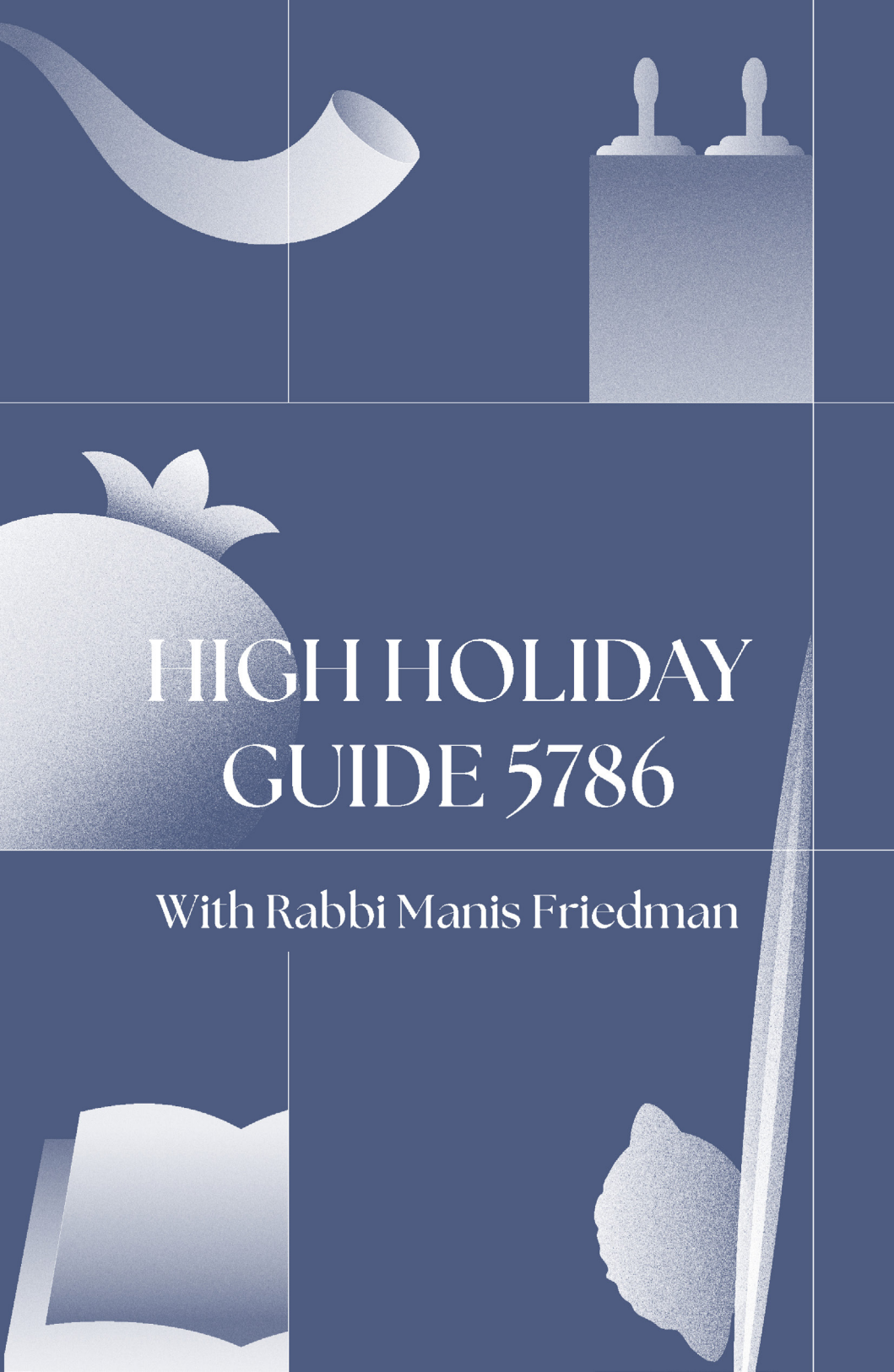




HIGH HOLIDAY GUIDE 5786

With Rabbi Manis Friedman

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Journey for Life

When all the Shofar's notes have been sounded; when all the chests have been beaten; when all the Sukkahs have been built and all the

Lulavs shaken — will we feel any closer to our Father in Heaven than we did before? After our hands and feet have done all the moves and gone through all the motions, where will we be in our thoughts and emotions?

The High Holydays were given to us by G-d as a means to draw us close. With bad memories erased by Rosh Hashanah, past offenses forgiven by Yom Kippur, a renewed sense of joy and warmth permeates the relationship on Sukkot and Simchat Torah. Every part of the person is invited into the High Holyday experience: spiritual, emotional, intellectual, until the entire person, from top to bottom, is folded into the Sukkah's embrace and there's no holding back the exuberance.

With this holiday guide, we hope to make this season of awe as meaningful and real as possible. It is our prayer that all of your prayers be answered. May the High Holyday period move you, uplift you and inspire you. May you come to know, as never before, how much you are loved and how badly you and your Mitzvahs are needed by your G-d. May you be inscribed and sealed for a good, sweet year.

During the coming Festivals, each Jewish man and woman will embark on a journey, to reconnect with one's inner self and with G-d. Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and then Sukkot and Simchat Torah are all stages in this very special experience, which can help inspire each individual for the coming year. Although this High Holyday period will be very different than other years, we hope that the articles in this booklet will help you experience the Jewish New Year in a meaningful way.

Rabbi Manis Friedman

The Month of Awe

We are now in Elul, the last month of the Jewish year. The High Holydays of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkot are less than a month away.

Everybody knows about Yom Kippur. Almost everybody knows about Rosh Hashanah. Some people also know about Sukkot. But what do you know about Elul, this awesome and holy month?

If you read up on Elul, you will notice that there's one word that keeps coming up: "Teshuvah," which is generally understood to mean 'repentance' or 'atonement'. We are told that during the month of Elul we must work for G-d's forgiveness for any sins we may have committed so that come Rosh Hashanah, G-d will be sufficiently appeased and will be inclined to plan the coming year in our favor. We are told that Elul is a fearful, dreadful time. There's no time to lose, the Day of Judgment is at hand, and if G-d finds

you wanting He will make you suffer! The only thing to do is to “do Teshuvah:” to repent for our sins.

This is the traditional view. But from the Chassidic view, this only scratches the surface.

In the mid-1700s, the first Rebbe of Chabad, known as “The Alter Rebbe,” taught that ‘Teshuvah’ doesn’t necessarily mean to repent for sin. It means far more than begging for forgiveness. In fact, we don’t even have to be guilty of sin to ‘do Teshuvah’. Teshuvah means to move forward and higher in our relationship with G-d. Guilty or innocent, we can all get closer to G-d.

There was once a majestic palace where a great King lived. The common people were in awe of him. Even if the palace gates were opened to them, they would never dare enter. They never dreamed that they might enter the palace and see the King. They looked down at their weather-beaten hands, dirty clothes and muddy shoes... how could they stand before a King? How could they go somewhere they clearly did not belong? They were farmers and laborers who spent their days working in the fields, working with dirt and mud; the palace was not for them.

One day, something

extraordinary happened. The great gates of the palace opened, and the King emerged. He headed for the fields where his people worked. The King greeted his people and personally invited them to join him in his palace. The King came to the people, to their place, in the dirt and the mud. He came to tell them that they did have a place in the palace, that he was their King and they were his people, and neither muddy shoes nor dirty clothes would ever change that. The King came to the people to make sure they never again felt like they did not belong.

With this fable the Alter Rebbe explained Elul. After a long year of working, living, getting distracted, and making mistakes along the way, we look at ourselves and consider what we have done with the last year. Who are we? Knowing ourselves honestly, the thought of being close to G-d (Teshuvah) might sound absurd! How can we come to Shul, the King’s palace, on Yom Kippur and act as if we belong?

So, for the whole month prior, ‘the King is in the fields’. G-d reaches out to us, as we are... where we are... to remind us that we do belong. He comes, not to change us, just to tell us to come as we are. No matter what happened in the past,

we do belong and He needs us with Him. The King of all the Universe goes out to where His people live and work, asking them to come home, muddy shoes and all.

In a sense, Elul is even holier than Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah.

Those holy days are great but are also limited: to experience them fully, we must stop working, dress differently, go to the synagogue and pray. But when the “King” comes out to the “fields”, people are busy with their regular jobs, wearing regular work clothes. During Elul, we go on with our regular lives because the holiness of Elul has no restrictions: G-d comes to us as we are.

The Jewish experience has not been an easy one. True, G-d spoke to us at Mount Sinai, and then through His prophets, and finally revealed His presence in the temple in Jerusalem. But that was thousands of years ago and we have heard nothing from Him since! Can G-d really be ‘angry’ with someone because an ancestor, whom he never knew, made a promise to do a Mitzvah three thousand years ago that he isn’t keeping?

We have no temple today; prophecy has not existed in

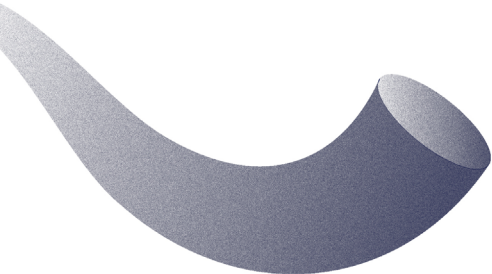
millennia. Being Jewish has been hard. We have been oppressed by kings and emperors, and we’ve been forced to wander from country to country. We have been brutally tortured during pogroms, butchered by Crusaders, and slaughtered in the millions. After all that, how can G-d possibly be angry with a Jew?

How could He? After He put us through all that, what could a Jew do that would justify anger? Who could blame a Jew today for not following the Torah? The fact there are still people who call themselves ‘Jews’ even after thousands of good reasons to quit is amazing!

G-d is not angry with us when we sin: He is hurt. He is hurt because the sin hurts. And He is hurt because He knows that He put us in this position. That is why G-d asks us to come and be forgiven. He wants to forgive us. He needs to forgive us. By going to Shul on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we are doing as much for Him as we do for us.

In short, Elul means G-d is personally inviting every one of us to join Him for the High Holidays, because He is not going to take a chance that you won’t show up on Yom Kippur. He needs you there.

Elul: The Season of the Soul



A king doesn't make himself king.

That's not how it works.

A man can have all the royal blood in the world, the finest crown, and the biggest army—but unless the people want him to be king, he isn't. The title is given, not taken.

The same is true for the King of the Universe.

And that is the work of Elul.

ELUL IS THE month where we inspire God to want to be King. We're the ones who start the conversation. And how do we do it? Not with dramatic speeches or public declarations, but with something much quieter: the feeling of emptiness when you realize you can't do life without Him.

It's the silent pull of the soul

toward its Source.

You might not even notice it yourself. No one else can hear it. But God does. The “still, small voice” within you is louder in Heaven than any shofar blast.

And so, in Elul, God makes Himself available—He comes toward us—to let us know that He's heard. That He wants this relationship too.

C hassidus describes this as “The King in the Field.”

Imagine a princess who wandered far from the palace. She's been in the fields, where people work and sweat, where life is busy and noisy. She looks around and realizes she's far from home—and she starts to cry. But no one hears her. She's alone.

No one... except the King.

But the King is not just the ruler of the land—he's her father. And he hears her cry. He comes to her, right there in the field, not as the distant monarch in his golden robes, but as a father who loves her. And he takes her by the hand and walks her home.

Avinu Malkeinu—our Father, our King—is the only one who truly hears the cry of the soul. Even when we feel lost and invisible, that yearning moves Him deeply. The princess initiated the reunion. And so do we.

IN ELUL, we become aware that we are far from home. We're "in the field"—caught up in work, bills, relationships, worries, survival. We may feel trapped in existence without any higher alternative. And yet... the King is here. Not in His palace, but walking among us. Waiting for our call.

A man once used to visit the Rebbe every Sunday to receive a blessing and a dollar for charity. Then one day, he stopped coming. Months later, the Rebbe asked him why. The man explained that he had taken a job involving manual labor. His clothes were always dirty, and he felt too embarrassed to come.

The Rebbe smiled and said, "Come as you are."

That's Elul.

God is not waiting for us to get dressed for the palace. He's not telling us to first fix everything, become holy, become perfect. He's saying, Come as you are. The King is in the field. And He's here for you.

ELUL IS NOT about big, dramatic spiritual leaps. It's about noticing the quiet tug inside. It's about realizing that even if the field feels endless, you are not alone in it. And it's about knowing that when you take even the smallest step toward God, He is already walking toward you.

So this Elul, listen for that still, small voice in your soul. It might not shout. But it's enough to move a King.

Rosh Hashanah

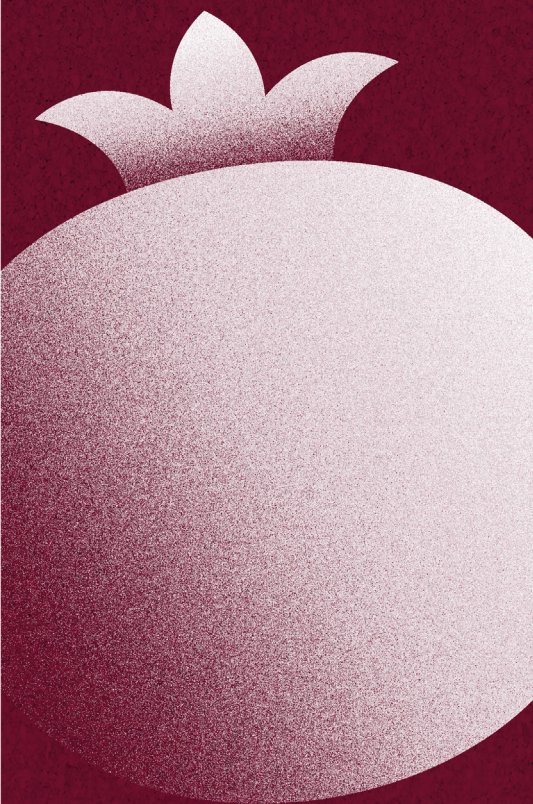
About 5784 years ago, on the 25th day of Elul, “G-d said, ‘Let there be light’ and there was light” – creation of the Universe began.

On the 26th, G-d said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the water, and let it be a separation between water and water.”

On the 27th, G-d said, “Let the water that is beneath the heavens gather into one place, and let the dry land appear” and it was so... G-d saw that it was good.

G-d said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, seed-yielding herbs and fruit trees that produce fruit according to their kind, in which their seed is found, on the earth.” And so it was: each day He spoke and created something new. Then, on the 1st of Tishrei, “G-d formed Man from the dust of the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils; and Man became a living soul”. Creation was complete.

Each year, G-d commemorates the anniversary of the Universe’s creation, but not on the 25th of Elul when He began this process. Instead, G-d observes the 1st of Tishrei, the last day of Creation, when He created humans, as the birthday of the world. Therefore, we observe Rosh Hashanah, the head of the year and anniversary of Creation on the 1st of Tishrei, the



birthday of humanity.

The entire world belongs to G-d. Although He is naturally far removed from it, He concerns Himself with every detail of the management of the Universe. He alone runs everything, and nothing happens without Him wishing it to be just so. That is why we call G-d the “King.” By creating the world, G-d became “King of the Universe.”

But, G-d is neither an administrator nor a manager; not a king nor even a creator. While G-d did create everything, that does not define Him – it is a peripheral act that does not impact His identity.

Administrator, manager, king, creator, are all qualities and roles that G-d chooses to use. However, G-d is beyond definition: He may be King, but this title does not define Him. He is the King, but He is not a King.

By creating the world, G-d, who is not a King, chose to humble himself and manage the affairs of this physical world. He did it because He needs the world, and in the beginning being King was exciting and pleasurable. But each year, on the anniversary of that momentous day, He revisits His feelings about the world. He asks Himself whether He still loves to take care of the world, or if the pleasure and excitement has gone. Is running the world a pleasure, or a dull, even painful, affair?

Where does pleasure in kingship come from? Not the mundane

pleasure in power – but the pleasure of caring for the needs of others – where does that come from?

The pleasure in kingship comes from the People. If the people love the King and choose to crown Him, that makes caring for their affairs a pleasure. If the People do not freely choose their ruler, then He is a dictator, not a King, and G-d takes no pleasure in forcing Himself on others. Just as G-d plans our year on Rosh Hashanah, we have the power to influence G-d’s year. Will it be pleasant and sweet or painful and grinding? It depends on how we feel about Him.

This is Rosh Hashanah. On this day, we recognize that G-d is the truth, and tell Him that we want Him to be our King and to run the world. We say “אֲבִינוּ מֶלֶכֵּנוּ אֵין לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ אֶלָּא אַתָּה” “Our Father, our King, we have no King except You!” We have none and we want no other King; only you!

When we blow the Shofar, that is the coronation.

We sound the horn and proclaim that we choose G-d, freely and with joy.

On Rosh Hashanah we wish one another a good and sweet year: “good” because we want a good year, and “sweet” because “good” is not good enough. We know that everything G-d does is good and for the good. But we do not want that kind of “good.” We want goodness that feels good. We want sweet

goodness. We want it for ourselves and for G-d, and by blowing the Shofar we ensure that G-d's year will be a pleasure.

What are we doing?

It's Yom Kippur, or perhaps Rosh Hashanah, we're sitting in Shul for the third straight hour with no end in sight. We take a quick peek at the Machzor, trying to estimate how many more pages need to be read.

Why?

We read words somebody else wrote, seemingly repeating some of the same stuff over and over again; sing a song; stand up, sit down, repeat.

Why?

They call this "praying," but what does that mean? If you peruse the English translation of the liturgy, you might notice that many of the words we are saying are praise for G-d, while others are about sin and repentance.

Why?

*Does G-d not know that He is great?
Does G-d not know our sins and how we
feel? Why do we need to say it over and
over again?*

Actually, this question can be asked of not just the High Holidays, but the prayers we recite daily the rest of the year too. For example, three times a day we must say the Shema, proclaiming that "G-d is one."

Why?

Does G-d not know he is one?

Why would He need to be constantly reminded? And if the purpose of the verbal repetition is to remind ourselves, then why don't we just meditate on it? Why say it?

The reason we struggle with this question is because many times we forget what our relationship with G-d is all about. It's not about the powerless trying to appease the all-mighty one. It's a grand romantic relationship over thousands of years. G-d loves us and needs us. That's how we need to think of it.

So now let's examine this in the context of a marriage: Every day, multiple times a day, a husband will tell his wife that he loves her. Why? Does she not know that he loves her? Is she so forgetful that she doesn't remember when he said it last time?

The reason husbands say "I love you" is because wives enjoy hearing it. There is pleasure in it. Indeed, a person needs to hear that from their spouse.

That's why we stand there praising G-d. It's because He enjoys it. He needs to hear us say it.

There are times when we say something because we want to say it. Then, we use our own words and don't repeat ourselves so we don't become annoying. But when we say something because someone else wants to hear it, then we say it in their language, and as often as they like.

Seen in the context of a

relationship, speaking words for someone else, even in a language we don't understand, and even when it seems repetitive, is even more meaningful than speaking for ourselves.

A number of years back, I was invited to give a lecture in Argentina. And so I packed my bags and headed to the airport. I've traveled a lot, lecturing all around, but never liked it. Like most people, I presume, I especially dislike these long international flights.

This flight was particularly grueling. After two stops and over 19 hours of travel, I was totally exhausted. Luckily, when I arrived, the local rabbi was there to pick me up and bring me to the hotel. Or so I thought. When I got in the car, my head pounding, desiring nothing but a shower and a bed, the rabbi informed me that we would actually be making a stop before going to the hotel.

We were first going to visit a local woman who had recently lost her son in a car accident. She had been so utterly devastated, the rabbi explained, that she had totally lost interest in everything, in life itself, and hadn't even left her apartment since the accident a few months earlier. She generally refused to talk to anyone, but for some reason agreed to make an exception and meet with me. And so that's where we were going immediately after an

exhausting 19-hour trip.

Well, I was furious. It struck me as incredibly rude and inconsiderate to put me in this position. I had just traveled for 19 hours! I needed some rest. Why couldn't we meet this poor woman the next day, or at least after I showered and had a nap?

The thing that irritated me the most was the fact that they didn't even ask me before scheduling this appointment. They literally just informed me of it. I kept thinking about it again and again: why didn't they ask me?? But the woman was expecting us so we had to go.

When I walked in, the pain and horror were immediately palpable. It seemed like death was in the air. I will never forget it.

The woman was like a zombie. Her eyes were lifeless. She had completely withdrawn from the world.

She couldn't even cry. The pain was too much. She told me about her son. Clearly, he was a very special young man. He actually had gotten into the accident on the drive back from midnight Selichos prayers. I tried to talk to her, but what is there to say? She lost her 19-year-old son. I couldn't imagine the pain she was feeling.

I tried to suggest that having this wonderful son for 19 years was significant and meaningful, but she was not impressed.

Then I tried to suggest that perhaps the shock of the tragedy

was contributing to the debilitated state she was in. Yes, the pain was overwhelming, but it was the shock that was destroying her ability to function. I asked her a question that I hoped would illustrate this: “What if there had been no shock?” I asked, “What if G-d had come to you 19 years ago and said, ‘I have a special soul I plan to send to this world for 19 years and I’m looking for someone to be his mother,’ would you then accept the special task, even with the tragic ending?”

In my mind, I was 100% convinced she would say, “Of course I would!” But instead, she decisively declared, “Absolutely not.”

But without thinking I said “If so, it’s a good thing G-d didn’t ask you.”

Everything suddenly changed. The woman burst into tears. Her numbness was shattered, and she became alive and emotional. At last, she was able to mourn in a healthy way.

It was one of the most incredible things I’ve ever seen. But when we were back in the car, something else struck me. Just an hour earlier, I had been fuming over not being asked if I wanted to visit the woman. And I realized that had I been asked, I would have said, “Absolutely not.” That would have been the wrong answer, I thought, so I should be grateful they did not ask me either.

On Rosh Hashanah, G-d plans out everything that will happen to

us in the coming year. It’s a good thing G-d doesn’t ask us before giving us challenges because we’d just embarrass ourselves by giving the wrong answer. When G-d gives us a challenge in life, He puts it on our plate knowing we can handle it.

We must remember that no matter what happens, G-d is looking out for us. He knows what’s best and only sends us good – even when we can’t see it ourselves.

As we mentioned previously, the core of Rosh Hashanah is giving G-d the pleasure of ruling the world.

But if we dig a little deeper, this should fill us with tremendous optimism. Not only will G-d always be in control, but G-d is also constantly moving us closer and closer to the ultimate goal of Moshiach, and a perfect world. The world is like a ship, constantly in motion, moving closer and closer to the promised land.

Every year we are getting closer to our inevitable destination. Walking towards the west is pointless if you’re on a ship moving east. But there would be no pleasure in that – not for the captain or the passenger. Our role as passengers is to find the pleasure.

G-d’s world is moving towards its ultimate destination no matter what we do. But G-d takes no pleasure in it if He’s making it happen alone. Just as

a father wants his son to join him in his activities — not because he can't do it alone, but because he loves his son — G-d wants us to work with Him. The world is destined to be a good, holy, and G-dly place, but G-d wants us to help Him make it happen. G-d wants us to be His partner in making this world a better place.

The new year is a perfect time for good resolutions. We promise G-d, and ourselves, that this year we will be better, and it's good to specify how. All good resolutions are fantastic, but here are 5 suggestions you might consider:

1) Give charity

We're all fighting bad habits, but it's important to also cultivate good habits. Not just habits that are healthy and good for us, but habits of kindness that will make the world a better place. One fantastic way to do this is to get a "charity box," drop a coin in it every day, and then donate it all to charity when it's full. We shouldn't just give to charity when disaster hits or when somebody is in a crisis, we should make it a part of our daily routine. Make it a habit. Get addicted to giving.

2) Light Shabbat candles

This one is for women and girls. Every Friday afternoon, 18 minutes before sundown, light a candle.

Add some light to the world. Every Mitzvah counts, even a part of a Mitzvah.

3) Put on Tefillin

This one is for men. Every day, put Tefillin on your head and on your arm near your heart. The act of dedicating your mind and heart to G-d every day will change your life.

4) Make phone calls

Once a week, once every other week, or even once a month, make a point to call someone who is lonely or having a hard time. Don't tell them how to fix their problems, don't lecture them, just listen. Be there for them. Show them they are not alone. It may sound small, but one phone call could literally save a family, a marriage, or even a life.

5) Study Torah

Our moods, our emotions, and our desires are affected by what's going on in our head much more than we realize. Just as we need healthy food, we also need a steady diet of holy information. We need to constantly add truth and wisdom to our system. Holy knowledge becomes a part of us and changes the dynamic of our psyche. The power of study Torah regularly cannot be overstated. Try it! You'll see.

Rosh Hashanah: The Day the World Is Born

A man meets the love of his life. She says yes. He's overjoyed.

So he plans the wedding of a lifetime—books the finest hall, hires the best caterer in the city, contracts world-class musicians. He tells all his friends, with pride, about the beautiful celebration to come.

Two days before the wedding, she calls him. She's changed her mind. The wedding is off.

Is he still proud of his caterer? Still boasting about the musicians? Of course not. Without her, none of it matters. The music, the food, the flowers—they were all for her.

That's how it is with God. He created a magnificent universe—mountains, rivers, galaxies—because He wanted a relationship with us. Without us, without that relationship, none of it matters. To Him, we are the whole point.

THAT'S WHAT Rosh Hashanah is about. It's the day

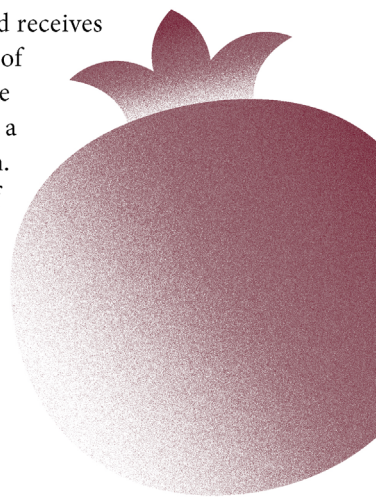
the world is born—Hayom Harat Olam. And just like the word harat means both “pregnancy and birth” and “awe or fear,” this day carries both emotions.

On Rosh Hashanah, all of creation stands in awe, wondering: Will God choose to keep creating us for another year? And the birth? That's what happens when we give Him a reason to.

You see, creation isn't on autopilot. Every year, God chooses again. And just like an earthly king can't crown himself, God doesn't simply make Himself King.

We have to crown Him.

That work begins in Elul—when we start to feel the emptiness of life without Him. But on Rosh Hashanah, we make it official. We stand before Him and say, Yes. Be our King. And when we do, the world receives a new surge of life—just like the moment a child is born. Reality itself is renewed.



THERE'S A misconception that God chooses to be King only if the world and its inhabitants will act perfect. But the truth is, He chooses to be King only if we choose Him—even in an imperfect world. The condition, therefore, is not perfection but reciprocity.

It's like the man in the story—his joy, his pride, all his careful plans—none of it has meaning without the relationship. When we choose God, everything else in creation matters. When we don't, it's just scenery without a story.

That's why your choices on Rosh Hashanah carry unimaginable weight. When you take on a mitzvah—whether it's lighting Shabbat candles, putting on tefillin, keeping kosher—you're not just improving your own life. You're affirming the existence of the entire world. You're telling God, “Yes. This relationship matters. Keep creating.”

Your relationship with God is more essential to the universe than the sun, the moon, and all the stars

combined. Without it, the whole thing unravels.

WHEN YOU HEAR the shofar on Rosh Hashanah, think of it as more than a tradition. It's the sound of a coronation. The trumpet blast that says: The King is here, the world is new, the relationship is alive.

And the question is—will you say yes to the wedding? Will you give the King a reason to keep the music playing, to keep the feast ready, to keep the lights on in this magnificent world?

Rosh Hashanah is not only about asking for a good year. It's about giving God a reason to want the world at all. Without us, the world is an empty banquet hall. With us—committed, engaged, and choosing Him—it becomes the most beautiful celebration in creation.

So this year, don't just celebrate the world's birthday. Be the reason it gets to have one.

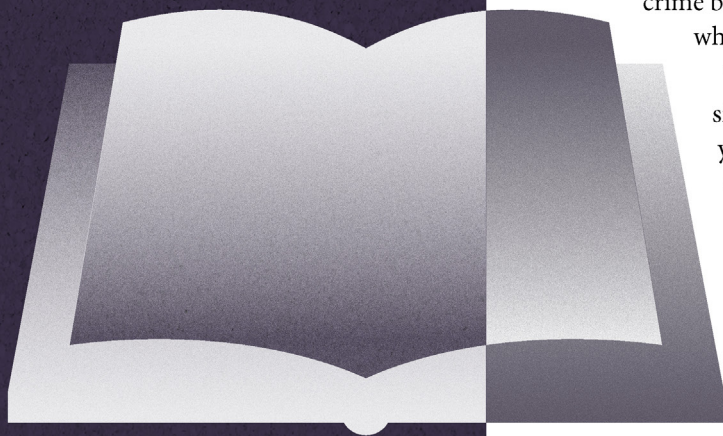
Ten Teshuvah Days

The first step of Teshuvah is regret: remorse for doing wrong. But regret is a tricky thing: to regret something I took means wishing I had never taken it, but is that realistic? How am I able to just “wish I hadn’t done that”? What has changed? When we sin, we do it because we enjoy it. Now, we still would enjoy it, so how can we claim we wish we had never done it? It’s fun! There’s no denying that.

When Torah talks about regret and remorse, it is not about what I did, but to whom I did it. I did enjoy the crime, I still would enjoy it, but now that I realize who I hurt, I regret it.

What would happen if a thief met one of his victims and discovered she is a single mom working three jobs just to support and feed her children... until he stole everything she worked for? The thief feels awful. That is regret. He has not lost his taste for stealing, but he regrets his crime because he realizes who he hurt.

We may have sinned in that past year, and we did enjoy it, but after Rosh Hashanah, we feel awful. We had just spent Rosh Hashanah thinking about G-d,



and we realized that G-d is the truth and we chose Him as our King. Now, we find ourselves regretting our sins, not because we no longer want to sin, but because after Rosh Hashanah he know who we hurt. We hurt G-d, and now we want to make that right.

But how? How do we do Teshuvah?

Rabbi Zusha of Anipoli suggests five practical steps we can take, and he teaches them from the word ‘Teshuvah’, with each of its five letters (תשובה) as the initial letters

of verses with practical guidance on how to make G-d a natural part of our lives:

ת T Tamim

“Be sincere with the Eternal, your G-d.”

ש Sh Shiviti

“I have set G-d in front of me always.”

א U V'ahavta

“Love your fellow as yourself.”

ב V B'chol

“In all your ways, know Him.”

ל H Hatznei'a

“Walk discreetly with your L-rd.”

Let's look a little deeper at the meaning of Teshuvah:

T for Tamim: “Be sincere with the

Eternal, your G-d.”

The part of us that is sincere is where our ability to truly change comes from. The word ‘sincere’ comes from the Latin ‘sine cera’, meaning ‘without wax’. Back in ancient Greece, dishonest sculptors would save money on materials by using wax instead of proper marble. Thus, the work of an honest man as known as “sine cera”.

We all have sincerity, but we get distracted and confused. Becoming sincere simply means clearing away the noise and unimportant chatter. Sincerity is not something we can manufacture: it is a process of elimination.

We simplify live; we remember what is truly important and we clean out the wax.

Sh for Shiviti: “I have set G-d in front of me always.”

One obstacle to change is our awareness of our past. We define ourselves based on who we were in the past. But is this accurate?

Remember though, that G-d recreates the world from scratch constantly. He did not simply create the Universe and then let it be. It can't be that G-d created the world once and then let it be, because something that was made from nothing lasts only as long as the force that creates it. At every moment, the world of a moment ago dies, and G-d creates a new one.

This means that every moment we have a whole new world. The past is dead. As the world of a moment ago expires, G-d creates a new moment, a new 'now'. Whatever our actions whether last year or even a moment ago, that was a another universe.

Now there is a new reality. All that matters now is what we do in this new universe.

We are like Adam in the Garden of Eden: where endless possibilities await. Thus, Teshuvah means simply letting go of the past.

U for V'ahavta: "Love your fellow as yourself." What does it mean to love others? It means caring about others more than ourselves. A good person feels the needs of others and seeks to do what is best for them. If we sin, it is because we lose touch with our own goodness. We get so caught up in our needs that we forget about the needs of others.

We forget about what G-d needs. Teshuvah is about get in touch with our own goodness, putting the "you" before "me".

V for B'chol: "In all your ways, know Him."

How does one "know" G-d? We look at our lives and see the hand of G-d. Events that seemed random turn out to have been part of a greater plan. The older we get and the more attention we pay, the

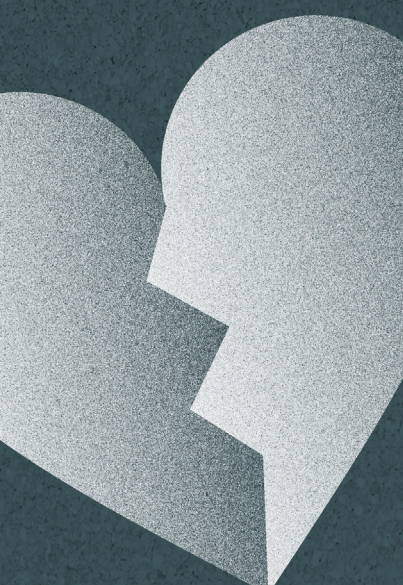
more apparent this becomes. We see things happen that we cannot simply write off as "coincidence;" G-d is clearly in charge and paying attention. G-d pays attention to things we don't even notice. G-d cares about this world more than we do, it's His world. This changes everything. This means that nothing we do is insignificant, every little thing at every moment means a great deal to G-d. Every act, every word, that a human being engages in, is infinitely significant to G-d.

H for Hatznei'a: "Walk discreetly with your Gd."

Intimacy thrives within privacy. When things become a performance for others, intimacy and purity erode. Sometimes, we get so caught up in societal expectations that we become actors, living our lives externally, for the opinions and approval of others. We forget who we are: we become empty inside, living only for the validation provided by another. The best way to keep our relationship with G-d real is to protect it from exposure.

"Walking discreetly with L-rd" means that the choices we make are personal: they are genuine and not for public accolade. When our personal choices are discreet and without fanfare, we create an authentic relationship with G-d.

Yom Kippur



After ten days doing Teshuvah, our relationship with G-d is back on track: our sins are no longer a problem. But that is not good enough. Neither we nor G-d want to just “be okay” with each other; we want to go back to how it was before we sinned. Well, Yom Kippur is the day when G-d cleanses us from any residue of sin.

A few years ago, I took part in a Yom Kippur program for Jews who were unfamiliar with the Yom Kippur prayers. The synagogue had two floors: traditional services were upstairs, while our program was on the ground floor. Some of our participants were curious to see what a “traditional” Yom Kippur service was like and went upstairs to have a look. When they came back, it was my turn to be curious: I wanted to hear what a traditional Yom Kippur service looks like to someone who had never seen one before, so I asked them for their thoughts.

I could tell they were not impressed. “I just saw a room full of people begging and pleading with G-d to ‘inscribe them in the Book of Life’”, said one. “Why do young, healthy people think they’re going to die? It’s mass paranoia!” Another said, “why do these people think that G-d is going to kill them if they don’t beg for His forgiveness? Most of my friends don’t even come to the synagogue on Yom Kippur and they’re doing fine!” Yom Kippur

This was interesting. I had to admit that it made sense, and it reminded me of another Yom Kippur conversation I had many years

earlier when I was a Yeshiva student.

I was sitting in the Yeshiva with my study partner, when the elder Chassid, Reb Mendel Futerfas, walked over to us. “What is this ‘Cheshbon Ha’Nefesh’ that we are supposed to do on Yom Kippur?” he asked.

We knew the answer. Tradition teaches that we repent and cleanse ourselves of our sins on Yom Kippur by reviewing the past year, revisiting the year’s sins, and asking for forgiveness. This is the process we know as ‘Cheshbon Ha’Nefesh’. But Reb Mendel was a legend: a brilliant scholar and a man of immense character. He was a hero of the struggle to protect Jews and Judaism in the former Soviet Union. Chassidic Jews of all ages turned to Reb Mendel for advice and drank in his words of guidance, so this rhetorical question was our chance to learn from his wisdom. We sat in respectful silence and waited for him to continue.

“The ‘Cheshbon Ha’Nefesh’ means that we sit in the synagogue on Yom Kippur and remember the first month of last year. We think of all the sins we committed in that month. Then, we think about the second month of the year and all its sins, and so on. We get through all our sins of the past year and then ask G-d to forgive us for them all, right?”

We nodded along. Yep, that is how

we saw it.

Then, in his eloquent Yiddish he exclaimed “Fehl!”, which loosely translates as “disgraceful!” and continued: “can you imagine a room full of Jews spending their day thinking about sin?”

On Yom Kippur? The holiest day of the year? That’s disgraceful!”

Reb Mendel was right, as were the folks who stepped into the synagogue for the first time to see what Yom Kippur looks like. We should not spend any day thinking about sin and trembling in fear that G-d will cut us down! Spending Yom Kippur with those thoughts, cannot be what G-d wants.

G-d is not going to kill us for not “begging enough” on Yom Kippur. *G-d created Yom Kippur because He wants to cleanse us from sin. All we must do is let Him.* But there is something we do ask. We aren’t afraid of death: death is simple. It’s life that is hard, because there is nothing worse than a meaningless life, yet it is so hard to stay focused on what is important.

On Yom Kippur we ask G-d, we beg Him, to give us the wisdom to live meaningfully, to stay focused on what is real and ignore the noise. We ask Him to inscribe us in the “Book of Life”; – we don’t want to just “not die”; rather, we also want to live – *we want to live as G-d created us to, fulfilling His purpose.*

We should spend Yom Kippur

thinking about what G-d needs from us. G-d needs us to come to the synagogue on this day and ask His forgiveness so He can cleanse us of anything that could get between us. And so, we do. G-d needs us to fast, so we do. Most of all, G-d needs us to show up. He needs us there.

In 1970, the Rebbe announced that he wanted to complete writing “Moshiach’s Torah”. This was a project to write a Torah scroll that would be used to greet Moshiach. The Previous Rebbe had started the project but the scroll was left incomplete after he passed away. Now, with the Rebbe’s announcement, it would be finished. To celebrate its completion, people flew to New York from all over the world. I was there as well. I watched the ceremony with awe, but I could not help feeling this was such a holy event that I had no business being there. I could not help thinking that I did not belong there.

However, as soon as these thoughts crossed my mind, the Rebbe raised his eyes from his prayer book and looked right at me. He gave me what I can only describe as ‘a sharp look’, as if he knew what

I was thinking and wanted me to stop it. There must have been five-hundred standing people in front of me, but the Rebbe just looked at me for a moment and then went back to his Siddur.

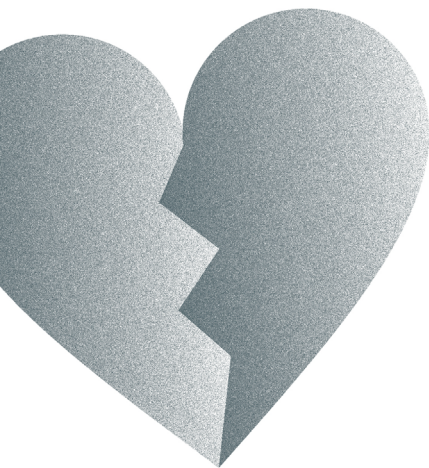
The way I understood it, the thought “maybe I don’t belong here” produced a disruptive energy and the Rebbe felt it. Thoughts are things: they matter a great deal. The Rebbe sensed the negativity and needed me to stop.

Yom Kippur can be intimidating. It is very holy; we do not really understand what is happening and we may well feel like we do not 20

belong. But we really shouldn’t. On Yom Kippur, make yourself at home. You are exactly where you belong, and nothing can change that. When you are busy having a relationship with G-d, settle in; you are in your element, it is who you are.

Always remember: it does not matter whether you know what the Hebrew says or what page you’re supposed to be on. It matters only that you are at home, you are exactly where you belong.

Yom Kippur: The Regret That Brings You Closer



A friend tells you about a company whose stock has just skyrocketed.

You check the price. If you had invested just \$1,000 last year, you could have made \$50,000.

You imagine the vacations you could have taken, the car you could have bought, the debts you could have paid off. You feel sick. “If only I had known! If only I’d done it!”

That’s one kind of regret.

BUT THEN there’s another kind.

You remember your father’s birthday last year, how you told yourself you’d call but got distracted. Or the time your child wanted to show you something, and you waved them off because you were “too busy.”

No one had to tell you that you should have done differently—you already know. And when that realization hits, it’s not just about the past. Something shifts inside you. You become a little more attentive, a little more grateful, a little more aware—immediately.

On Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, we’re not here to wallow in the first kind of regret. That “I could have been rich” regret is about missed opportunities that may not have turned out the way we imagine anyway. You can’t prove how things would have been. And besides—no matter how deeply you regret not buying that stock, you still don’t own it. It’s gone.

But the second kind of regret—the “I should have” regret—is different. It’s not based on guessing. It’s certain. You should have been more grateful. You should have been kinder. And the moment you feel that regret, you are already moving in the right direction. Even if nothing else changes, you have changed.

THIS IS WHY Yom Kippur is not about regretting what could have been—it's about regretting what should have been. Because that kind of regret isn't a dead end; it's a doorway.

And here's where it gets even deeper: according to Chassidus, regretting not being closer to God instantly brings you closer to Him. It's not about regretting, "I could have been more religious, I could have been a scholar, I could have been perfect." It's simply, "I should have been closer to You."

That regret alone is closeness.

Think of a friend you haven't spoken to in years. The moment you say, "I should call them," you're already halfway to picking up the phone. In your heart, the distance has already begun to close. Yom Kippur is that moment between you and God.

When you stand in synagogue and your heart says, "I should have been closer to You this year," you are already closer. Not next week, not after you fix yourself—right now.

THE FIRST KIND of regret—the "what could have been" kind—keeps you stuck in wishful thinking. The second kind—the "what should have been" kind—pulls you upward. And Yom Kippur is about making that shift, turning regret into reconnection.

So when you fast, when you pray, when you stand in Ne'ilah, don't think about missed chances that may never have been real. Think about the relationships—human and divine—that should have been nurtured. Let that realization pull you toward the truth, toward goodness, toward God.

And here's the most beautiful part: even if it were your last day on earth, even if nothing else in your life changed, that kind of regret would still be worth it. Because in that moment, you would be closer to holiness than you've ever been.

This Yom Kippur, don't just regret the past. Regret your distance. Because that regret is the first step home.

Sukkot

The G-dliness we connect to on Rosh Hashanah is G-d's royalty. The G-dliness of Yom Kippur is cleansing and brings innocence. The G-dliness of Sukkot is unity; the unity of the people, and the unity of the individual within ourselves.

There are two main Mitzvot on Sukkot: The Sukkah and the Lulav. Each day, we take the Lulav, Etrog, Hadass and Aravah bundle in our hands and shake it about. Every day we sit in the Sukkah. These are incredibly powerful Mitzvot. Part of this stems from the Lulav, Etrog, Hadass and Aravah bundle itself.

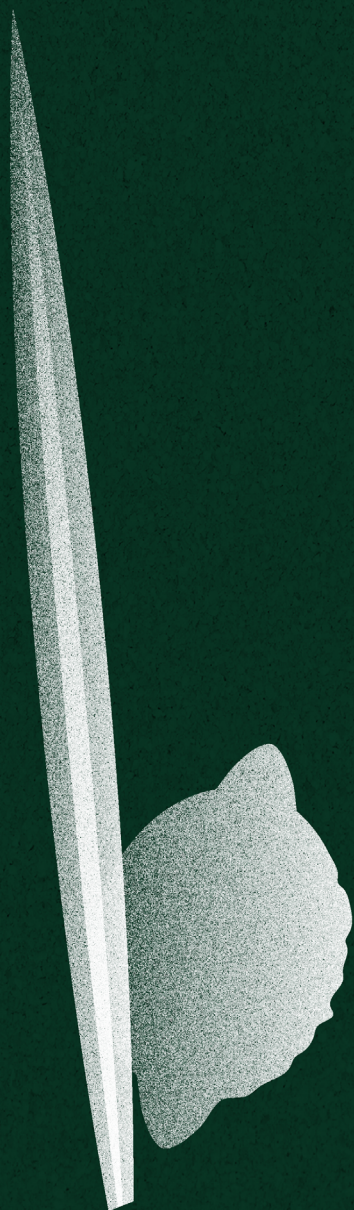
The Lulav is a branch from a palm tree. The date has a sweet taste but no fragrance. The Midrash suggests that taste represents Torah study, because it enters one's being. Fragrance represents the act of performing Mitzvot, so the Lulav symbolizes those Jews who excel at Torah study.

Alongside the Lulav are Hadassim: myrtle branches, having a pleasant fragrance but no taste. They represent those Jews who excel at doing Mitzvot.

These two species are bound with Aravot, willow branches, which have neither taste nor fragrance. They symbolize those who neither excel at performing Mitzvot, nor at studying Torah.

Finally, we have an Etrog, a citron, which has both taste and fragrance. It symbolizes the person who excels at both Torah study doing Mitzvot.

We hold all these diverse types Sukkot



together for the Mitzvah of the Four Kinds. This symbolizes the unity of the Jewish people.

They also represent the unity of the individual. Straight and tall, the Lulav looks like the spine, the myrtle leaf is the shape of an eye, the willow leaf is the shape of the lips, and the citron is the shape of the heart. The heart, the eyes, and the lips represent the major spiritual functions, and the spine represents the whole body; brought together it all represents the unity of the individual human being.

Following the theme of unity, the other Mitzvah of Sukkot, the Mitzvah of sitting in the Sukkah, also brings unity. It is the only Mitzvah that many people can perform with the same object. Only one person at a time can shake a Lulav, but the entire Jewish people could theoretically fulfil the Mitzvah of Sukkah in a single gigantic Sukkah. We can bring our family together in the Sukkah, we can bring our community together in the Sukkah. Also Sukkah is a Mitzvah that requires the entire individual: all of you needs to be in the Sukkah, head to toe.

Not only is the G-dliness of Sukkot unique, the way we experience it is unlike any other. *With this special G-dliness of unity, of Sukkot, we experience it to two different ways at once. Both internalizing it and surrounded by it.*

After living its life on earth, the

soul rises up to heaven, leaving all earthly possessions behind. But we are told that the soul does bring with it the Mitzvot it accomplished and the Torah it studied. Now, without the body or anything physical, the Mitzvot of the completed life envelop the soul like clothes, and the Torah it brings with it nourishes the soul like food. The soul rises to heaven to meet its maker shrouded in its Mitzvot and filled with its Torah learning.

When you do something for a friend, something private and personal to them, some deep need that you will never comprehend, there is closeness, but you don't understand your friend any better than before. They pulled you close, but on their own terms. You put yourself aside, you even suspended your own intellect and did something you didn't want or understand; you did it just for them. Similarly, when we do a Mitzvah, we are connecting to a part of G-d that is so removed from anything in our realm of reality that we cannot understand or internalize it. We fleshly mortals connect with the highest desire of the infinite G-d. It's pure and raw. When we perform the Mitzvah we do connect with that G-dliness, but it doesn't energize us, it overpowers us. It doesn't become our own, it covers us like garments. It's like we are surrounded by G-dliness that is too big for us. That's why when the soul goes to heaven

it wears its Mitzvot like garments, instead of carrying them within.

But when we absorb Torah, we do take it in, and it transforms us. Torah is G-dliness made finite and comprehensible. We get closer to G-d by getting to know and understand Him better. We bring G-dliness within ourselves. It really is astonishing, but G-d has made it possible for our beefy brains to grasp G-dliness. Learning Torah changes us as we become more familiar with G-d, and even after we die, the soul carries the Torah we learned and benefits from its effects. However, the fact that we can understand Torah means that it is not pure G-dliness, it is shaped and diluted for our minds so that we can understand it.

So both have an advantage. We cannot internalize the Mitzvot but this is the highest form of G-dliness, and we can understand Torah but the G-dliness is not the same.

Similarly, on Sukkot we have the opportunity to connect with G-d in both ways. But now we do it at the same time. The G-dliness of Sukkot brings unity, and when we step into the Sukkah, we are completely surrounded by that G-dliness, the way the Mitzvah clothes the soul in heaven. When we hold the Lulav and Etrog in our hands, we grasp them and bring them to ourselves, like the way we grasp and absorb Torah. The Sukkah is the pure G-dliness we cannot understand, while the Lulav

and Etrog are the G-dliness that we can grasp. The Sukkah unites us by being bigger than all of us, while we unite with the Lulav by coming together. When we do both at the same time; when you do the Mitzvah of shaking the Lulav while you are inside a Sukkah, then you have both.

It's like a hug: when you hug somebody, it's a double action. You both embrace the other and are embraced at the same time. You draw the other closer to you, and you give yourself to the other. When we step into the Sukkah, we are completely enveloped by the Mitzvah and when we lift the Lulav, we envelop it.

Unity cannot be manufactured. It either is or isn't. But sometimes things that are one at heart get distracted and the unity is obscured. By getting rid of the distraction of distinctions and ego, we are one. Through this embrace with G-dliness, all distinctions melt away. We are one people, with one G-d. We remember that nobody has to do anything to be a part of the Jewish people. A Jew is a Jew is a Jew. Knowing about this unity, knowing what we are a part of, the natural reaction is pure unadulterated joy!

The struggle to keep Judaism alive in Russia during the era of Soviet oppression included some of the greatest acts of heroism imaginable. Under the threats of certain death, a life sentence to brutal labor in a

Siberian gulag, and severe economic deprivation, the Jewish underground would not bend. Thousands were killed, giving their lives so that Judaism would not die.

One such hero – one of the few fortunate enough to survive the struggle – was Reb Lazer Naness, a tall, stubborn redhead; a man whom I remember vividly from my youth in Brooklyn.

Back in the Soviet Union, after fighting to establish and preserve illegal Jewish infrastructure like Mikvas and Torah classes for children, the KGB caught up with him. He was arrested and quickly sentenced to hard labor in Siberia for his “crimes.”

Somehow, he survived years of backbreaking labor, torture, and brutality in the freezing gulag labor camp, until his sentence was suddenly changed to another cruel form of Soviet “justice,” internal exile. He was told to gather his belongings and relocate to a remote village, where he would be left to fend for himself. Away from his family, living in the middle of nowhere, he would be forced to live out his sentence.

When he arrived, he approached a local man, a Tatar Russian. Reb Lazer needed a place to stay, and this man was known to rent out rooms in his home.

When Reb Lazer asked if the man had a room available, the man

replied that he did, but somebody else was already living there and so Reb Lazer would have to share it with the other person. Not having much of a choice, Reb Lazer agreed.

However, when he met his new roommate, Reb Lazer was overjoyed. Incredibly, it was an old friend from Yeshiva, Reb Meir Avtzon. But Reb Lazer’s new residence also had a less pleasant surprise. A top Soviet bureaucrat lived right across the street. Having Meir’s company would be invaluable in surviving the ordeal of exile, but living so close to a government official would complicate things.

When Sukkot came, Meir built a tiny Sukkah in the back with a few scraps of wood. At least they would be able to observe the holiday on some level. But Reb Meir wasn’t satisfied with a low-key, meek, observance. Sukkot is a holiday of rejoicing, and that is exactly what Reb Meir intended to do. Although Reb Lazer was more cautious about drawing too much attention to themselves, especially with their Communist neighbor, Reb Meir convinced him to cast away his fears and celebrate. They got a bottle of vodka, headed out to the Sukkah, drank, danced, and sang all night like nothing was wrong.

These men hadn’t seen their families in years. The forces of darkness had taken everything from them. They’d been tortured, beaten, and exiled. But nothing

could break them. They knew well what the Soviet government could do to them. They didn't care. Their hearts and minds were on another plane of reality, where guns and jails and tyrants are meaningless. They were under the boot of the KGB, but it was Sukkot, the festival of G-d's relationship with us, and that made them happy. That's what mattered to them.

But unbeknownst to them, other events were afoot. As they celebrated, they made such a ruckus that their Soviet neighbor came running over. He confronted the Muslim landlord and demanded to see what was going on. Just two people can't be making all that noise, he thought – surely there must be some grand meeting of Zionist Jewish conspirators.

When he saw what was happening, however, it moved him to his core. The sight of two Jews, eyes closed, singing at the top of their lungs, dancing in a village in remote Siberia where they were sent as a punishment, blew him away.

"What are they doing?" he asked. "Those are holy men on their holy day," the landlord replied.

The Muslim landlord and the communist bureaucrat watched this incredible scene for a while, before going home, leaving the two

oblivious Jews in peace.

At work the next day, when the bureaucrat was asked to sign a stack of documents, he noticed something that troubled him. He normally showed up to work drunk and never bothered reading what he was asked to sign, but for some reason, he was sober that day and decided to read the papers on his desk. Sitting on his desk was a document sentencing Lazer Naness to death by firing squad the next day. The KGB had already signed off on it, but for political reasons needed this bureaucrat's signature as well.

As he later told the landlord, "I couldn't bring myself to sign off on shooting a holy man like a dog." And so, he crossed out the death sentence, and instead sentenced Reb Lazer to more exile. The next day Lazer was ordered to pack his bags and relocate once again.

The landlord repeated the story to Meir, who shared it with Lazer years later, when they reunited in the US.

Celebrating together with a fellow Jew had saved Reb Lazer's life.

This Sukkot let's remember this story. *Grab a friend, a family member, or some stranger—whatever you can find—and rejoice! Who knows how powerful it can be?*

And then comes Simchat Torah...

Sukkot: The Joy of Unity

A musician can be a master of the violin. Another can be a brilliant pianist. Each can be flawless in their own field. But when they play together in an orchestra, something new is born—a unity that's greater than the sum of its parts.

That's what Sukkot is about.

After the awe of Rosh Hashanah and the soul-searching of Yom Kippur, Sukkot is a celebration—not just of God's kingship, not just of forgiveness, but of togetherness. Our togetherness with God, with each other, and even within ourselves.

THE TORAH tells us to take four species on Sukkot: the etrog (citron), lulav (palm branch), hadas (myrtle), and aravah (willow). We hold them together, bless them, and shake them in six directions—north, south, east, west, up, and down.

But Chassidus explains that

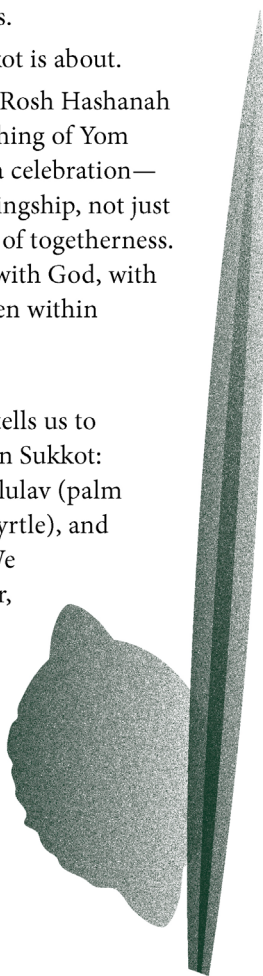
these four species aren't just plants. They represent four parts of the human body—and four aspects of our inner life.

The etrog looks like a heart. The heart is the home of emotion—love, awe, compassion, joy. A “good heart” is one full of positive, holy feelings toward our fellow Jews, toward life, and toward God. When the heart is in the right place, it colors everything else in our lives.

The lulav is like a spine. It's the central column of the body's nervous system, carrying sensation to every limb. But more than that, the spine is about dignity and moral backbone. To stand tall, to know who you are and what you're worth—that's the work of the lulav.

The hadas is shaped like an eye. And eyes represent wisdom—the ability to see what is coming into being, to perceive not only what's in front of you but the deeper meaning behind it. As the Sages say, “Who is wise? The one who sees what is being born.”

The aravah resembles lips. The lips are our speech, our connection to others, the way we share thoughts, feelings,



and truth. Holy speech can build worlds. Thoughtless speech can destroy them.

On Sukkot, we don't bless these four things separately. We bind them together. We make them into one mitzvah.

Because real unity isn't just harmony between people—it's harmony within ourselves. The heart, spine, eyes, and lips—our feelings, our dignity, our wisdom, and our speech—must all be dedicated to the same purpose.

When you stand with the four species in your hands, you are saying: "I want my emotions, my backbone, my vision, and my words to be aligned in serving God".

And here's the amazing part: even if you don't think about any of this, the act itself still leaves a mark. Doing the mitzvah shapes you in ways you may not notice at the time. But the more consciously you hold these ideas while shaking the lulav, the deeper the effect.

It's like tuning all the instruments in an orchestra before the music starts. The sound that comes

afterward will be richer, fuller, more alive.

So the next time you shake the aravah, remember: you've dedicated your speech—now use it to say things that are kind, uplifting, and godly. When you hold the etrog, remember: you've dedicated your heart—now fill it with love and awe. When you stand tall with the lulav, remember: you've affirmed your dignity—so live with it. And when you look at the hadas, remember: you've offered your eyes—so see with wisdom.

Sukkot is called "the time of our joy." Joy comes from wholeness, from all the parts of ourselves playing the same song. And when we bring that harmony into our lives, we're not just celebrating unity—we're living it.

So step into the sukkah. Feel the embrace of its walls. Hold the four species. Shake them in all directions. Let yourself be moved—literally and spiritually. And carry that unity with you into every day of the year.

Simchat Torah



Now we rejoice with G-d. Just Him and us. The outside world is not invited. It is like the honeymoon, when the wedding guests leave, and the bride and groom share time together, alone.

On Simchat Torah, we rejoice with the Wisdom of G-d, also known as the Torah. We hold the Torah, wrapped in its coverings, and dance all night and then all day. The question is, if we are celebrating G-d's Wisdom, shouldn't we study the Torah instead of dancing with it? Shouldn't we read it instead of keeping it rolled up and covered?

However, on Simchat Torah, we are not just celebrating the wisdom of G-d: we are celebrating the gift.

G-d gave us the Torah. It's not about how wise G-d is, it's about how close He feels to us that He gave His wisdom to us. It's not about the Torah, it's about G-d giving us the Torah. During the rest of the year we will study it and keep its laws, but now we just jump for joy at the thought of G-d giving over to us what is most precious to Him. If He gave it to us then we must be even more precious to Him. Before unwrapping the present, we take the time to appreciate the fact that G-d gave us a present.

But we don't just dance for ourselves, we dance for the Torah. After all, what would the Torah be without the Jewish people? It Simchat Torah would be just another book. That's why we hold the Torah when we

dance. The Torah wants to dance but obviously it can't, so we offer ourselves to be the Torah's legs so it can dance through us. We don't just celebrate the Torah. We dedicate ourselves to it. By dancing with the Torah we are offering to perform for the Torah what it can't perform itself, we give it its fulfillment. After all, what would we be without the Torah? We'd be living meaningless lives. The Torah gives us true life.

When G-d has become our only King and He is One, and the Jewish people have been united and they are one, and then G-d and His people are united and become one, then we add the Torah into the mix and all three are joined together and the joy is greater than heaven. Literally.

The day after Simchat Torah, the angels in heaven once saw a great light coming from a heavenly chamber. When they investigated,

they found that the light was emanating from a pile of strange physical objects unknown to them. They looked for someone who was familiar with physical things and decided to ask the Baal Shem Tov, a human being, to help them understand what was going on. The Baal Shem Tov told them that what was causing the light was the worn-out shoes of those who danced on Simchat Torah. The danced-in shoes themselves gave off brighter light than anything in heaven.

What if on Simchat Torah we realize that we didn't observe Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur right? Even those of us who weren't paying attention during Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot, should dance away! *What you can accomplish through dancing on Simchat Torah is as powerful as the blowing of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah.*

► *The World's Best Guide to a*

SWEET NEW YEAR

the Month Before:

During Elul, the month before the High Holidays, we begin practicing blowing the Shofar daily and reciting Psalm 27 in our daily prayers. The code of Jewish Law encourages people to visit the resting place of a great tzadik to pray to G-d before the High Holidays. Many people today use the online form at www.OhelChabad.com to send their letters for blessings to the resting place of the Rebbe.

Did you know?

The Shofar is made of a ram's horn to recall the Binding of Isaac which also occurred on Rosh Hashanah, in which a ram took Isaac's place as an offering to G-d. We evoke Abraham's merit as we pray for a year of life, health and prosperity.

► ROSH HASHANAH

Definition

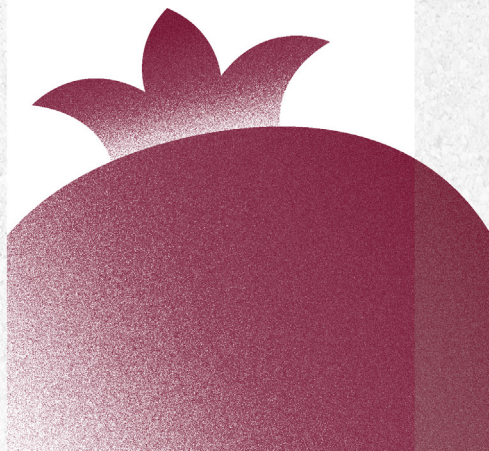
Rosh Hashanah (Head of the Year). How your brain impacts your body, Rosh Hashanah affects your year. Also known as Yom Hazikaron (Day of Remembrance), this term is used in prayer, candle lighting, and the Kiddush. **OBSERVANCE:** Hear the Shofar. The ram's horn is sounded on both days (unless one day is Shabbat).

Customary Foods

On the first night, eat an apple dipped in honey for a sweet year. (See blessing in Machzor page 46.) Some display the head of a fish or ram to be the "head of the class." Some eat carrots because in Yiddish, carrots, *meren*, means to multiply. Pomegranates customarily symbolize our wish to be full of mitzvot, as pomegranates are filled with seeds. On the second night, eat a new fruit to recite the Shehecheyanu. (See Machzor page 46)

Tashlich

On the second day, recite the "Tashlich" prayer near a body of water with fish. Water, a symbol of Divine kindness, and the fish's ever-open eyes make this the perfect spot to pray for Divine mercy. (See Machzor page 291.)



► YOM KIPPUR

Definition

Yom Kippur, the holiest day, means "Day of Atonement." The 5 Don'ts: 1) No food or drink. 2) No washing of the body. 3) No using creams or lotions. 3) No leather footwear. 5) No marital relations.

Before Yom Kippur Prep

In the morning, take a chicken or money and give it to charity at the Kaparot ceremony. (See Kehot's Machzor for Yom Kippur, page 2.) Lekach: Request and receive a slice of honey cake, letting this cake be the only thing you beg for this year. Eat a festive meal, immerse in a mikvah, and give extra charity. In the late afternoon, eat a pre-fast meal. Parents bless their children. If applicable, light a memorial candle. Girls and women light candles 18 minutes before sunset.

What To Wear

Many wear white as a sign of purity. In addition, men wear a tallit during the Kol Nidrei and Yom Kippur Eve service.

SUKKOT

Definition

Sukkot means "Huts." The Jews enjoyed "clouds of glory" during the Exodus, therefore, G-d commands us to dwell in huts during Sukkot (Tishrei 15-21). ALSO KNOWN AS: Z'man Simchateinu (The Time of Our Rejoicing). All holidays are joyous, yet Sukkot is the only holiday with this title.

Observance

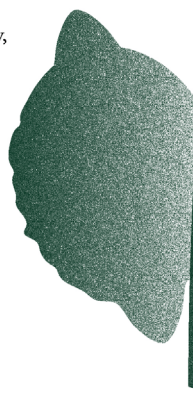
Eat all your meals in the Sukkah and regard it as your home.

Shake

Take the Four Kinds: a) an Etrog (citron), b) a Lulav (palm frond), c) three Hadassim (myrtle twigs), and d) two Aravot (willow twigs) on each day of the festival (besides Shabbat). For instructions on how to take the Four Kinds or "Shake the Lulav" visit our website.

Definition

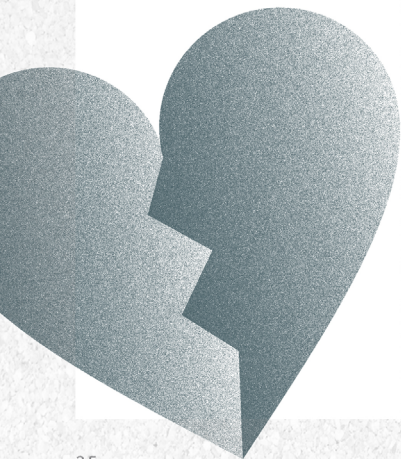
Chol Hamoed (literally, "the weekday of the holiday") refers to the "intermediate period" of the festivals (Tishrei 17-20). We eat in the Sukkah, shake the Lulav, drink wine, and rejoice, but work is permitted.



HOSHANA RABBAH

Definition

Hoshana Rabbah, "Great Salvation" (Tishrei 21), is the seventh day of Sukkot, which closes the period of Divine judgment. Hakafot: Encircle the Bimah (synagogue reading table) seven times while holding the Four Kinds. Hoshanot: Take a bundle of five willow branches and beat them against the ground after the Hakafot ceremony.



SHEMINI ATZERET

Definition

Shemini Atzeret, literally The Eighth (Day) of Restriction (Tishrei 22-23), is a biblical festival that comes after Sukkot; it is a day of unbridled joy, surpassing even the joy of Sukkot.

Observance

In the evening service, dance seven Hakafof with the Torah, similar to Simchat Torah. Yizkor: In the morning, the memorial service is recited. It's not Sukkot, but many have the custom of eating and drinking in the Sukkah without reciting the blessing.

Custom

Sometime before sundown, it is customary to go into the Sukkah, have a bite to eat, and "bid farewell" to its holy shade. ISRAEL VS. DIASPORA: Simchat Torah is the day after Shemini Atzeret in the Diaspora. In Israel, Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah are on the same day.

Shemini Atzeret is the only Jewish festival not tied to a historical event. The Midrash uses the following parable to describe Shmini Atzeret:

A king once invited his children and guests to a seven-day feast. At the end of the seven days, he said: "Children, please, let's continue to feast one more day with only you and me, for your separation is difficult for me."

"Shemini" means eighth, and "Atzeret" means to stop or stay, signifying G-d's invitation to extend Sukkot for an additional eighth day. This "extension," notes the Rebbe, is the only biblical holiday of its kind, and it empowers us year-round to continue extending holiness to the world and transforming ordinary days into Divinity.

SIMCHAT TORAH

Definition

Simchat Torah means the "The Joy of the Torah." It is the most joyous occasion as we celebrate our Divine inheritance and intrinsic connection to the Torah.

Observance

Hakafof are held on the eve and the morning of Simchat Torah. We march and dance with the Torah scrolls seven times around the reading table in the synagogue.

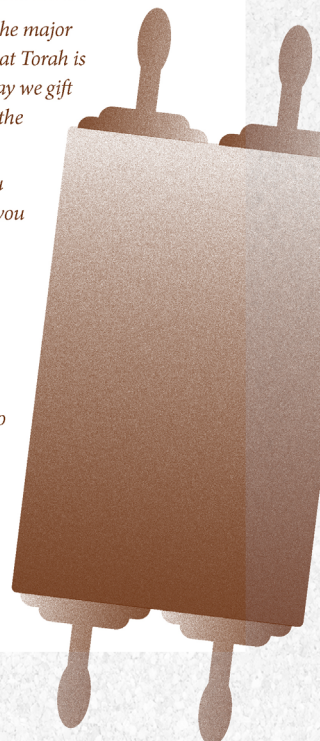
Simchat Torah Was Our Idea

The Passover Exodus had brought us to Mount Sinai for Shavuot. Still, Moses smashed those first Tablets when he saw the Golden Calf, and only eighty days later, on Yom Kippur, were we forgiven and presented with a new, second set of Tablets. Then, only after Sukkot, was our first opportunity to express our joy and love for the Torah. So we, the Jews, invented Simchat Torah.

While G-d gives us the major biblical festivals, Simchat Torah is our initiative; it's the day we gift G-d a holiday and ask the Torah to dance.

Physically, when you dance with the Torah, you become its dependable legs, and in return, the Torah scroll promises to be your dependable support throughout the year. So, the Rebbe would encourage you to celebrate and dance, to go round and round in circles, so you can lock in the blessings from all sides.

(Based on the teachings of the Rebbe)



► *Rejoice!* IT'S TISHREI

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Sep 6 24 Elul	Sep 7 25 Elul	Sep 8 26 Elul	Sep 9 27 Elul	Sep 10 28 Elul	Sep 11 29 Elul Erev Rosh Hashanah Give extra charity Light candles 18 minutes before sunset BLESS your friends with the words "May you be inscribed and sealed for a good year."	Sep 12 1 Tishrei Rosh Hashanah Day 1 Light candles after nightfall from pre-existing flame Dip challah and apple in honey! <i>Happy Birthday Adam & Eve. On this day 5785 years ago G-d said: "Let Us make man in Our image."</i>
Sep 13 2 Tishrei Rosh Hashanah Day 2 Dip challah and apple in honey! Hear the Shofar Say Tashlich at a body of water <i>On this day in 1677 BCE our matriarch Sarah passed away after hearing the good news that Abraham had not sacrificed her only son Isaac.</i>	Sep 14 3 Tishrei Fast of Gedaliah <i>Fast day mourning the assassination of the Jewish royal Gedaliah ben Achikam in 423 BCE</i>	Sep 15 4 Tishrei	Sep 16 5 Tishrei	Sep 17 6 Tishrei	Sep 18 7 Tishrei	Sep 19 8 Tishrei Ha'azinu Shabbat Shuvah
Sep 20 9 Tishrei Erev Yom Kippur KAPAROT Give extra charity . FAST begins and Light candles 18 minutes before sunset. Remove leather shoes KOLNIDREI prayer	Sep 21 10 Tishrei Yom Kippur No eating or drinking Recite Yizkor Memorial Prayer Sounding of Shofar at conclusion of Neilah Havdalah & break-fast after nightfall On this day G-d said: "I forgive the Jewish people."	Sep 22 11 Tishrei Carry out some work on the Sukkah . Don't forget to order your set of The Four Kinds .	Sep 23 12 Tishrei	Sep 24 13 Tishrei	Sep 25 14 Tishrei Erev Sukkot Light candles 18 minutes before sunset. Kidush and all meals in the Sukkah , and dip challah in honey! On Sukkot, supernatural "guests" (Ushpizin) grace our Sukkah. Tonight's Guest: Abraham	Sep 26 15 Tishrei Sukkot Day 1 Kidush and all meals in the Sukkah Light candles after nightfall from pre-existing flame Tonight's Guest: Isaac
Sep 27 16 Tishrei Sukkot Day 2 Shake the Lulav and Etrog Kidush and all meals in the Sukkah Tonight's Guest: Jacob	Sep 28 17 Tishrei Chol Hamoed Shake the Lulav and Etrog All meals in the Sukkah Tonight's Guest: Moses	Sep 29 18 Tishrei Chol Hamoed Shake the Lulav and Etrog All meals in the Sukkah Tonight's Guest: Aaron	Sep 30 19 Tishrei Chol Hamoed Shake the Lulav and Etrog Tonight's Guest: Joseph	Oct 1 20 Tishrei Chol Hamoed Shake the Lulav and Etrog All meals in the Sukkah Tonight's Guest: David	Oct 2 21 Tishrei Hoshana Rabba Shake the Lulav and Etrog Perform Hoshanot Kidush and all meals in the Sukkah Light candles 18 minutes before sunset	Oct 3 22 Tishrei Shemini Atzeret Recite Yizkor Memorial Prayer Recite Prayer for Rain Light candles after nightfall from pre-existing flame In the eveing perform Hakafof and dance with the Torah
Oct 4 23 Tishrei Simchat Torah Perform Hakafof and dance with the Torah Kidush and all meals in the house Havdalah after nightfall	Oct 5 24 Tishrei	Oct 6 25 Tishrei	Oct 7 26 Tishrei	Oct 8 27 Tishrei	Oct 9 28 Tishrei	Oct 10 29 Tishrei Bereishit

MAXIMUM



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