once he identified himself, the Rebbe remembered his grandfather warmly, and welcomed him with open arms, and instructed the Gabbai to let him in whenever he wanted to come.

This is how we have to approach Hashem. We are outside the building so to speak, and we need access into Hashem. Why are we outside? We created that wall – we wandered outside. The further we have drifted from Hashem, from being connected to Him, from relying on Him and living with Him, it creates a barrier between us of *Hester Panim*. Once we are outside, in order to get in, we have to wait on line with all the other supplicants who are asking for something from Hashem. We

## ROSH HASHANAH



approach the door like poor people, with nothing, no claim, no demand, no identity, because outside – none of that helps. But once we get in, and have reconnected to Hashem, reestablished our connection, we have a long and powerful history! We have the *Avos*, *Klal Yisrael* in the *Midbar*, all that *Klal Yisrael* has been promised and guaranteed throughout our relationship with Hashem.

That is the challenge of *Selichos*. Once we get in, once we bypass the barrier that we ourselves have constructed, we have a lot to work with. We have *Yud Gimel Middos*, we have all kinds of covenants, and we have *Avos* and more. But we have to get in! That requires the greatest level of humility. If we have drifted away and forgotten about Hashem all this time, we can't expect to come barging back in. We have to approach this with the utmost humility – *כדיים וככשימים* – with the most basic and intense request – *וֹסֵה עַל עַמְלָךְ* – we are Your creations – have mercy.



**Rabbi Michael Frank** is the *Mora D'Asra* of Kehillas Ohr HaTorah in Kemp Mill, Maryland. Renowned for his depth in *Halacha* and clarity in teaching, Rabbi Frank plays an integral leadership role in the Greater Washington community. He serves on the Vaad Harabanim of Greater Washington and is the primary *posek* for the Chevra Kadisha of Greater Washington, where his halachic expertise guides sensitive end-of-life matters with care and precision. A prolific teacher, Rabbi Frank has over 1,000 recorded Torah shiurim—on almost every topic—new uploaded shiurim weekly are available on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and TorahAnytime. Rabbi Frank and his wife, Rivkie, are known for their warm hospitality and deep dedication to community building, fostering a strong sense of belonging and spiritual growth among their growing *kehilla*.



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# Greater Washington Daily Shiurim Guide 2025



## SUNDAY

6:30 a.m.	Sunday Morning Daf Yomi with Mr. Judah Lifschitz/Rabbi Hess @ Yeshiva of Greater Washington (Beis Medrash)
7:15 a.m.	Daf Yomi with Rabbi Rappaport @ OSTT Olney
Following 7:15 a.m. Shacharis	Sunday Morning Kollel Zichron Amram @ Ohr HaTorah
8:45 a.m.	Mishnah Brura - Shabbos with Rabbi Ben-Horin @ OSTT Olney
8:15 a.m. (Approx.)	Daf Yomi (Rabbi Uriel Charlap) @ Ohr HaTorah
9:30-10:30 a.m.	Sunday Brunch & Learn (For men) @ YISE, 1132 Arcola Ave, Kemp Mill
Illuminating Inquiries in Halacha	- Rabbi Mandel
Judaism 102	- Rabbi Shaps
Navigating Navi	- Rabbi Grossman
9:45 a.m.	Tanya Class (Rabbi Wolovsky) @ Chabad of Silver Spring (Zoom)
7:30 p.m.	Parsha Exploration (Rabbi Yitzchok Grossman) @ KMS (Zoom)
	ID: 655-813-1022, Password: 365636
8:15 p.m.	Tehilim Expositions (Rabbi Schwartz) @ Greater Washington Community Kollel (Zoom)
8:00-8:45 p.m.	Hilchos Shabbos (Teens) (Rabbi Zaks) @ SSJC (Ma'ariv follows)
8:45-9:30 p.m.	Daf Hashavua (Rabbi Frank) @ Ohr HaTorah
9:00-9:45 p.m.	Night Kollel (Ma'ariv follows) @ Ohr HaTorah

## MONDAY

6:00-6:45 a.m.	Morning Kollel and Daf Yomi (Rabbi Uriel Charlap) @ Ohr HaTorah
6:30 a.m.	Daf Yomi (Mr. Judah Lifschitz/Rabbi Hess) @ Yeshiva of Greater Washington (Beis Medrash)
7:30 am	Daf Yomi with Rabbi Rappaport @ OSTT Olney
11:00 a.m.	"Da'as Atzmeinu" (Laura Goldman) @ KMS (Zoom, Classroom B)
12:00-12:15 p.m.	Rashi a Day (Rabbi Weinberg) @ KMS (Zoom)
8:30-9:30 p.m.	Evening Learning @ SEHC (For men) @ 10900 Lockwood Drive, Silver Spring
Michtav M'Eliyahu	- Rabbi Municante
8:45 p.m.	Semichas Chaver Program (Rabbi Shaps) @ YISE (For men)
9:00 p.m.	Daf Yomi (Mr. Judah Lifschitz) @ Yeshiva of Greater Washington (Beis Medrash)
9:15-9:45 p.m.	K'tzos Hachoshen (Rabbi Frank) @ Ohr HaTorah

## TUESDAY

6:00-6:45 a.m.	Morning Kollel @ Ohr HaTorah
6:30 a.m.	Daf Yomi (Mr. Judah Lifschitz) @ Yeshiva of Greater Washington (Beis Medrash)
7:30 am	Daf Yomi with Rabbi Rappaport @ OSTT Olney
12:00-12:15 p.m.	Rashi a Day (Rabbi Weinberg) @ KMS (Zoom)
8:00 p.m.	Jewish Unity Learning (Greater Washington Community Kollel, For men and women) @ KMS (In Person)
8:00 p.m.	Machshava Shu"i (Chazon Ish: Emunah/B'tachon) (Rabbi Zaks) @ SSJC (Ma'ariv follows)
8:00 p.m.	Halacha Class (Rabbi Wolovsky) @ Chabad of Silver Spring (In Person)
8:15 p.m.	Inspired Tefillah (Mrs. Sara Malka Winter) @ Greater Washington Community Kollel (Zoom, For women)
8:30-9:30 p.m.	Evening Learning @ SEHC (For men) @ 10900 Lockwood Drive, Silver Spring
Timely Topics in Halacha	- Rabbi Grossman & Rabbi Mandel
9:00 p.m.	Daf Yomi (Mr. Judah Lifschitz) @ Yeshiva of Greater Washington (Beis Medrash)
9:15-9:45 p.m.	A Deeper Understanding of Tefillah (Rabbi Frank) @ Ohr HaTorah

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**Magen David Sephardic Congregation [S]**  
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### GAITHERSBURG

**Chabad of Upper Montgomery County [Ari]**  
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**Woodside Synagogue/Ahavas Torah**  
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**Yeshiva Gedola of Greater Washington (YGW)**  
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**Young Israel Shomrai Emuna**  
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**Beth Shalom Congregation**  
11825 Seven Locks Rd, Potomac, MD 20854

**Chabad of Potomac [Ari]**  
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**Young Israel Ezras Israel of Potomac**  
11618 Seven Locks Rd, Potomac, MD 20854

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Berman Hebrew Academy**  
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### JROC

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**Chabad of Silver Spring [Ari]**  
519 Lamberton Dr, Silver Spring, MD 20902

### Kemp Mill Synagogue

11910 Kemp Mill Rd, Silver Spring, MD 20902

### Ohr Hatorah

1009 Kersey Rd, Silver Spring, MD 20902

### Silver Spring Jewish Center

1401 Arcola Ave, Silver Spring, MD 20902

### Southeast Hebrew Congregation, Knesset Yehoshua

10900 Lockwood Dr, Silver Spring, MD 20901

### WASHINGTON

**Chabad of DC [Ari]**  
2110 Leroy Pl. NW, Washington, DC 20008

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### Chabad of Chevy Chase

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### Chabad of Greater Laurel

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**Debbie Ginsberg**, is the CEO of Neuro Mentors Network and the creator of the Neuro Mentors™ Mastery Course. A published author, entrepreneur, and co-host of the *Get it Done!* podcast, Debbie has spent her career building programs that make a real difference in people's lives. Through her innovative Neuro-CBT™ method, she is now training the first generation of Certified Neuro Mentors™, giving professionals, parents, and coaches the tools to help others succeed. Debbie's work can be found at [www.NeuroMentors.com](http://www.NeuroMentors.com). For more information, email [Support@NeuroMentors.com](mailto:Support@NeuroMentors.com) or call 516-984-9365.



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# Effective Goal Setting and Self-Compassion for the New Year



SELENA SNOW, PHD

As summer ends and recedes into memory, we turn our focus to the start of a new year in the Jewish calendar, which coincides with the back-to-school season. Even people who are not in the life stage of driving carpools and picking out lunchboxes at Target can have an awareness that a fresh beginning is at hand as they see the yellow school buses return to the roadways. Rosh Hashana and the fall *chagim* (holidays) are surely right around the corner! Life can seem full of promise and hope that we and our loved ones will be able to reach our personal and spiritual goals. Yet, the beginning of a new year and a fresh slate can also evoke a mix of feelings at that prospect, ranging from curiosity and excitement to fear and dread, and sometimes many of those at the same time.

As we contemplate how to start our year off on the best foot, we can get swept up in a long list of action items that can seem to help us move towards our goals but can be self-defeating. While setting goals for the new year can be helpful to get to our intended destination, it is also important to set realistic and manageable goals so that we don't set ourselves up for failure with goals that are beyond our reach. Another problem with ineffective goal setting is that we can become so overwhelmed by very lofty goals that we avoid starting the process altogether and then engage in excessive self-criticism, self-blame, and self-loathing for our perceived failures. **Avoidance** plays a significant role in maintaining unhelpful patterns of thinking

and behavior that contribute to a spiral of depression and anxiety. Although avoidance provides short-term relief from uncomfortable thoughts, feelings, and sensations, it ultimately causes long-term difficulties by reinforcing the belief that things are too difficult for you and you can't handle it, which makes you more likely to rely upon avoidance as a coping mechanism in the future. Repeated avoidance and withdrawal can shrink your world and increase depression and anxiety with fewer opportunities for positive experiences or corrective feedback about yourself, others, and the future.

A useful acronym of strategies for effective goal setting is to create SMART goals, based on the work of George Doran (1981), who described how to write management objectives:

**S: Specific** - Goals should not be vague and amorphous, such as, "I am going to clean my house." Rather, the goal should be something very specific, such as "I am going to pick up all the dirty laundry on my bedroom floor and wash, dry, fold, and put it away in the correct drawers."

**M: Measurable** - Create a goal that can be quantified. For example, plan a measurable goal such as walking one mile (vs I am going to exercise), reading three chapters of my textbook (vs I am going to study), or creating four PowerPoint slides for an upcoming presentation (vs I am going to work on my presentation).

**A: Achievable (by me)** - It is important

to select goals that we have the ability to achieve. If your goal is to get a job, you cannot fully control whether or not you will be able to achieve that goal because the hiring manager may not select you. Instead, the goal can be to submit three job applications. Similarly, a goal of making friends may not be fully up to you, but you can set an achievable (by you) goal to ask two people at work this week about how they spent their weekend.

**R: Realistic** - Set a goal that is realistic and build on successes. Rather than expecting a child who does not like to read to complete three books this week, set an initial goal of a few pages and expand the expectation gradually as they achieve successes.

**T: Time Bound** - Set a time to complete the activity to make it more likely that you follow through on your goal. Rather than saying I am going to walk one mile tomorrow, plan a time that you will take your walk. Without a planned time, the day can get away from us and we never get around to taking our intended walk.

By setting SMART goals, we can help set ourselves up for success to reach our goals for the coming new year. Nonetheless, as the sage Rashi famously quotes in several places, *Kol hatchalot kashot*—All beginnings are difficult. It is useful to remember that we are mere mortals and therefore inherently imperfect. We can benefit from practicing **self-compassion** when we make mistakes or fall short of our goals. We can also practice both **acceptance AND change**, which can

seem like opposites, but these concepts actually go together. People fear that if they accept where they are at the moment, then they will stay stuck there and never change. The opposite is true. When we don't accept where we are and who we are, and instead condemn ourselves as unworthy, incompetent, or unlovable, it becomes exceedingly difficult to believe that we are capable of undertaking the hard work necessary for meaningful change, which then leaves us stuck.

No school would hire a coach to go into the locker room before a big game to tell the team that they are awful and never do anything right and will surely lose. That is not motivational to facilitate change. Instead, if we are trying to motivate the team, we might acknowledge that they have had a tough season and things didn't always go their way, but we know that they can dig deep and find the strength and courage to go out there and try to change things up today.

As we prepare for the



*Yamim Nora'im* (High Holy Days), consider acknowledging your flaws and accepting that you have made mistakes while striving to do better. Nobody is so perfect that they are excused from asking for forgiveness and praying over the holidays. Let us think about ourselves with loving kindness and self-compassion as we set SMART goals, accept

ourselves as works in progress, and strive to change, grow, and improve upon our past mistakes and shortcomings.

Wishing everyone a happy and healthy new year!

*This article is provided as psychoeducational information for the community and is not intended as psychological treatment and does not constitute creation of a doctor-patient relationship. If you are experiencing a mental health emergency, call 9-8-8, the national behavioral health emergency number, or go to your nearest emergency room.*



**Dr. Selena Snow**, is a licensed psychologist. She is the founder and director of The Snow Psychology Group, a private practice of psychologists specializing in CBT and other evidence-based treatment for depression, anxiety, OCD, and trauma for ages 12+. They also conduct neuropsychological evaluations for ages 18+. Services are provided In-Person in Rockville, MD and via Telehealth in over 40 states. For more information, visit [www.snowpsych.com](http://www.snowpsych.com) or call the office at (240) 676-4206 x1.



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# Unesaneh Tokef: History, Myth, and Memory

*Tracing the ancient origins of Judaism's most stirring High Holiday prayer—and how a timeless piyyut of divine judgment was reshaped by the courage of Rabbi Amnon.*



RABBI GEDALIA WALLS

The piyyut or liturgical poem *Unesaneh Tokef* is a very important part of the Rosh Hashanah service. Many people know the story of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz and believe he wrote it, but a deeper study Jewish history contends the prayer's true beginning is more complicated.

It is very likely that *Unesaneh Tokef* is actually a very old poem from the land of Israel, from ancient times, centuries before Rabbi Amnon lived. Old documents found in the Cairo Genizah over a thousand years old demonstrate this. The poem's old-fashioned style, without clear rhymes, also shows that it was written much earlier than the 11th century, so Rabbi Amnon could not have been its original author.

Instead of being a story about the poem's creation, the legend of Rabbi Amnon is a powerful metaphor. It tells how Rabbi Amnon chose to die for his faith rather than convert during a time of terrible persecution, like the Crusades. The story gave a new, deeper meaning to the old poem. The poem's ideas about G-d's judgment and forgiveness became a symbol of strength and self-sacrifice for the Jewish community.

This powerful story was the main reason the poem spread so quickly across Europe. The legend turned an ancient text into a living symbol of memory, giving it a personal meaning for a people facing danger. This story helps explain why *Unesaneh Tokef* took the place of another popular prayer from the famous Rabbi Eleazar HaKalir—its emotional message was so much stronger. The importance of *Unesaneh Tokef* comes from its symbolism that captures all of the feelings and emotions surrounding the Ashkenazi community as it faces threats from the outside world with a message that judgement ultimately ends in a hopeful future.

Rabbi Gedalia Walls is a respected dayan and posek, recognized for bringing both depth and clarity to Torah learning and halachic guidance for communities worldwide. With more than fifteen years of expertise in gittin, giyur, and complex halachic litigation, he has also contributed to high-level resolutions connected to Washington, D.C. Beyond his rabbinic leadership, Rabbi Walls is a noted health and wellness authority. He welcomes inquiries at gedaliawalls@gmail.com.

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## Should We Shine It Again?

Alec Stapp  @AlecStapp

We should clean the Statue of Liberty and unveil its shiny color on July 4th next year for the 250th anniversary of American independence

### Clean The Statue Of Liberty

The Statue of Liberty is made of copper, and was originally a shiny orange-gold color. Over the years, it has tarnished to its current faded-green.



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**- לב שרים ומלכים ביד ה' “The hearts of rulers are in Hashem's hands”**

**J**ust 15 minutes from Silver Spring, in the Oval Office, Netanyahu gets the royal welcome from the President and VP Vance – steadfast allies in a world where hostility is never far away.

In the end, is this just politics... or the script of something greater?



**From Silver Spring to Eretz Yisrael**

**R**abbi Yosef & Aliza Postelnek – beloved Rav and Rebbetzin of Shomrei Emunah – have made Aliyah with their family. Their leadership, warmth, and presence will be missed here, but their journey home inspires us all. When leaders leave for a higher calling, is it our loss... or a gain for the future they're building?



## Volkswagen Takes the Driverless Road

**V**olkswagen will roll out its autonomous ID. Buzz AD1 vans in Los Angeles next year, teaming up with Uber for the launch. Are we ready to hand over the wheel – or will trust take the slow lane?



## Apple Eyes ChatGPT for Siri

**A**pple may tap OpenAI or Anthropic tech to power Siri, sidelining its in-house AI in a bid to reboot its digital assistant. Would you trust Siri more with ChatGPT under the hood?



## Kraft Heinz Cuts the Color

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## COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

### Saluting Our Heroes: A Night of Honor at KMS

Kemp Mill Synagogue came alive as the Jewish War Veterans of the USA's Department of the Mid-Atlantic Area and Israel hosted their annual Dining Out. It was more than a dinner – it was a powerful evening of unity, gratitude, and pride, where the community stood together to celebrate the courage of Jewish veterans and the enduring legacy they've given us.



Left to right: Anne Schlesinger, Scott Schlesinger (Commander of JWV Department of Mid-Atlantic Area and Israel), Mrs. April Foreman, Captain David Foreman (President of the Mess), Colonel Ed Rothstein (MD Secretary of Veterans and Families), The Honorable Elav Benjamin, (Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of Israel), Command Sergeant Major Gary Ginsburg (Past National Commander, JWV)



Attendees at the Dining Out



At the Grog Bowl.



Colonel Ed Rothstein (MD Secretary of Veterans and Families)



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# Community Health Q&A

*Smiles, Science & Family Care with Dr. Despina Markogiannakis*



## Why is dentistry so meaningful to you?

I've wanted to be a dentist since third grade, when I first realized dentistry is "arts and crafts in the mouth—where science meets art and you can change someone's life." At our Chevy Chase practice, we often see grandparents, parents, and kids all in the same waiting room. That multigenerational trust is everything. We use tools like digital X-rays, 3D scanners, and microscopic cameras so patients can see what we see. When patients understand what's happening in their mouths, they're more motivated to take care of themselves. Oral health is inseparable from overall health—gum disease is connected to diabetes, heart disease, even ADHD.

## What do you love about treating families?

Our office is truly family-centered. Patients don't just come for cleanings or crowns—they come for a team that will take care of them now—and forever.

## How do you connect dental and overall health?

The mouth often shows what's happening in the rest of the body. Gum issues and bacteria are linked to diabetes, heart disease, even fatigue. By showing patients images with microscopic cameras and 3D scans, invisible issues become visible—and people are more motivated to take care of themselves.

## What's the most important daily habit?

Prevention is everything. Brush, floss, and rinse twice a day—an electric toothbrush is most effective. For kids with braces or appliances, cleanings every three months can make a big difference. Small, consistent routines protect health before problems arise.

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**Dr. Despina Markogiannakis** is the owner of Smiles of Chevy Chase and a top-rated dentist in the D.C. region. Recognized by Washingtonian, Potomac, and Bethesda magazines, she specializes in restorative, cosmetic, general, and implant dentistry with a reputation for expertise, compassion, and trust.

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# A Conversation with Chief Judge Matthew H. Solomson

*Few members of our community carry both the weight of national responsibility and the warmth of neighborhood life quite like Matthew Solomson, a Kemp Mill resident, father, and devoted learner, and the Chief Judge of the U.S. Court of Federal Claims. In this conversation, he reflects on his upbringing, his career path, and the values that continue to guide him.*



**First of all, thank you so much for inviting us into your chambers here in D.C., and for taking the time to sit down for this conversation.**

*Chief Judge Solomson:*

It's my pleasure. I'm happy to share a little of my story with the community. Fire away.

**Let's start from the beginning—how did you grow up, what was your education like, and how did you find yourself drawn to law?**

I grew up all over the country as an Army brat. My father is a retired colonel and surgeon. By the time I reached eighth grade, I had already lived in nine different places: Louisiana, Texas, West Point, Silver Spring (once before), Savannah, San Francisco, Honolulu, Augusta (Georgia), and finally back to Maryland.

I went to public school here in the area, in Potomac. For college, I attended Brandeis, and by the end of 1995—just a month before my wedding—I didn't have a job lined up. It was stressful. I had been interviewing in New York, Boston, Chicago, and here in DC, but with no luck. Lisa and I were getting married in three weeks and I had no job lined up. Although it's really not my thing at all, I was spending Shabbos in Brookline (Boston) and went to the Bostoner Rebbe for a bracha for parnasa. I received a job offer from a large economics consulting firm back in D.C. later that very week (conclude what you will). That brought us to Silver Spring, and we've been here ever since (minus a half-year of yeshiva in Israel). Kemp Mill has been a wonderful community in which to raise our three kids. We have friends who are like family, and it's been such a blessing to watch everyone's kids

grow up together. Our wonderful *mechutanim* also live around the corner – something we could never have foreseen when we first moved in. And my parents still live in Potomac.

**So once you were back in the area, what path did your career take?**

I knew that I wanted to apply to joint JD/MBA programs and those generally require work experience, so I worked at the consulting firm for a little more than a year. Once I applied and was accepted to a JD/MBA program, however, I left the firm, asked the school for a deferment, and took a year off to learn. We spent some time in Israel, and here at YGW as well.

After law and business school, my first job was clerking for a judge on the U.S. Court of Federal Claims, where I now serve as the Chief Judge. So my career has come full circle in a way that I could never have anticipated.

When it comes to managing a career, you can make plans, do everything "right," and still have no idea where you'll actually end up. When I started clerking here at the court, I couldn't even tell you exactly what this court did. But I interviewed, received



Chief Judge Solomson at his Senate confirmation hearing.

an offer, and accepted the position. At the time, I fully expected to go into patent litigation—that was my plan – and the judge for whom I clerked promised me the opportunity to work on patent cases with him. But when I joined my first firm after clerking – Arnold & Porter, one of the largest firms in D.C.—they steered me into work before the Court of Federal Claims, primarily focused on government contracts. At first I wasn't thrilled about it, but over time I came to really enjoy the work and the completely unanticipated career path. It's why I tell new lawyers to keep an open mind about what they want to do.

So I ended up building my career around the jurisdiction of the Court of Federal Claims, which includes not only government contracts, but also a wide-range of monetary claims against the United States government, including intellectual property, tax, employment, Fifth Amendment takings, amongst other types of claims. Eventually, I published a very thick and boring book about the court's jurisdiction and that – combined with my experience in the private sector and the Justice Department – ultimately positioned me for the bench. It was a grueling, nearly three year process. I first



Chief Judge Solomson's Senate confirmation vote.

interviewed with the White House for the judicial position in 2017, just after the inauguration, in April—right around Pesach. In fact, the initial interview date I was offered was on *yuntif* and I considered trying to work it out rather than ask for a different date, but Lisa – who is always supportive – all but made me ask for another date. The White House had no problem with accommodating for unavailability for Pesach. Then, about a year later, on Purim, the White House called to say they would move forward with my nomination, assuming the background check went smoothly. The background check took a full year. Following the nomination, it was another few months before I had a Senate confirmation hearing and then approximately nine more months before I finally had a Senate floor vote.

### What made you want to go through the interview process in the first place?

It was a complicated set of considerations. On the one hand, being a judge in the federal system is, I think, one of the highest honors you can have as a lawyer in this country. It's also an opportunity to serve the country and play a vital role in the legal system.

One of my biggest regrets is not having joined the JAG Corps following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. I really wanted to join the Army as a lawyer, at least in the reserves. But with young children at home, it just didn't seem like the life my wife had signed up for. Lisa had no objections, for the record. But I didn't do it, and I regret that to this day. Now, I'm not trying to compare serving as a judge to serving in uniform—our armed forces put their personal safety at risk and often leave their families for long stretches of time—but being a judge is still a way to do some small part to serve my country. I've also always had a passion for the legal system itself. We have a fascinating, beautiful, and fundamentally just system in America. The chance to be part of it, to resolve cases, and to apply the law to new factual situations is both meaningful and enjoyable professionally. So I won't claim it's only about service. It's also what I love to do—solving legal problems and helping to resolve disputes. And that's a privilege in itself. Because what's the alternative? In other systems or societies, people sometimes settle disputes through violence. In America, we have the rule of law—rules that are known in advance, applied by an impartial judge. Whether as a judge or as an attorney, whether in private practice or with the government, I think the practice of law is a noble profession and everyone who participates in the system is helping the country in a material way.

So when I got a call from a friend of mine—

someone else who lives in Kemp Mill—proposing to recommend me to the White House for this judicial position, I said, "You'll have my resume in five minutes." And that's how I wound up here. Of course, it was a very long process, and it didn't happen without the help of many friends along the way. I am happy to share the *hashgacha* stories with you some other time.

### The confirmation process sounds exhausting. What was it like going through such an intensive background check?

It really was crazy. The investigation went all the way back to my eighteenth birthday. At the time I started in the process, I was, perhaps, forty-three? I had to provide the FBI, the DOJ, and the Senate with every location I had ever lived, every job I had ever held. I had to provide a slew of professional references—including the names of opposing counsel from my cases—and copies of everything I had ever published.

I thought I had submitted a complete set of my work, but DOJ or the Senate staffers still dug up a letter to the editor of the Brandeis newspaper I had written in college—a piece I didn't even remember. When they showed it to me, I acknowledged that it looked like my writing at that age, and that it had my friends' names as co-signatories, but I insisted I had no recollection whatsoever of having written it. The letter had criticized my college newspaper for running an advertisement from a Holocaust denier. My point was simple: as a private newspaper, they didn't have to accept such ads, and I couldn't believe that the flagship newspaper of a Jewish-sponsored university like Brandeis would publish one. I asked the Justice Department lawyers, "Is this going to be a problem for me?" I worried someone might call it anti-free speech or something. They laughed and said, "Do you really think any senator is going to attack an Orthodox Jew for criticizing Holocaust denial? No one's going near that with a ten-foot pole." And they were right—it was never an issue.

But that shows how deep the process goes. The FBI talked to my neighbors, my parents, my friends—and then asked my friends for more names. Because we had spent six months in Israel, they even contacted the Israeli national police to confirm I had no criminal record in that country. That step alone added several months to the process. And of course I had no record there—I spent all of my time walking to and from yeshiva or doing Shabbos shopping in Geula.

### Speaking of anti-semitism and universities, after October 7 you took to LinkedIn with a strong stand, refusing to hire law students who signed letters sympathetic to Hamas. How did you find



Chief Judge Solomson touring Kibbutz Be'eri with Judge Patrick Bumatay, Judge David Stras, and Judge Robert Luck.

### the strength to do that?

It's funny—when I was confirmed, I made perhaps two final thank-you posts on social media. One on Facebook for friends, and one on LinkedIn for professional colleagues. I announced I had been confirmed, thanked everyone, and essentially said, *"This is the last you'll see of me on social media. Everyone knows where to find me. Have a great life."* And I meant it. I stayed off social media almost completely—until October 7.

That day changed everything. I felt compelled to speak out. Reasonable people can disagree with that decision. Judges generally aren't supposed to opine on controversial issues outside of their cases. But our ethics rules also encourage us to teach, to express opinions about the law and the profession, and to promote the rule of law and principles of justice. I thought it was important to address not only the terror attacks themselves, but also what they meant for the Jewish community in America. Within days—before Israel had even responded—you already saw anti-Israel protests. Really, anti-Jewish protests. On campuses, in New York City, and elsewhere.

Initially, what received a fair amount of press was my statement on LinkedIn that I would not hire as a law clerk any Harvard student who remained a member of the organizations that signed onto a pro-Hamas letter. If you resigned in protest, fine. But for students who stayed members of those groups, I argued they were not fit to be hired as Federal judicial law clerks, any more than would a student who expressed support for the KKK. Both the legal and mainstream



Chief Judge Solomson being sworn into office by then-Chief Judge Sweeney, with his wife Lisa holding the Chumash.



Chief Judge Solomson sharing lunch with former President of Israel Ruvi Rivlin, alongside Judges Rudofsky and Altman, two of the judicial trip's organizers.



Chief Judge Solomson with Judge Schwartz and the U.S. Air Force Academy's Jewish choir in chambers.

press covered my statement.

Soon after, a number of major law firms—far more powerful than a single judge—began rescinding job offers to students who had signed or made pro-Hamas statements. Soon after, another judge, a friend of mine, followed suit with a similar statement.

Look, there's a wide range of legitimate views about the Middle East. You can argue for two states, or whatever. That's fine. But when you cross the line into supporting terrorism, that's different. Free speech protects your right to say even very offensive things. But it doesn't obligate me to consider you for a clerkship. And when protests move from speech into physical harassment—physically blocking Jewish students or intimidating them on campus—that's not speech anymore. That's prohibited conduct. And that's exactly what we saw on a range of campuses.

### **After Harvard, you were also involved in the boycott of Columbia Law School. How did that come about?**

I have hired law clerks from a range of law schools, including Harvard, UPenn, NYU, Georgetown, Notre Dame, Maryland, Cornell, Pepperdine, Fordham, Cardozo, and GWU. I pay attention to what is happening at law schools. At a certain point, what I was seeing at Columbia was intolerable. On my own, I knew I wouldn't move the needle—if one judge says he or she won't hire Columbia grads, no one cares that much. So I reached out via email to Judge Jim Ho of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit and to Judge Lisa Branch of the Eleventh Circuit. Both had previously led boycotts of Stanford and Yale—refusing to hire their law students—after those schools mistreated conservative speakers and generally showed hostility to conservative students. Neither judge is Jewish.

Together, we concluded that a simple letter of condemnation wouldn't change anything. The only way to get the university's attention was a boycott. So thirteen or so federal judges, including myself, signed

onto a statement saying we would not hire Columbia graduates going forward—starting with the incoming class, so prospective students had the chance to choose a different school. I published a Wall Street Journal op-ed explaining our decision. (Incidentally, it must've been Kemp Mill day at the Journal—my close friend Dr. Tevi Troy had an article published on the same page as mine.)

Some people argued that our hiring boycott would unfairly hurt innocent students, including Jewish students. But as Judge Ho explained, that critique is born of a loser mentality because it assumes failure. If you assume the boycott will succeed, that would mean the university has changed and reformed, and the boycott ends with a net positive result. And, indeed, Judge Ho is correct that if only thirty or forty judges had joined, the pressure would have been overwhelming, and the schools would have no choice but to change, and then no student would face any repercussions. So asking about innocent students makes a critical assumption that the boycott would not achieve its intended effect. All of those who signed the boycott had the attitude that we would succeed and perhaps more judges would join us.

Another final story on this is worth relating. Judge Ho called me later and said that his initial reaction to my email request was that this antisemitism issue was not his fight. After all, he had already taken a stand against Yale and Stanford, and caught flak for that. But then, he told me, he prayed on the matter one evening, and woke up thinking—and this brings me to tears every time I tell it—"what kind of person would I be if I only stood up for Christians and conservatives, and not my Jewish brothers and sisters."

### **You mentioned that the boycott didn't come without cost. What was the reaction like, and did you ever worry about security?**

I think we're tremendously blessed in this country. By and large, our fellow citizens support us, and that's why America doesn't

look like some other places that seem to have been overrun by Hamas sympathizers.

But yes, the boycott drew criticism. Professors criticized us. Even some Jewish professors criticized us, calling it mean or unfair. And it wasn't cost-free—we all faced ethics complaints (that ultimately were dismissed as meritless). But it was a small price to pay to help focus legal employers on the plight of Jewish students at Columbia. As for security—yes, it's always a concern. Judicial security is an important issue. There's always someone who loses in court, which means there's always someone unhappy with you as a judge. In fact, if you look at recent years, Congress has been grappling with this very problem. One Federal judge in New Jersey, Judge Salas, was the victim of a serious crime—an evil man who I believe once had a case before her, came to her home, shot her husband, and killed her son. And I think that some (if not all) Supreme Court justices today need around-the-clock security due to threats. So yes, it's definitely something we think about.

### **I heard that after October 7 you even brought Rabbi Frank in to speak at the court. How did that come about?**

Yes. In the aftermath, a number of Jewish colleagues—both inside the court and lawyers I knew outside—felt this real need to connect with other Jews, to connect more deeply with Judaism, and to process what had happened and what we were experiencing in the Diaspora. I think we were all feeling that need, no matter our observance level. October 7 was like a pogrom out of old-world Europe—or like Chevron in 1929—only carried out in our time. When you stop and scale the numbers, if the same thing had happened here in the United States, it would have been the equivalent of something like 40-50,000 people murdered in a single day. It's unfathomable.

Because of that need, I invited Rabbi Frank to come in and speak to a group of judges and lawyers who expressed interest in getting together. It was a very diverse group of

Jews—I think he remarked that it was the most diverse group he's ever addressed. We actually brought him in twice, and the feedback was incredible. People said it was sensitive, thoughtful, and exactly what they needed. In fact, I think one of those shiurim ended up being his most downloaded from his podcast library. We've talked about doing it again and I've had others ask about it. It's been a while now, so maybe it's time to regroup.

**And what about being an openly observant Jew—has that ever posed unique challenges for you on the bench?**

Not at all. Honestly, it was more of a challenge in private practice. When you're a young lawyer, you have to explain Shabbos and yom tov to every new boss. Or you're out to eat with colleagues, sipping a Diet Coke and eating cold fruit while they're eating burgers, and it can feel awkward.



Chief Judge Solomson with the judicial delegation in front of the Knesset.

As a judge, though, I set the schedule. And I have the luxury of being able to close chambers for Jewish holidays—and out of respect, I do the same for my non-Jewish clerks between December 24 and January 1. I'll work from home, but they get that time off.

Before my Senate confirmation hearing, I asked a DOJ lawyer helping us nominees through the process whether it would be

a problem for me to wear a yarmulke at the hearing. He said, *"Not with our side of the aisle—and we have all the votes."* Funny answer. I was confirmed by a very wide margin, so nobody was too troubled by my religious observance.

**Do you have any memorable experiences explaining your observance to employers before becoming a judge?**

One of my favorite stories goes back to



Chief Judge Solomson leading Tehillim at a memorial service with fellow judges at Har Herzl.

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when I received a job offer at a company. I had a standard spiel I'd give to every potential new boss. I'd say: *"I'm a Saturday Sabbath observer. From Friday evening until Saturday night, I'll be completely out of pocket—no phone, no email. But I'll pick up the work Saturday night, I'll answer emails every night before bed and first thing in the morning, and I've never dropped the ball. If this is a problem for you or the company, that's fine—just let me know now. I won't sue or complain about discrimination. I just want this to be a good fit."*

One boss—now a good friend—told me it wouldn't be a problem. But on my very first Wednesday, he came into my office and said, *"Don't you have to be getting home?"* I replied, *"Why would I need to get home?"* He shrugged and said, *"Well, it's getting dark out."* I said back *"So?"* *"Your Sabbath?"*, he asked. I realized he thought I had to be home every night before dark. I laughed and explained, *"The Jewish Sabbath starts Friday night and ends Saturday night. I don't need to leave early today."* He just shook his head and said, *"Whatever, man,"* and walked out. He literally didn't know when Shabbos was. That's a common thing I warn young professionals about — outside of NY or LA, people aren't familiar with Jewish observance or, say, *yarmulkes*.

**That's hilarious—but did you ever feel it was a challenge to maintain observance in the workplace?**

I never really had an issue. Sometimes you do have to work harder to show you're not slacking. But if you do great work, if you're responsive and deliver high-quality results, people respect that. They'll be respectful of your religious commitment and the fact that you're offline on Shabbos or yom tov.

But you absolutely can't coast and expect special treatment. You've got to set the bar high, because in the middle of a litigation deadline, when everyone else is working around the clock, you may need to say, *"Sorry, I'm out for three days."* And of course, people don't understand that you're not at the beach. On Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur, you're in shul twelve hours a day, or fasting—but nobody cares. To them, you're just unavailable and on vacation. And you can't expect sympathy. You just make it work, and you make up for it by being excellent and fully committed the rest of the time. I also always offered my non-Jewish colleagues to cover for them during the Christmas season or around Easter.

**Sometimes people assume that being an Orthodox Jew must affect how you approach the law. How do you think about that intersection?**

It's important to separate between two very different things: *halacha* and skills from learning.

*Halacha* has nothing to do with the substantive answers to American legal questions. My oath is to uphold the Constitution and to faithfully apply American law. Above me in the judicial hierarchy, I have the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit and, of course, the United States Supreme Court. My role is to faithfully apply to cases the statutes Congress passes (and the President signs into law), the regulations the Executive Branch promulgates, and the binding decisions of the Federal Circuit and the Supreme Court.

It's hard to even think of an issue in my court where *halacha* would have a view, but if you asked, *what if halacha conflicted with American law in a case before you?*—the answer is simple. I would apply American law. Period. My oath and duty require me to apply American law. If *halacha* ever conflicted with American law, my duty would still be to apply American law. If I ever felt I could not fulfill my oath to do so, for whatever reason, I would resign. That's the deal. Other religious judges — including a sitting Catholic Supreme Court justice — have essentially been asked this kind of question,

and to me it reflects a subtle anti-religious bias. Nobody asks a secular judge what happens if the law conflicts with their secular humanist philosophy as if it's not essentially a religion. In any event, my answer is that my religious views stay outside the courtroom.

### What about the skill set from learning in yeshiva—does that translate into your work as a judge?

That's a different story. Yeshiva provides a kind of legal training in its own right. You do case analysis, close reading of texts, and you apply rules to new factual scenarios. That's excellent preparation for law school. At the same time, law school also teaches things yeshiva doesn't—structured theory, legal vocabulary, and different frameworks for interpretation.

For example, in American law, there are at least three approaches to interpreting a statute, for example:

**1. Textualism** – sticking closely to the plain, original public meaning of the words of a binding text like a statute or constitutional provision.

**2. Purposivism** – looking to the broader purpose of the law, even if it pushes beyond the text.

**3. Intentionalism** – focusing on what Congress specifically intended, sometimes based on congressional committee reports or debates.

When I was learning *Yoreh De'ah*, I sometimes noticed that one authority might be more sensitive to specific language and word choices, another to the broader purpose of a rule, and another to a related text elsewhere. It struck me that some *poskim* were essentially doing "textualism" while others were "purposivists," etc. – even that vocabulary isn't used. But that's my point – in my experience, the *beis medrash* isn't focused too much on legal theory or methodology (even in the context of *halacha*).

### And you've kept up your learning alongside your legal career?

Well, I've tried, but admittedly some periods of my professional life have been more productive than others in terms of Torah learning. A few years ago, however, my son encouraged me to pick up something more challenging that would motivate me. And so I applied and was accepted to the *yadin yadin* kollel program at YU/RIETS. The learning is self-study, and it takes about four years, I understand, to complete the basic curriculum. We have weekly *chaburas* via Zoom and in the several past years I have

attended the *chabrusas* at RIETS in person (thanks to Amtrak). In addition to *bechinos*, another requirement is that we must present a *chabura* once per year. I've completed two thus far (available on YUTorah) and it is likely the most challenging, most intimidating thing I have ever done – more so than appearing before an appellate court or the Senate. I am not exaggerating even a little. The Roshei Kollel – including HaRav Mordechai Willig, HaRav Yona Reiss, and HaRav J. David Bleich – typically attend, as do the other *chavrei kollel*, all of whom are, of course, tremendous *talmidei chachamim*. It is a tough crowd. My goal is limited – not to embarrass myself.

### In 2024, you joined a delegation of judges on a trip to Israel. Can you tell me about that experience?

Yes. A group of three other Jewish judges and I organized it—14 federal judges in total, evenly split: seven Jews, seven non-Jews; seven appellate judges, seven trial judges. The World Jewish Congress sponsored the trip, and it lasted four or five days.

We met with Supreme Court justices, Knesset members, Israeli State Department lawyers arguing Israel's case at the ICC, and military lawyers and generals. But we also went south. In Kibbutz Be'eri, we were guided by a *chayelet* who had lost a handful of family members on October 7. She walked us through their homes, through the devastation, and shared her story with extraordinary *gevurah*. I honestly don't know how she did it without breaking down. For the rest of us, it was overwhelming.

We were also shown a 47-minute video of the atrocities – the one that hasn't been released publicly (phones weren't allowed in the room). The footage was horrific. Everyone came out shaken; some sat in silence, others cried openly. It was, without question, one of the most emotional moments of my life.

It was a great privilege—and very emotional—to stand together, to meet hostage families, and to bear witness to the atrocities. I think every judge who joined us on the trip has since spoken to law school groups about October 7, our experience in Israel, and what we learned there.

### As we enter the High Holidays, do you have a message for the community?

My wife Lisa always reminds me – correctly – that the holidays are a chance to take a beat to be grateful ... to express gratitude to our Creator for our lives and to appreciate the opportunity to spend meaningful time



Chief Judge Solomson and Judge Schwartz with Rav Yitzchok Breitowitz of Ohr Somayach in Israel.



Chief Judge Solomson and his wife Lisa attending a Supreme Court dinner honoring new federal judges.

with our family and friends (who are like family), while also reflecting on what makes life meaningful. It's a chance to rebalance our priorities for the upcoming year. We in Kemp Mill are indeed very lucky to live in such a special community with special friends and neighbors. I don't think I'm in a position to offer a message, but I'd say that everyone should try to appreciate the time you have with the people you love and don't wish the time by. Even if you're young, and work (with the Jewish holiday season) feels very difficult – something I remember – it all goes by quickly and you can't get the time back.

# HAPPY 1ST ANNIVERSARY!

AVIVA WAXMAN

It is hard to believe that we are approaching Rosh Hashanah once again while I feel like Pesach was over yesterday. Coincidentally, the first anniversary for this magazine is this Rosh Hashanah Issue! It is so exciting that we are at the one year mark of this column! With the upcoming Yom Tov of Rosh Hashanah where we celebrate the one-ness of the world and G-d and for the first anniversary of the WJJ I thought it would be applicable to discuss some rules of number **one** in design. Let's dive into places in design where the number **one** is important.

First and foremost, when designing a home it is of paramount importance that you stick with **one** style. From that style, each room can be a different angle of it but the look throughout has to be very consistent. Keeping the style consistent gives people a sense of security and comfort in your home because it's almost like they know what to expect throughout. One of the first homes I worked on, and the most inspiring home I worked on, was a mansion near Manhattan that was designed in a Ralph Lauren style. Each room was completely different but they all had the common grounds of very horse centric, and all the rich saturated navies, greens, and reds. When you confirm the style you want, create a color pallet and some prominent features and make sure to stick with that for every room.

Another rule of **one** is: **one** focal point. Every room should have a location that is the point of interest to tell the viewer where to look. The point of interest does not need to be major but there has to be something that gives the room visual interest. Many rooms have very standard point of interest, the range and range hood in

the kitchen, buffet area with painting in the dining room, the living room largest sofa with artwork above it.

The last rule of **one** is **one** pattern per room. I am a big believer that every great design has at least one pattern. Pattern gives a space great visual interest and personality. A room that has only solid colors and similar matte fabrics looks amateur and bland. If you are going with a monochromatic style then go heavy on different fabrics, mix leather and fur with Sherpa to add pattern in the fabrics. Patterns keep the space vibrant and edgy.

I cannot complete this article about **one** without incorporating the most important rule of one; our one and only King. I read a stunning article on Aish.com written by Yoni Rhine, where he quotes Reb Yeruchim Levovitz who said that although the biblical prohibition of Idolatry does not seem applicable today, really, idol worshiping pertains to any negative force that makes us loose our focus from our service in G-d, whether it is jealousy, money, perfection... and causes us to sin. On Rosh Hashanah when we announce the One-ness of Hashem and coronate G-d as our king we are refocusing ourselves to serve only the one and only Hashem. In this vain I feel like we can truly complete this article: everything we do in life needs to be G-d-centric, that is our one and only "point of interest" in this world but with that we can and should live a beautiful life. Let us take the important lesson of Rosh Hashanah and these number **one** tips in design and have a wonderful new year.

**Aviva Waxman** is the owner of Sheva Interiors, an interior design firm covering Maryland and DC. Aviva loves to work with her clients to bring out their style in a contemporary and You-nique way. She can be reached at [shevainteriors@gmail.com](mailto:shevainteriors@gmail.com)



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# Judged by Our Ripples

“One small act of kindness can travel far beyond what we see, touching lives in ways we may never know. As Rosh Hashana approaches, we are reminded that our truest judgment may be found in the ripples we leave behind. Each moment offers us the chance to become a source of blessing in someone else’s story.”



RABBI ARI KORETZKY



I've been fond these past few weeks of recounting a story that recently happened to my wife, Malka, in Trader Joe's.

While waiting in line, she noticed that the person who had just checked out ahead of her had left an item behind on the counter. Glancing out the window, she saw the man still in the parking lot. Without hesitating, she grabbed the item, ran it out to him, and returned it just in time.

When she came back inside, the clerk called over the store manager (or “Captain,” in Trader Joe's lingo) and excitedly exclaimed, “That's her! That's the woman who chased after the man who forgot his item!”

The manager handed Malka a complimentary bouquet of flowers, which later graced our Shabbos table. As she left the store, another customer – a woman not obviously Jewish – turned to her and said, “You did a real *mitzvah*.”

As I approach Rosh Hashana, I keep thinking about the ripple effect of that one small act. A man received his item back, a clerk and manager felt uplifted, a stranger was moved to speak of *mitzvos* – and perhaps, to feel a flicker of Jewish pride.

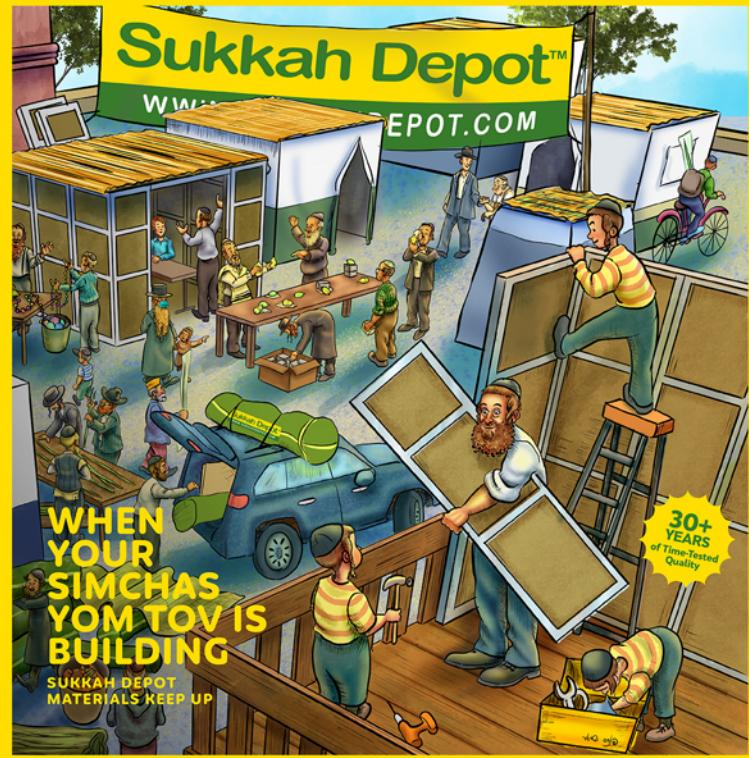
The great mussar teachers, such as Rav Dov Yoffen, taught that one way to merit a favorable judgment is to become *rabim tzrichim lo* – someone upon whom others depend. To the degree that our presence sustains or uplifts others, our own life and blessing become more necessary in this world.

This may be especially true in our interactions with less affiliated Jews. Sometimes we may be that one remaining link tethering another Jew to their heritage.

And so, as the shofar blows and a new year dawns, I find myself asking: beyond my immediate family, to whom might I be an indispensable link in the year ahead?



Raised in Baltimore, Maryland, “Rabbi K” journeyed to College Park by way of Israel, Ner Israel Rabbinical College, and Johns Hopkins University, where he earned a Master's in Creative Nonfiction Writing. He brings to his role as Executive Director a passion for Judaism, podcasting (check out *Jews You Should Know*), piano, jetskiing, and racquetball. Rabbi K lives in Silver Spring, MD with his wife, Malka, and their four children – Meir, Rena, Shalom, and Ahuva.



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# Finding the Divine in Social Capital



JOSH SEIDEMANN

In *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Robert Putnam explored trends indicating a decline in what he defined as "social capital" - specifically, diminishing "connections among individuals' social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them." As one example, Putnam noted that while bowling alleys were enjoying an uptick in business over several decades, participation in bowling leagues had declined. Putnam developed several reasons for this shift, including generational differences, urban sprawl, and pressures borne of time and money.

But Putnam also observed that roughly half of American social capital is religious. In a 2011 interview, Putnam proposed that if we placed bowling leagues, garden clubs, Boy Scouts, the Rotary and other social organizations on one side of a scale and religious organizations on the other, they would roughly balance out. My *kaddish* year for my Dad z'l corroborated Putnam's observations, and my more recent obligations as a "*kaddish chaver*" suggest how the social connections Putnam explores may affect our relationship with the Divine, as well.

I travelled a lot for work during my *kaddish* year. And travel can make *kaddish* difficult. Airlines and meeting schedules do not align naturally to shul. And finding a minyan in some communities can take some work. But the same conditions that created challenges yielded rewarding and inspiring experiences.

In Iowa, a shul that hosts a minyan only on Shabbos opened on both Wednesday and Thursday so that I could say *kaddish*; one congregant shared that he drove 45 minutes each way to make the minyan. In Missouri, a downtown office minyan dispatched someone to hold a parking spot for me on the street so that I could pull in,



In Missouri, these men made the minyan.

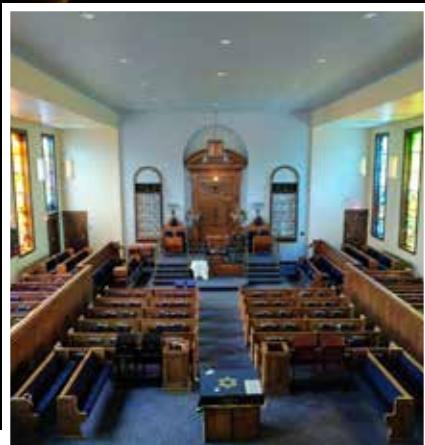
and then get to the airport for a flight home. And in Kansas, a man approached me the morning after my first evening in shul and handed me a heavy package that smelled like Heaven. "If you have room in your suitcase going home," he said, "I bake and like to share." It was a home-baked loaf of bread laced with cinnamon, bearing a sticker with the man's name and "Proudly baked with Kansas wheat." I saved it for Shabbos. It was delicious.

Of course, I would have rather not been saying *kaddish*; doing so means you have suffered a loss. And yet there was something profoundly comforting in the social capital that arose from the genuine camaraderie and commitment of otherwise-strangers to my personal obligation.

During that year, I also compiled a photo album of all the places I said *kaddish*,

from Nashville to Harrisburg to Denver to the convention floor of the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas and places in between. I thought of that collection when saying an "*emissarial kaddish*" a few weeks ago in Richmond on behalf of a departed neighbor. As I snuck a picture of the shul to send to her daughter, I wondered what connection might have emerged between Tova Channah bas Yaakov and this minyan. The *Machzor Vitry*, an 11th century compendium of prayers, poetry, and practices of the northeastern France Jewish community, suggests a bridge.

An encounter between Rabbi Akiva and an apparition appears numerous times in the literature; among the earliest is the *Machzor Vitry*, but the account appears across continents and centuries in other sources, though none are contemporaneous with the time in which Rabbi Akiva lived. The



story describes a meeting between Rabbi Akiva and a man engaged in backbreaking (and sometimes, depending on the source, Sisyphean) labor. Sometimes the man hauls coal; other times, wood; in some accounts, fire is involved, and in certain of those versions, the man is condemned to burn in the fire he feeds and to then replenish it as it ebbs. Sometimes the man is a ghost. But in most accounts, he is tormented, and while reluctant to pause his work at the risk of infuriating his taskmasters, tells Rabbi Akiva that if he (the apparition of the departed) has a son, and if that son says *barchu* and *kaddish*, and if a minyan responds *Baruch HaShem ha'mevorach l'olam va'ed* and *yehei sh'mei rabbah*, then his posthumous afflictions will be relieved. Other sources take a more compassionate, even restorative, view – citing the 16th century Kabbalist Rabbi Isaac Luria (known colloquially as the AriZal) the 1651's *Nishmas Chayim* proposes that *kaddish* lifts the departed upward from one level of Heaven to another.

The common thread among these sources is that *kaddish* is less about the *individual's* recitation and more about the *community's* responses to it. And this should not surprise us because we know that *kaddish* can be said only in the presence of a *minyan*. The collective response of *yehei sh'mei rabbah*

is the true reward of the *kaddish*. And in that respect, *kaddish*, and the bridges it creates between the reciter and the respondents – especially when people extend themselves beyond typical expectations to create a minyan – attest to Putnam's "connections among individuals' social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them."

Which then invites us to ask: Can we discern a Divine dimension in the pursuit of social capital?

Rabbeinu Yonah (Gerona, Spain, d.1264) in *Sha'arei Teshuva* addresses a fundamental aspect of repentance that appears as far back as the Talmud, specifically, *Yoma* 85b. The *Mishnah* addresses the duality of infractions between man and his fellow (specifically, the concurrent injury among people alongside the perpetrator's violation of G-d's commands) and the construct that one's return to G-d cannot be effected until his fellow is appeased. But while the subsequent *Gemorah* and other sources portray this in a somewhat formulaic fashion, the *Sha'arei Teshuva* reframes this as part of his broader vision in which kindness and humility are not simply corrective measures but transcendent initiatives that repair and affirm one's relationship with the Creator. Stated differently, the cultivation of this social capital – through kindness,

trust, extension, and empathy – improves not only relationships among people, but serves as an essential pathway to enhance one's relationship with G-d.

And so *kaddish* and its responsive chorus that elevate the departed's soul might not only build the type of aspirational social capital that Putnam describes among the living but also a pathway to deepen our relationship with the Divine. And those avenues can be found anywhere we pause to extend and connect with others – whether in Iowa, or Kansas, or Nevada, or Colorado, or here in metro DC – any place where a minyan gathers with the shared outcome of elevating both the souls of the departed and the living.



**Josh Seidemann** is a senior telecom attorney with broad experience across private practice, government, and national trade associations. He specializes in emerging technologies and Federal regulatory policy shaping rural U.S. markets, and has worked extensively with public and private sector organizations to advance telehealth, distance education, and rural economic development. In addition to his legal and policy work, he is a recognized thought leader who publishes regularly in trade and academic outlets on the intersection of technology and industry.

# Rosh Hashanah

## THE INNER VOICE



RABBI RAPHAEL PELCOVITZ

On Rosh Hashanah, Jews gather in *shul* to hear the sound of the shofar. However, what the listener should really attempt to do is to evoke his own personal *shofar*, to awaken himself from his spiritual slumber, sensitize himself and attempt to become aware of his own potential.

One must arouse the *kol penimi*, the inner voice which every person possesses, the *yetzer tov*, the inclination for good which everyone has, the *pintele Yid* to which all Jews are heirs, since Israel was chosen as G-d's people. The Talmud teaches us: *בְּתַחַן שֹׁפָר בְּתוֹךְ שֹׁפָר, אֵם קָל פָּנִים שְׁפָעַם יִצְחָק;* "If one places a *shofar* within a *shofar* and blows, if the inner one is heard he fulfills the *mitzvah*, but if the outer one, he does not" (Rosh Hashanah 27b).

Every human being is ruled by two forces, which are often in conflict with one another. He is attracted to power, riches, position, comfort and luxury; in other words, to the material, to physical and worldly pleasures. Still, there is also often within him a sense of frustration, dissatisfaction and unhappiness, for his soul hungers for the aesthetic, the intellectual and the spiritual. This is the inner *kol* which may be in his subconscious, but is the "real me," which modern man seems to be searching

for so desperately. It is the *kol penimi* which must be aroused in us on Rosh Hashanah if we are to be *yonsei*. And this inner voice is heard by all of us at certain moments in our life. When a Jew observes a *yahrzeit*, or recites *Yizkor*, when one responds to the needs of a Jewish institution, when we rise to the defense of Israel under attack – political or military – minimal as all this may be, we are listening to the *kol penimi*. What has brought so many people back to Torah Judaism, as witness the many *baalei teshuvah*, if not the inner voice found in every Jew?

The strength and supremacy of man's subconscious *penimius*, as opposed to his conscious choices and reasoned order of priority, *chitzonius*, was described in a fascinating manner by the founder of the *mussar* movement, Reb Yisrael Salanter. There was once a man who had a wayward son whose bad behavior caused his father much aggravation. This man also had a pupil living in his house who was a delight – good, studious and respectful – whom he loved dearly. The two boys shared a room, and one night the father was awakened by the smell of smoke – a fire had broken out

in the house. He ran to the room where the boys were sleeping. Which of the two would he save first? Reb Yisrael was convinced that the father would instinctively rush to rescue his son! For subconsciously – *b'penimius* – he loved him deeply. And so too, every Jew deep down, if only subconsciously, loves Judaism and is loyal to his heritage and his people. It is this *kol penimi* to which we must listen today, the voice that tells us to reorder our priorities, reexamine our values and recognize our responsibilities as Jews.

The Talmud, in *Rosh Hashanah*, on the *daf* which we quoted above, makes a



## ROSH HASHANAH

most telling and profound observation. It states that although normally "Two voices cannot be heard simultaneously," there is an exception: "If it is beloved and dear, he concentrates and hears." Modern man is subjected constantly to "two voices": the call of the outside world, which is secular, materialistic and hedonistic, and the call of Judaism, which is spiritual, idealistic and disciplined.

The first *kol* is strong, shrill and demanding; the second is quiet, sincere and muted. But if it is cherished and beloved, it can and will be heard. The inner voice can overcome the outer one for it is ultimately stronger, as Reb Yisrael Salanter proved in his parable.

A thoughtful author once depicted his impression of an iceberg – wind, tide and surface ice are all going in one direction, and moving majestically against these forces is an iceberg! How is it able to do so? We ask this question only because we see just a small part of the iceberg. Deep down in the water at the base of the iceberg there are more powerful currents in control. Men and women who are committed to Torah Judaism are like that iceberg. Strength of character, a courageous spirit and devotion to Torah – these are the powerful currents that keep us going in the right direction, against the forces of a society that is so alien to our beliefs. Listen to the *kol penimi* within you, to the inner shofar, and you will hear the sound of our glorious past, the echo of our rich heritage; and by following its guidance you will fashion a better future for yourself.



**Rabbi Raphael Pelcovitz** ז"צ, the beloved rabbi emeritus of the famed "White Shul" in Far Rockaway, was a master teacher whose warmth, clarity, and depth inspired generations, making Torah learning both accessible and uplifting. As one of the crown jewels of the American rabbinate, he guided thousands with wisdom and simplicity, leaving behind a towering legacy of faith, leadership, and devotion that continues to illuminate lives worldwide. At his side stood his wife, Mrs. Shirley Pelcovitz, a woman of vision and strength who helped pioneer Miami's first Torah community, laying the groundwork for Jewish education there, and later brought her passion and leadership to Far Rockaway. Her courage, grace, and boundless heart built the foundation for generations of Jewish life, turning dreams into reality and inspiring communities for decades with a legacy that will endure for all time.

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# The Servant Who Felt Like Family



RABBI DR. AVICHLI PEPPER

A long time ago, there was a mighty king who was loved by everyone. He was so kind and so wise that even the kings of other countries respected him.

In the king's palace lived a young servant boy. But really, he didn't feel like a servant at all—he felt like family.

When he brought breakfast, the king would smile and say,

"Sit with us! Eat with us!"

When he cleaned the rooms, the king's children would laugh and help him sweep.

Every day he was treated with kindness. Every day he felt more and more like one of the king's own children. And slowly, he began to act that way too. Sometimes he didn't wear his servant uniform. Sometimes he forgot to bow. He felt so close to the king that he didn't think about those things anymore.

And the king didn't mind. In fact, the king loved it. He enjoyed having the boy join family meals, games, and celebrations.

One afternoon, the king called the boy into his private room. His face was serious but gentle.

"My dear boy," said the king, "soon the kings of many countries will come to my palace. On that day, I want you to stand with me in the great hall. I want you to wear your

uniform, bow before me, and show all the guests how a servant of the king honors his master."

The boy's eyes grew wide.

"But Your Majesty," he whispered, "I don't remember how! I don't act like a servant anymore. Although I have so much respect for you, I've forgotten some of the rules."

The king smiled kindly.

"That is why I am telling you now. For the next month, wear your uniform again. Come a little earlier. Practice bowing and standing tall. And one more thing—practice with the sounding of the trumpet. Each day, sound it once so that when the royal trumpets blast on the great day, you will be ready."

So the boy practiced. Every morning he put on his servant clothes. He stood straight, bowed deeply, and spoke with respect, and proudly declared the king his master. And each day, he lifted a small trumpet to his lips and blew one clear note. At first it felt strange. But little by little, he grew more confident. He began to remember what it meant to be a servant in the king's palace.

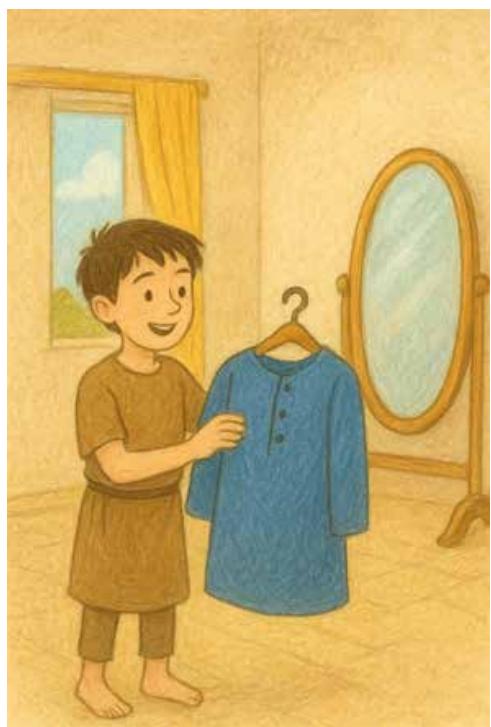
Finally, the great day came. The throne room was filled with noble guests. The boy's heart pounded as he stepped inside.

Suddenly, the royal trumpets sounded—again and again, a hundred times! Each note shook the walls, filling the room with

the greatness of the king.

The boy took a deep breath. The blasts were no surprise to him now. He had practiced for this moment.

There sat the king, dressed in shining royal robes, his crown glittering with jewels. The boy walked slowly, bowed low, and declared





with a steady voice:

"This is my king. He is mighty and he is great."

The room went silent. The boy held his breath.

Did he do it right? Did he honor the king enough?

Then he looked up.

The king gave him a small smile. And then—just for him—a little wink.

In that moment, the boy knew: I made my king proud.

After all the guests left, the king called the boy back. His voice was warm again.

"You were wonderful. Now, come back to the table. Sit with us as family. You will always be loved."

But as the boy walked back, he realized something important. Yes, he was like family. Yes, the king loved him no matter what. But

to truly honor the king meant more than just feeling close. It meant remembering to follow the king's rules—even in private, even when no one else was watching.

From that day on, he still laughed with the royal children, he still ate at the king's table, but he also wore his uniform with pride. Because now he understood: wearing the uniform showed his love and respect for the king, both in public and in private.

Even as a "child" of the king, showing respect and honor has a right way, a proud way, a way that exalts the king. And the king loved him even more for it.

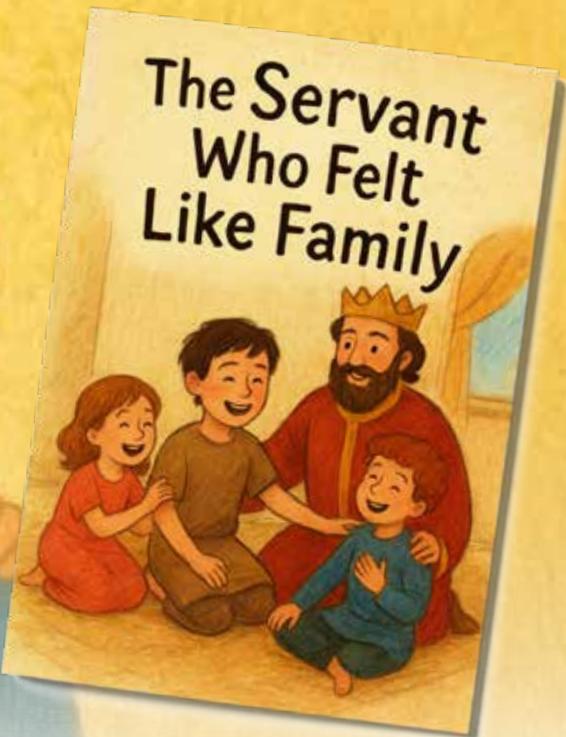
Not the End, it continues all year long.

### Wrap-Up for Kids

This story is a mashul (a parable) about our special days from Elul through Sukkos. All year long, we work to maintain a closeness with Hashem, but during this time we give our relationship extra care. Just like the boy had to put on his uniform again, practice with the trumpet, and prepare to honor the king, we also get ready to honor Hashem during the Yamim Noraim. These are also positive habits to try and maintain all year long that are outlined in Torah and Halacha.

### Now it's our turn to think

Read the story again and match up as many lessons as you can that relate to us and our relationship with Hashem and the Yamim



No'raim. What can we learn from the boy and the king that will help us prepare for Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkos?

## Discussion Questions

### The King's Kindness

In the story, the king treated the boy like family, not just a servant. What does this show us about the way Hashem relates to us?

Can you think of ways that you can feel Hashem's kindness in our own lives?

### The Uniform

Why was it important for the boy to wear his uniform when serving the king?

What do you think the "uniform" represents in our relationship with Hashem?

How can we "put on our uniform" to show honor to Hashem in Elul and Tishrei?

### The Trumpet Practice

The boy practiced with the trumpet every day to prepare. Why?

What do the shofar blasts remind us of during Elul?

### Day of Judgment

The boy stood nervously before the king but was comforted by the king's wink.

What does this part of the story teach us about standing before Hashem on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur?

How does Hashem let us know He believes in us and loves us, even when we are nervous about being judged?

### After the Ceremony

Even after the king's big event, the boy realized he should still honor the king in private by wearing his uniform. What lesson does this give us for after Yom Kippur, when we go back to our "regular" lives?

How does Sukkos remind us to stay close to Hashem even after the Yamim Noraim are over?

### Personal Reflection

If you were the boy in the story, how would you feel serving the king?

What's one thing you would like to "practice" this Elul to prepare yourself to stand before Hashem?

What's a small change, "wearing the uniform", you can keep with you all year to show Hashem honor and love?



**Rabbi Dr. Avichai Pepper** is a seasoned educator with a rich academic and professional background. A graduate of the New England Rabbinical College in Providence, RI, he has devoted his life to the pursuit of knowledge and the nurturing of young minds and support of Torah and Jewish communal growth. Rabbi Pepper holds a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Liberty University, alongside a Master's degree in Educational Leadership from Bellevue University and a Master's degree in Counseling from Liberty University.

Currently serving as the Director of Educational Advancement and Community Relations at the Yeshiva of Greater Washington, Rabbi Dr. Pepper leverages almost 30 years of dedicated service in Chinuch (Jewish education) and community development. His extensive experience in Jewish education includes various impactful roles, demonstrating his commitment to fostering academic excellence and personal growth within the Jewish educational system. He has played a role in the Jewish Day School movement in several cities including Providence, RI, Houston, TX, Seattle, WA, Phoenix, AZ, and currently, Silver Spring, MD. He also serves as a teacher coach through Lomdei and is an adjunct professor at Woodmont College - School of Education and School of Behavioral Science.

Rabbi Pepper's expertise lies in cultivating an environment of positivity and encouragement, where students thrive academically, socially, and spiritually. His leadership is rooted in the belief that a supportive and dynamic school culture is key to unlocking each student's potential and empowering students' growth, ensuring their holistic development and success.

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# Faith, Politics, and the Future of Israel: A Conversation with Tevi Troy

An Orthodox Jew's front-row seat in the West Wing — what it means to live Jewish life at the highest levels of government, and why the battle over Israel's future is just beginning.



**Dr. Tevi Troy**

*As a White House insider, historian, and Orthodox Jew, Dr. Tevi Troy has seen where principle collides with politics. From putting on tefillin in the West Wing to advising a president in moments of crisis, his story fuses faith and power at the highest levels. In this conversation, he shares candid reflections on parenting, antisemitism, and Israel's uncertain future.*

**Last year we spoke about your background, education, your book *The Power and the Money*, and of course your time in the White House. One question that lingered was this: what's one important lesson you learned about raising kids in an Orthodox home while holding such a demanding government job?**

**Tevi Troy:** I wouldn't call it a "great lesson" so much as a reality check. There are only so many hours in a day, and in those jobs you just can't do everything. They are all-consuming. I wasn't home as much as I would have liked. I davened in the White House, but I missed a lot at home.

Now that I've been out of government for 15 years, I'm much more present with my kids. In some ways, those intense years made me value the time I did get with them even more, because the early years of parenting are so hard. Back then, we didn't have iPhones, texting, or the ability to open attachments on a phone. If I had to work, it was in the office — not at home.

That's one area where things have changed dramatically. Today, with Zoom, laptops, and smartphones, it's much more feasible to balance demanding jobs while still being at home part of the time. White House jobs are still extremely intensive, but technology has opened up possibilities that just weren't there when I was serving.



*Dr. and Mrs. Tevi and Kami Troy.*

Another point I made in our previous interview was that my being Orthodox in the White House often worked to my advantage — people respected my observance, and I didn't encounter much antisemitism personally. Unfortunately, that's changed. Antisemitism has made a troubling comeback in recent years, and that's something the next generation will have to contend with in a way I largely didn't. I was fortunate. I feel like I dodged it, but now it has reappeared in an ugly way.

**In your opinion, do you think America is headed in a better or worse direction long-term? Are we at a tipping point where the current resurgence of antisemitism might fade once the Gaza war subsides, or has something darker been unleashed that we'll be grappling with for years to come?**

That's the question, and we honestly don't know the answer yet. From about 1970 to 2015, Jews in America experienced a remarkable era. Antisemitism wasn't seen as a major issue. Jews had extraordinary opportunities — top schools, cultural achievements, and roles at the highest levels of government.

But since around 2017, antisemitism has

become much more visible. Was that 45-year stretch the new normal, with today being the anomaly? Or was that period itself the anomaly, a brief vacation from history — and now we're back to the unfortunate norm of persistent antisemitism? We don't know yet.

**What shifted in 2017? Was it people feeling freer to say things, or was it more about the rise of new platforms?**

Both, but there are two big dynamics. On the left, the rise of intersectionality — this idea that the more oppressed you are, the more virtuous you are — created a dangerous framework. In that worldview, Jews are not seen as oppressed but as oppressors, which gives people license to vilify them. That's why some excuse or even celebrate horrific acts by Hamas — because in their minds, "the oppressed can do no wrong, and the oppressor can do no right." It's a deeply flawed and harmful way of thinking.

On the right, the problem was the loss of gatekeepers. In the past, people like William F. Buckley would draw clear red lines, saying certain figures or rhetoric were beyond the pale. That kept some of the worst elements at bay. Today, there's no equivalent figure setting those boundaries. That doesn't mean all conservatives are antisemitic — far from it. In fact, Republicans remain more consistently pro-Israel than Democrats. But the lack of guardrails has allowed more extreme voices to gain oxygen.

So we're seeing antisemitism emerge from both sides, which is why I get frustrated when people only see it on the "other" side of the aisle. It exists on both, and it has to be confronted on both.

**Do you think antisemitism today is more dangerous coming from the far right, the far left, or mainstream institutions?**

That goes back to my point — it's dangerous on all sides. Over the last year, I've traveled the country debating this issue with my friend David Saperstein, a Reform rabbi who's far to the left of me. He often argued that while antisemitism exists on the left, only the right produces violent



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antisemitism. I disagree. There's violent antisemitism from Islamist elements and on the left as well. It's real, it's dangerous, and it needs to be called out. Drawing artificial distinctions doesn't help.

That said, I did learn a lot from our debates. We traveled to Milwaukee, St. Louis, Boston, New York, Chicago, Boca Raton – and the rooms were packed. People were hungry for real dialogue. They didn't want a shouting match; they wanted to see two people from different sides of the aisle engage respectfully, disagree passionately but civilly. That gives me hope. Even in difficult times, there's a thirst for constructive conversation.

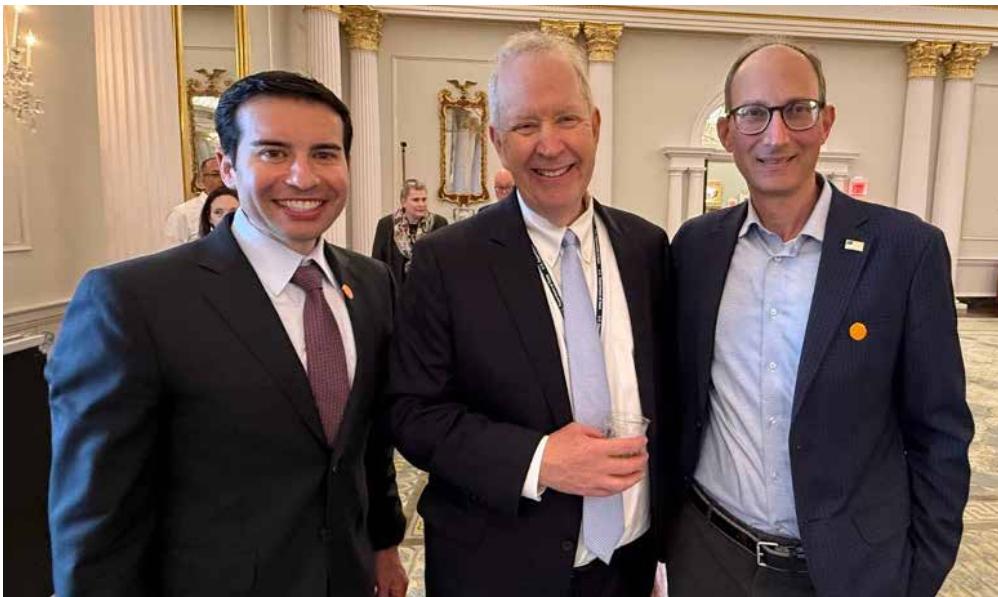


Dr. Tevi Troy alongside close friend Judge Matthew Solomson of the U.S. Court of Federal Claims.

**Forsure. And just pivoting for a moment – let's talk about college campuses. You've written about Jewish life and politics. Is there anything that worries you about what we're seeing now on campuses? I know under the Trump administration some things improved, which I think is praiseworthy. But how do you see the current situation?**

Of course, we worry about antisemitism on college campuses. And the truth is, many university administrations – especially at elite Northeastern schools – completely dropped the ball. They were unwilling to address the problem.

For about a decade, from 2013 to 2023, these schools rejected free speech. They embraced the concept of "microaggressions": the idea that if you said anything that might possibly offend anyone, you could be sanctioned.



Dr. Tevi Troy with State Department Counselor Reed Rubinstein and Deputy Secretary of Labor Keith Sonderling.

Speakers were shouted down. People lost their platforms.

Then, after October 7, everything flipped. Suddenly, some of the most offensive things could be said to Jews – "go back to Poland," tearing down posters of kidnapped Israelis, even spitting at Jewish students – and suddenly universities rediscovered "free speech." For ten years they rejected free speech in favor of protecting against microaggressions, but once Jews were targeted, they used free speech as cover to allow it. Everyone saw the hypocrisy. And as a result, these universities have suffered reputationally. Increasingly, top Jewish students are looking to places like the University of Florida, Vanderbilt, Emory, or Washington University in St. Louis – schools that are taking antisemitism seriously and actively recruiting talented Jewish students.

**When you say "microaggressions," what do you mean?**

A microaggression is the idea that even the smallest remark, even unintentional, if interpreted as offensive to a minority group, makes you culpable. A classic example was the Halloween costume controversy at Yale. A counselor suggested letting students wear costumes without overregulating, and he was surrounded, shouted down, and vilified for it.

It extended to language policing – for example, banning words like "master" in academic contexts because of slavery associations. Things that once had benign meanings suddenly became taboo. But here's the irony: universities

obsessed over avoiding these minor perceived slights, while at the same time tolerating – even excusing – blatant antisemitism. Telling a Jewish student to "go back to Poland" isn't a microaggression; it's outright hatred. And yet, somehow, that was defended under the banner of free speech.

**That double standard is so glaring. And it ties into social media, doesn't it?**

Absolutely. Technology plays a huge role. In the past, cultural gatekeepers – editors, TV producers – wouldn't give a platform to antisemitism. Today, with X and TikTok, there are no gatekeepers. Anyone with enough followers can spread hate widely. And TikTok, in particular, is troubling because it's run by a company tied to the Chinese Communist Party, which deliberately pushes anti-Israel and divisive content to Americans. In China, TikTok is used for math lessons. Here, it's weaponized. Think back to the Cold War – would we ever have let the KGB run a major U.S. media platform? Of course not. Yet that's essentially what's happening now.

**That's a chilling thought. Bringing it back to the government – do you think the current administration is doing enough on Israel and antisemitism?**

I give them credit where it's due. The very fact that administrations – both Trump's and Biden's – have put out formal plans to combat antisemitism matters. You don't have to agree with every detail, but the recognition itself is important. Holding universities accountable is critical.

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That said, not everything is perfect. There are troubling figures who have popped up in political circles – from the Kanye West dinner with Trump and people like Nick Fuentes. And there are individuals within government, even in the Defense Department, who tried to slow-walk arms to Israel. So there are challenges on both sides. But overall, the fact that administrations are stating clearly that antisemitism is unacceptable puts us on better footing than Jews have had at almost any other time in history.

**People online – even some on the right – argue that Israel might actually be better off becoming less reliant on America, making its own decisions without Washington's constant shadow. But doesn't Israel still need to at least prepare for a worst-case scenario, where America turns completely anti-Israel? For example, if someone like AOC or Zohran Mamdani were to become the Democratic nominee and even President after 2028, what's the likelihood of that?**

I don't think it's super likely in the immediate future. But within the next 20 years? Yes, I think we could have a Democratic president who is explicitly anti-Israel.

#### That's scary.

It is. Structurally, the way our politics works, if you win your party's nomination, you essentially have close to a 50-50 shot at the presidency. The country is so polarized that both parties start with roughly 180 electoral votes baked in. One candidate stumbles – a bad debate, a scandal, an economic downturn – and suddenly the other side wins, regardless of ideology.

So the danger is real, because within the Democratic Party, the activist energy among younger people is in the anti-Israel camp. Not all Democrats are anti-Israel, of course, but the activist base – the people knocking on doors, writing op-eds, flooding social media – lean heavily that way.

Joe Biden himself acknowledged this shift. He once told Bibi Netanyahu, "This is not Scoop Jackson's Democratic Party anymore." Scoop Jackson, a senator from Washington State, was one of the most pro-Israel Democrats of his era, and his wing drove Democratic foreign policy for years. Biden, who served alongside Jackson in the '70s, knew what he was talking about in terms of this change.

And here's the reality: in the Biden administration, it was really just a



With his brothers Dan and Gil Troy attending the Commentary magazine roast of Natan Sharansky.

handful of people – Biden, Antony Blinken, Jake Sullivan, and a couple of others – who held the line on keeping policy pro-Israel. Without them, it would have looked very different. You could already see pressure from below – anonymous letters from staffers, even interns, criticizing Biden for being too pro-Israel. That shows where the grassroots energy lies, and it's not good for Israel.

#### And yet, it's not only a Democratic problem.

Correct. On the Republican side, you could theoretically have a Tucker Carlson-type figure emerge. He hasn't run for office, so he's in a different category, but he's popular in some quarters and has been very critical of Israel. So it's not impossible to imagine a future Republican nominee who is unfriendly to Israel, either.

#### Like him, Candace Owens, that whole crew.

Exactly. If it's Tucker Carlson versus Josh Shapiro in 2028, I wouldn't be voting for the Republican.

#### Right, most people wouldn't. But looking ahead, do you think the next Democratic president will handle Israel very differently than a Republican one?

We've already seen it with Obama. He wasn't nearly as hostile as the AOC-Mamdani wing would be, but his approach to Israel was far cooler than his predecessors'. The question is: what happens when a candidate from that far-left wing actually wins? Because

people like Mamdani openly equate Israel with the Jewish people as a whole. That's where it becomes dangerous – when hostility toward Israel bleeds into hostility toward Jews globally.

#### Like when Mamdani suggested Netanyahu should be arrested if he set foot in New York City.

Exactly. That's insane. But it shows the mindset. When someone tells you what they believe, you should take them seriously. If a politician says they're okay with "globalizing the Intifada," believe them. That's the world we might be looking at.

#### What about New York Jews specifically? Because you'd think they'd push back hard against that rhetoric.

Most do. The vast majority of New York Jews are not voting for these kinds of candidates. But yes, maybe 20% are – and that's puzzling. A lot of it comes down to progressive politics among younger Jews, the strength of teachers' unions in New York Democratic primaries, and demographic shifts. The unions used to be strongly pro-Israel. Albert Shanker, who ran the teachers' union decades ago, was staunchly pro-Israel. That's not the case today. And New York itself isn't nearly as heavily Jewish as it was 30 or 40 years ago. So the political math looks different.

#### Which president, in your view, handled Israel policy the smartest way?

That's a really good question. And history complicates the answer. For example, I think George W. Bush was very good on



Dr. Tevi Troy with Rabbi David Saperstein at an *Eilu v'Eilu* debate, part of their national series on Jewish life and politics.

Israel. I worked for him, and I liked his approach. During the Second Intifada, when the State Department wanted to put out a mealy-mouthed statement about "bringing down the violence," Bush instead told Ari Fleischer, the press secretary, to say clearly: "Israel has a right to defend itself." That was important and set the right tone.

And yet, within that same administration came the Gaza pullout — which, in retrospect, was clearly a disaster. I don't blame Bush entirely, but it shows how history makes you wonder. Even good instincts can be coupled with policies that don't age well.

**If you could give one piece of advice to the next President of the United States about the U.S.-Israel relationship, what would it be?**

I think the key — and this applies whether the president is a Democrat or Republican — is to view Israel through the lens of being a democratic, Western-oriented ally. Look at the world: the U.S. is facing adversaries like China, Russia, Iran, and other hostile forces. Israel is on the right side of that divide. That's the simplest and smartest framework for U.S. policy — Israel is an ally in a world where reliable allies are increasingly hard to find.

**That makes sense. But it's worrisome when you look at the trends — younger Democratic voters are far less pro-Israel than older Democrats. And even in the Republican Party, younger voters aren't as supportive as their elders. It's not as stark yet, but the generational divide seems real.**

Exactly. Younger Democrats are probably the least supportive demographic of Israel in American politics today. Younger Republicans are less pro-Israel than older Republicans, but they're not nearly as hostile to Israel as younger Democrats. That's something policymakers, and frankly the Jewish community, need to be very aware of as we think about the future.

**Absolutely. Thank you so much for your time, Tevi. I really appreciate it.**

Happy to do it. I'm very supportive of your efforts, and I want to see them be a big success.

# Shana Tova U'Metuka!



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# Pinny for Your Thoughts



Insights from Pinny Roth, LCSW-C on  
Love, Connection, and Mental Wellness

PINNY ROTH, LCSW-C



# Can a Marriage Relearn Touch?

Rediscovering Closeness After Years Apart

Q: Dear Pinny,

After years of emotional neglect in our marriage, I find myself feeling repulsed by my husband's touch, even though I know he's not a bad person and I want to love him. My body reacts one way, shutting down or pulling away, but my mind tells me we should be closer. It's like there's a chasm between what I feel physically and what I know intellectually. How can we bridge this gap and rebuild our connection without forcing something that doesn't feel safe?

— N.V.

A: Dear N.V.,

Your letter captures a heartache and confusion I see often in my office: a gap between a spouse's body and heart, where past hurts like emotional neglect create a visceral push-pull. It's brave of you to name this, and you're not alone. Many couples wrestle with this dynamic, a body that recoils from touch even as the mind longs for closeness. The good news is that this disconnect is common, and with intention it can be healed.

To illustrate, let me share two anonymized stories from my practice. One wife, married 15 years with a house full of kids, felt her stomach churn when her husband reached for her hand. It was a lingering echo of years when he had brushed off her emotional needs for "practical" priorities. She thought, *He's a good person—why can't I just love him?* Another husband felt frozen during intimate moments, his body recalling times his wife dismissed his

vulnerabilities. Intellectually, he wanted to reconnect, but his nervous system screamed *unsafe*. These stories reveal something important: our bodies hold onto relational wounds long after our minds try to move forward.

This phenomenon is explored powerfully in Bessel van der Kolk's *The Body Keeps the Score*. Van der Kolk explains that emotional neglect and relational hurts aren't just mental—they're stored in our nervous system as survival responses. When connection has felt unsafe, the body may react with repulsion, tension, or numbness, signaling "danger," even if your spouse has changed or isn't "bad." Healing requires gradual, safe experiences that rewire those embodied memories, not just willpower or logic.

So how can you begin to bridge this gap in practice? Here are four gentle steps:



## 1. Acknowledge the Body's Score

The first step is awareness without judgment. Too often, people either blame themselves ("Why can't I just get over this?") or blame their spouse entirely. Instead, recognize what's happening: your body is holding on to protective reflexes that once served you.

Try journaling or simply noticing the disconnect in the moment:

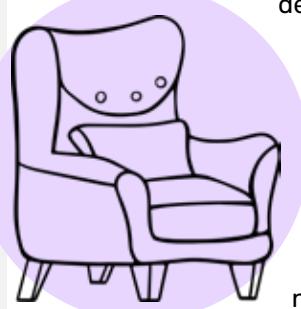
"My body feels repulsed because it remembers neglect, but my heart desires closeness." This statement validates both realities. The act of naming the split softens shame

and opens the door to compassion—for yourself and your spouse.

**Example:** One client began writing a nightly reflection: "Today my body froze



reconnect told his wife, "I want to want to be close again." It wasn't a perfect declaration of love, but it reassured her deeply because it was honest. She felt seen rather than shut out, which softened her own defenses.



#### 4. Consider Professional Support

Sometimes, even with awareness and small steps, the nervous system needs more direct healing. Somatic (body-based) therapies can be especially effective because they don't just talk about the hurt—they help the body release it. Even if your spouse isn't ready for therapy, beginning individually can create ripple effects for your marriage. Therapy can give you tools to regulate your body, expand your tolerance for closeness, and gently rewrite old patterns.

**Example:** One client began somatic therapy alone, practicing grounding exercises and body scans. After a few months, she found herself less reactive to her husband's attempts at connection. Her calmer presence changed the tone of their interactions, which encouraged him to meet her at a slower pace.

Healing this chasm takes patience and consistency, but it is absolutely possible. Each small step—whether noticing your body's signals, sharing a moment of safety, or offering a slice of love—moves you closer to genuine connection. You don't have to rush or force it. With time, your body and heart can come back into alignment, and closeness can feel natural again.

Warmly,

Richard "Pinny" Roth, LCSW-C



**Richard "Pinny" Roth, LCSW-C**, is a Silver Spring-based therapist who uses his gifts of connectedness, warmth, humor, and deep insight to

help his clients make sense of their emotional patterns. Trained in Emotionally Focused Therapy under master instructor George Faller, Pinny integrates his clinical expertise with innate ability to create clarity, guiding his clients toward achieving their goals. When he's not in session, he's focused on his "inpatient" caseload—his six lively boys and markedly outnumbered wife!

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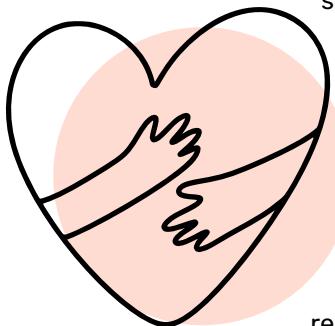


when he hugged me, but I also noticed I wanted his comfort." Over time, naming both parts helped her release guilt and approach her spouse with less tension.

#### 2. Build Safety Through Micro-Connections

When touch feels unsafe, the answer isn't to force it but to rebuild safety gradually. Start with simple moments of presence: a shared glance, sitting side by side with no agenda, or a kind word in passing. Pair these with gentle reassurance, such as, "I want to be close, and I'd like us to take it slow." These micro-connections matter because they retrain the nervous system. Over time, your body learns: "I can be near this person and still feel safe." Only when that foundation is laid does physical touch start to feel less threatening.

**Example:** One couple started a morning ritual of drinking coffee together in silence before the kids woke up. No touching, no pressure—just shared presence. Within weeks, the wife noticed her shoulders relaxing in his company, a first step toward rebuilding safety.



#### 3. Express Love in Slices

A common pain point in this chasm is the inability to say "I love you" without feeling fake. Many spouses long to reassure their partner but can't find words that match both body and heart. This is where Rabbi Manis Friedman's definition of love as "the desire to be close" becomes powerful. Love doesn't have to mean a fully felt warmth in the moment; it can be expressed as the yearning for closeness.

Instead of forcing "I love you," you can say:

- "I want to be there for you the way you need me, even though it's hard right now."
- "I desire closeness, but my body isn't ready yet."
- "I want us to find our way back to each other, step by step."

These small statements are slices of love. They tell your spouse: "I care, I'm invested, and I want to connect," without denying your own truth. For many partners, hearing this eases the fear of rejection while giving you space to honor your healing process.

**Example:** A husband who struggled to



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Here's to a sweet, strong, and healthy year ahead. Shana Tova U'Metuka.

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# The Battle Beyond the Battlefield: Sarah Stern on Israel, Media, and Survival

*Why Israel's war is not only military but also a fight for truth, survival, and America's security interests.*

A conversation with Sarah Stern, President and Founder of EMET



SARAH STERN

Few voices in Washington combine clarity and urgency like Sarah Stern's. As president of EMET (Endowment for Middle East Truth), she has spent years sounding the alarm about the Iranian threat and warning of the rising tide of anti-Israel hostility in American political life. The last time we spoke, our conversation centered on those dangers. Today, against the backdrop of Israel's war with Hamas and a relentless media battle, Sarah Stern reflects on the challenges ahead and the urgent fight for bipartisan support.



**Sarah, when we last spoke, you emphasized Iran's threat and the growing anti-Israel sentiment here in America. Looking at today's crisis, how do you see the media war shaping the world's perception of Israel?**

**Sarah Stern:** Israel has been taking a beating. The media really is the message. Despite the fact that Israel has sent more than 100,000 trucks of food and supplies into Gaza, much of it is commandeered by Hamas, who then sells it at outrageously inflated prices. Hamas fires indiscriminately, even killing its own people, and hides behind civilians.

On Capitol Hill, we're there almost every day, speaking with Democrats and Republicans alike to tell Israel's story. Unfortunately, the images people see in the media often cement in their minds and are very difficult to dislodge, no matter how misleading. Even when a correction comes out, a fraction of people see it compared to the millions who saw the original headline.

We are losing support on both extremes: the far left among Democrats, and increasingly, figures on the far right of the Republican Party—people like Tucker Carlson, Candace Owens, or revisionist “historians” like Daryl Cooper. Israel used to be a bipartisan issue, the one point of agreement in Washington. But

now, Israel's fight for its survival has become politicized, which is deeply troubling.

**Beyond the battlefield, how much of this war is also a PR war?**

Enormously. Israel is drowning in a PR crisis. Much of it is fueled by antisemitism—people simply don't want to believe the best about Israel. There's also resentment of Israel's military success. And we live in an age where people prefer to side with victims, even when the “victim” is being manipulated.

Intersectionality has painted Israel as a racist, colonialist state. But anyone who visits Israel can see it's a rainbow coalition—Jews from Ethiopia, Yemen, Russia, Morocco, America, Europe—all living side by side with Arabs, Druze, Bedouins, and others. The reality is the exact opposite of the accusations.

**You've seen some of the aftermath of October 7 firsthand. What stays with you most?**

My husband, my daughter, and I went to the Gaza envelope after October 7. We saw burnt-out homes riddled with bullets, bloodstained walls, children's tricycles charred outside destroyed houses. The people who lived there were among Israel's most liberal—those who

believed in peace and even helped bring Gazans to Israeli hospitals for cancer treatment. And yet they were brutally murdered.

That's what we're up against: pure hatred. Hamas mutilated and paraded people through the streets. Gaza residents may resent Hamas, but they live in fear of a totalitarian regime where dissent means death. It's horrific.

**With so many urgent issues, how do you decide where to focus EMET's advocacy?**

We try to find common ground on Capitol Hill. We don't waste time on offices that are closed to us, but we work hard to build bridges elsewhere.

We raise awareness about Hamas, Hezbollah, Syria, Iran—you name it. For example, Lebanon's president has spoken about collecting Hezbollah's weapons. We'll see if that materializes, but it's a brighter note than usual. We also warn against quickly dropping sanctions on Syria just because its leaders put on suits.

Israel has to remain vigilant, with enemies on multiple fronts. The IDF has been extraordinary militarily, but we admit that Israel hasn't been nearly as effective in the public-relations war.

**Have you found surprising allies in Congress?**

Yes. John Fetterman has been remarkable. He's a liberal Democrat from Pennsylvania, but also a staunch supporter of Israel and the Jewish people. Richie Torres, too—a Democrat, and a proud Zionist. They've both been incredible allies.

On the other hand, it's disappointing that Senator Chris Van Hollen and Representative Jamie Raskin—our own Maryland delegation—have been at the forefront of efforts to restrict aid to Israel. That's a profound betrayal of the Jewish community.

**What's the biggest misconception Americans have about U.S. support for Israel?**

People think it's charity. In reality, almost all U.S. aid to Israel comes back to American defense industries through joint projects. Israel provides invaluable expertise—tunneling technology, drone defense, and now laser defense systems like Iron Beam. The U.S. military benefits enormously from this partnership.

**You've described antisemitism as a resilient virus. How do you see it manifesting today?**

Antisemitism adapts to the times. In one era, Jews were accused of deicide; in another, of being communists; in another, of being capitalists. Today, it's anti-Zionism. Whatever society dislikes about itself, it projects onto Jews and onto Israel.

We saw this on Capitol Hill just recently—my colleague and I were ambushed by Code Pink activists, most of them Jews, shouting that Israel is genocidal. They had no arguments, only slogans. It's tragic, but it shows how deeply antisemitic narratives have taken root.

**For ordinary American Jews, what's one concrete action that makes a difference?**

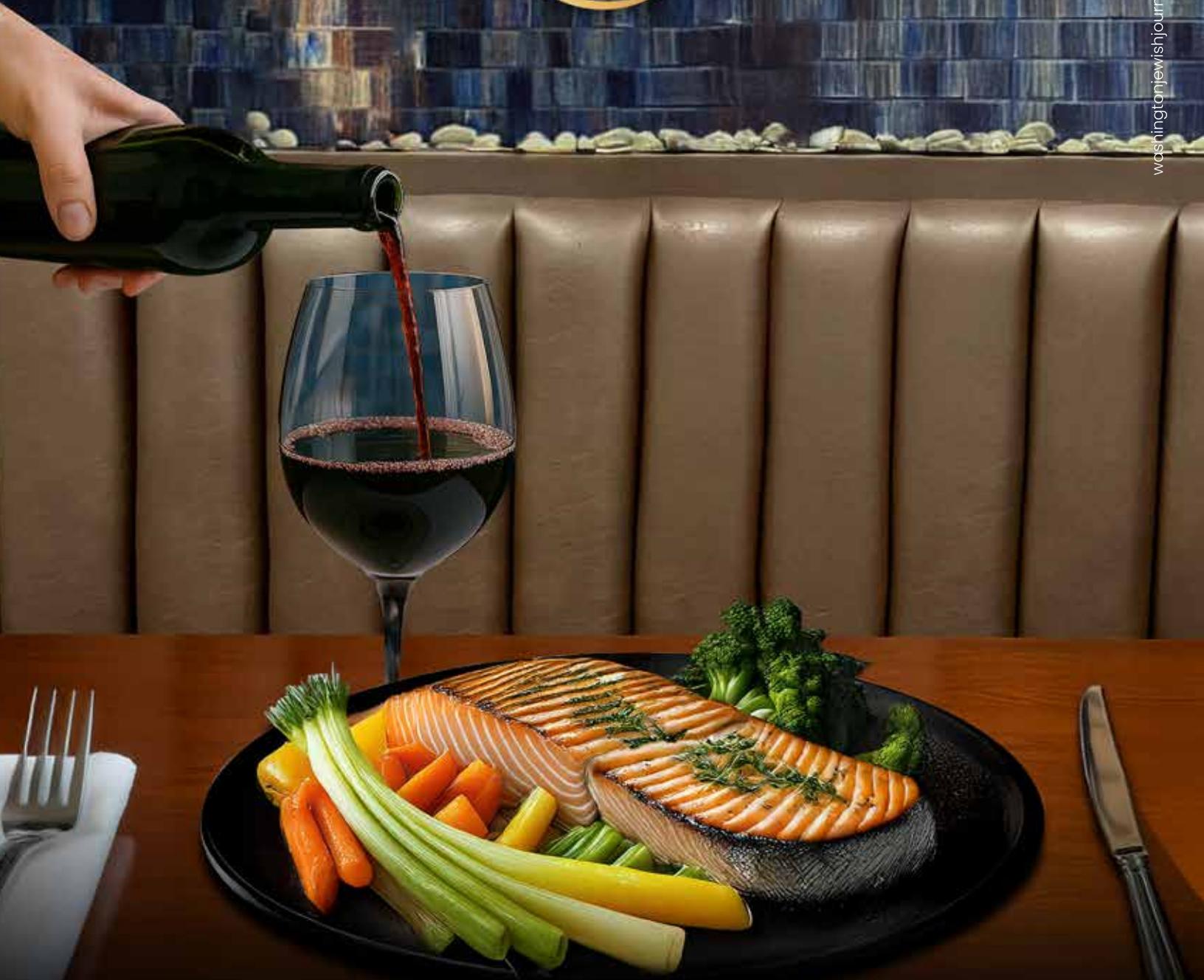
Call your representatives. In Maryland, that means Senators Van Hollen and Alsobrooks and Congressman Raskin. Tell them you are profoundly disappointed. Tell them Israel is fighting for its very survival and needs U.S. support. Three phone calls from you—and from your friends and family—can make a tremendous difference.

**Finally, as we enter the High Holidays, what should the Jewish community be thinking about?**

I can't stop thinking about the hostages. I've met some since their release. One young man spent more than 200 days in a tunnel, tortured, starved, humiliated. Others are still there.

As we daven on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we must think of them, and of the nearly 1,000 young men who have already given their lives in this war. They died as *kiddush Hashem*, sanctifying God's name. Their families will be saying Kaddish for years to come. We owe it to them—and to each other—to stand strong, to feel compassion for our fellow Jews, and to keep fighting for Israel's survival.





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