

A group of approximately ten young children are running across a dark green, textured outdoor surface, likely a playground or yard. They are all wearing colorful, pointed party hats. The children are dressed in casual summer clothing like t-shirts and dresses. In the background, there is a wooden fence and lush green trees. The word 'FINISH' is drawn in large, white, chalky letters on the ground in the foreground. The overall scene is bright and cheerful, suggesting a festive outdoor event.

שופר

THE SHOFAR

AUGUST 2021/5781

The United Synagogue of Hoboken
www.hobokensynagogue.org

Why do we welcome the new year in the evening?

By Rabbi Rob Scheinberg

I shared these thoughts with the community in September 2020, just as we entered the new year of 5781.

I note each year on the evening of Rosh HaShanah that among the multitude of differences between how we celebrate Rosh HaShanah and how we celebrate January 1, is the question of the exact moment when the new year begins. If at this exact moment you were to ask ‘What year is it on the Jewish calendar’? - there wouldn’t be a straight answer.

Unlike January 1, when there is a clear determination that the new year has begun at exactly 12:00 AM, in the Jewish calendar, days and weeks and years blend into each other. Every evening, there’s a period of about an hour when one day is being mixed into another. Tonight, that period, about an hour that surrounds sunset, also means the work week is blending into shabbat; the month of Elul is blending into the month of Tishrei, and the year 5781 is blending into the year 5782.



The bible poetically refers to this period of time each day, with the Hebrew word ערב - *erev* - which of course means “evening,” but which biblical scholars regard as connected to the Hebrew word for combinations and blends, because that’s how we experience this time of day. We see blends of light and dark and remarkable colors, blends of past and future, blends of this day and the next day, and sometimes blends of this year and the next year.

My colleague and teacher Rabbi Danny Nevins has written about additional resonances of the Hebrew root ‘erev,’ which can mean not only “blend,” but also “mixed up” and “confused” and “unclear.” Even in normal times, we greet the new year with mixed emotions and lack of clarity about the future.

At this time of year we wish each other *Shanah tovah u-metukah* - a happy and sweet new year - and apples and honey are a way that we concretize that wish. But there’s another Hebrew word for “sweetness,” especially sweet smells, which is the Hebrew word ‘arev’ -- surprisingly enough, yet another variation on the Hebrew root *erev* .ערב

It may be that a word meaning “blending” or “mixing” came also to mean “sweet” because of the special spice blends and incense blends that were used in ancient Israel and especially in the Temple. This verb is often used in the Bible and in rabbinic literature in the context of offerings in the Temple. A blend of ingredients is often so much richer and more interesting and more pleasantly complex than the blandness of a single ingredient. Jewish tradition has always known this -- encouraging us to be in relationship with those with whom we disagree, encouraging us to treasure our differences as much as our similarities, and noting that the diversity in our world is one of its greatest blessings.



THE “CHIEF RABBI OF HOBOKEN”

by Jeremy Morley

I just stumbled across the extremely surprising (to me, at least) fact that we once had a “Chief Rabbi of Hoboken.” And that he was a brilliant, trail-blazing, progressive and highly controversial scholar.

Rabbi Chaim Hirschensohn (1857-1935) was born in Tzfat in what is now Israel and spent many years in major centers of Jewish learning in Europe, before moving to Jerusalem. His primary focus was the study of the ways to reconcile *halacha* (Jewish law) with the modern age, science, rationalism and Zionism. He insisted that orthodox Judaism was totally compatible with modernity, a view which was very controversial in the orthodox world. As a result, he was hounded by Jerusalem zealots who called for his excommunication, and he moved with his family to America, where he became, in his words, the Chief Rabbi of “Hoboken, West Hoboken, Jersey City Heights, Union Hill and the Environs.” He was the rabbi of the Montefiore Synagogue on Grand Street but he attended the dedication of the Star of Israel building, which was founded shortly after his arrival. He remained at his post here in Hoboken for the next 31 years until his death.



Rabbi Hirschensohn is buried in Summit, New Jersey.

He was an amazing guy, who was very involved in public life. He invested a great deal of effort in Jewish education, and as Head of the Education Committee of the Union of Rabbis, he established the first Hebrew Kindergarten and he was very involved in the American Zionist movement.

The rabbi addressed his many writings primarily to halakhic scholars. He used conventional rabbinical language in an effort to convince them of the ability of the *halakha* to resolve modern problems. He proposed a more tolerant approach towards secular Jews and sought halakhic solutions which would justify the modern state of affairs where Jews who were not Torah observant would remain part of the Jewish nation.

He took a highly controversial stance on the status of women. In sharp contrast to almost all other orthodox rabbis, he insisted that women should be treated as equals to men. He explained that all the power of men over women in historic times was due to the economic situation and the underdeveloped moral state, where it was thought that it was possible to be religious without morality. He insisted that religion together with morality is our sacred Torah and that we should infer *halakha* from these historic situations, just as we need not live in tents simply because our forefathers did. He wrote a *responsum* during the

High Holy Days at USH

Event Schedule

Slichot

8:30 pm Saturday, August 28 (Online Only)

Rosh Hashanah

Monday, September 6

4-5 pm KPS Outdoor family Service, Church Sq Park

7:00 pm Evening Services, USH *

Tuesday, September 7

9:30 am Morning Service, USH * (includes Shofar)

3:30-4:45 pm LC Outdoor Family Service & Events, USH

4-5 pm KPS Outdoor family service, Pier A Park

5:00 pm Mincha (afternoon service), USH *

5:30 pm Public Shofar Blowing & Tashlikh, Pier A Park

7:00 pm Ma'ariv (evening service), USH *

Wednesday, September 8

9:30 am Morning Service, USH * (includes Shofar)

10:00 am KPS ZOOM Family Service (Online Only)

3:00 pm Public Shofar Blowing, OUTSIDE USH

3:30-4:45pm LC Outdoor Family Service & Events, USH



SCAN ME
to sign up for
InPerson and
Online Services

* denotes indoor service, proof of vaccination required

Yom Kippur

Wednesday, September 15

4-5 pm KPS Outdoor family Service, Church Sq Park

6:00 pm Mincha (afternoon service) USH *

6:15 pm (sharp) Kol Nidre (evening service) USH*

Thursday, September 16

9:30 am Morning Service, USH *

12:00 pm Yizkor, USH *

3:30-4:45 pm LC Outdoor Family Service & Events, USH

4:45 pm Public Yizkor Service, outside USH

5:15 pm Mincha (afternoon service), USH *

6:45 pm Neilah, outside USH

7:45 pm Final Shofar Blast, outside USH

(followed by light break-fast)

Mitzvah Day/

Sukkot Barbecue

Sunday, September 26

9:00 am - 3:00 pm Mitzvah Day
projects

3:00 pm Sukkot Barbecue

Simchat Torah

Tuesday, September 28

6:30 pm Evening Service, dance & sing in the street

Wednesday, September 29

9:30 am Morning Service

Sukkot

Tuesday, September 21

9:30 am Morning Service, USH

Wednesday, September 22

9:30 am Morning Service, USH

Thursday, September 23

7:00 pm Young Professionals Sushi in
the Sukkah, USH

Friday, September 24

7:00 pm Evening Service - Reception
in the Sukkah

Saturday, September 25

9:30 am Morning Service, USH

Shemini Atzeret

Monday & Tuesday, September 27 & 28

9:30 am Morning Service (including
Yizkor memorial prayers)

* denotes indoor service,
proof of vaccination required

KPS SUMMER CAMP

2021



Thank you for the
memories!

Mitzvah Day 2021

Mitzvah Day 2021 will soon be here! This year, our community's Mitzvah Day will be held Sunday, Sept. 26. A variety of activities and projects are scheduled: some remote/virtual and some in-person. With the pandemic still ongoing, some of our traditional projects will once again not take place – but some virtual projects that were started last year will continue! Unfortunately, there will not be any projects for children this year.

Mitzvah Day was started at USH in 2005 in memory of our member Jeffrey Gardner z”l, who died in the World Trade Center bombing on September 11, 2001. Our Mitzvah Day is always held near September 11 in his memory. We remember him every year as our community comes together to volunteer in one or several projects over the course of a day, which then concludes with the Welcome Back BBQ in our backyard!

Projects this year include a collection drive of new or gently used, freshly laundered coats, hats and mittens, for children and adults, or a donation of \$36, to benefit clients of Welcome Home, the Jersey City-based refugee support group with many USH members as volunteers. Also this year we are organizing a collection drive of children's clothing to benefit clients of the Hoboken Emergency Food Pantry. And for a second year, we are holding the “Buy Dinner for the Shelter” virtual program in which a donation of \$10 will provide dinner for one Shelter client – and our goal is to be able to donate a meal to all clients of the Hoboken Shelter on one evening.

Other traditional Mitzvah Day opportunities will include clean-up at the USH section at Riverside Cemetery for those who would like to be outdoors, collection of mini-toiletries to create hygiene kits for the Hoboken Shelter, holiday deliveries to seniors (with a possible longer visit outdoors), and our annual food drive to benefit the Hoboken Food Pantry.

Look for the Mitzvah Day project sign-up grid in the September Shofar. More information will be uploaded to the USH website in the coming weeks.

Thank you from the Mitzvah Day Committee: Merry Firschein, Hope Koturo, Melissa Sandler, Rabbi Scheinberg.

Sometimes we go the extra step and actually forge an alliance with someone else such that we have blended our responsibilities to each other and we each bear responsibility for each other. And it shouldn't surprise you that the Hebrew word for that kind of blending is also related to the Hebrew word ערב *rev*. In the Torah, when Judah promises his father that he will take care of his youngest brother Benjamin, he says -- אנכי אערבנו *anokhi e'ervenu* - "I will be his guarantor." (Genesis 43:9) In other words: I will take care of him. My responsibilities and concern will be blended with his. Normally I would expect that I would make decisions in my own best welfare. My top priority would be to provide for my own needs -- but in this case the focus of my concern is blended, because I am concerned with my own welfare but equally with the welfare of this other person whose welfare I am guaranteeing. There's a related phrase in the Talmud - כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה - *Kol Yisrael arevim zeh bazeh* - The entire people of Israel have the responsibility to care for and provide for the needs of one another.

I find it poignant that the Hebrew word for taking responsibility for someone else is, in a roundabout way, related to the Hebrew word for evening. We know that when evening approaches, it will soon be dark outside, a time of greater vulnerability, a time when people need to stay together and support each other. When you're trying to survive in the darkness, one of the best strategies is to be *arevim together with others*.

The Hasidic master Rabbi Hayyim of Sanz used to tell a story about this to his community every year on Rosh HaShanah: A man had gotten lost in a forest at night, and was wandering for several hours, not knowing which was the right way out. He was nearing the point of despair, when suddenly he saw a person approaching him. His heart was filled with joy. "Now I shall certainly find out which is the right way," he thought to himself.

When they came nearer one another, he asked them: "Brother, tell me which is the right way. I'm lost, and I've been wandering about in this forest for several hours."

Said the other to him, "Brother, I'm sorry to tell you: I can't tell you. I'm also lost."

The first man's heart sank. Until the second man said: "Thank God we have found each other. Because you know some of the paths that DON'T lead out of the forest. And I know some of the paths that DON'T lead out of the forest. And now we can look for a new way out together."

Reb Hayyim continues: "So it is with us. One thing I can tell you: the way we have been following this far we ought follow no further, for that way leads you astray. But now let us look for a new way out together."

As we wish everyone an *erev tov*, a good evening, and a good transition from one day to the next, from one week to the next, and from one year to the next: All these resonances of the Hebrew word 'erev' that we have mentioned give some additional weight to the first blessing we recite in evening: ברוך אתה ה' המעריך ערבים - *Barukh atah adonai ha-ma'ariv aravim*. Usually this blessing is translated as "Blessed are You, Adonai, who brings evenings." But I think we now realize that it can mean much more:

- Blessed are You, God, who teaches us that mixing and blending can be beautiful and holy.
- Blessed are You, God, who gives sweet things their wonderful fragrance,
- And Blessed are You, God, who teaches us to blend our responsibilities to ourselves and to each other, so that we can be "*arevim zeh lazeh*," guarantors for each other, and find a way out of the forest together.

Shanah Tovah!



fierce debate about woman's suffrage that not only allowed women to vote and to hold elected office, but also permitted women to serve as judges in halakhic disputes.

Among his many permissive and progressive positions, he authorized autopsies that contribute to the understanding and possible cure of an illness, and apparently even approved of the use of electric doorbells, telephones, and inner-city subways (i.e. the PATH!) on Shabbat.



On the lighter side, the writers of the TV show Mrs Maisel also discovered that Rabbi Hirschensohn was once the chief rabbi of Hoboken. In one scene, Mrs. Maisel gives her 4-year-old son, Ethan, "Rabbi Cards" as a gift. As she gives him one card, she says, "This is Rabbi Hirschensohn from Hoboken." Dr. Shaul Magid writes on the Hartman Institute website that this "is actually a crazy reference. Haim Hirschenson was indeed a famous rabbi from Safed and a colleague of Rav Kook, who was "exiled" to Hoboken because he wrote the teshuvah in favor of women's suffrage in Israel. Could the show's writers have added Hirschenson because of his position on women's suffrage? If so, it's a fabulous reference."

Rabbi Scheinberg showed me a recent republication of one of Rabbi Hirschensohn's books, the introduction to which thanks Rabbi Scheinberg for providing context as to what Hoboken was like when Rabbi Hirschensohn was living here.

Things to know about attending High Holidays at USH

Shanah Tovah! Below is detailed information about our High Holiday policies and procedures.

It has not been easy to set these policies. Even one month ago, we were hoping that our services would look much more similar to how they have been throughout the century-long history of our community. However, as we all know, the scourge of Covid continues to be with us, and the events in the last several weeks have demanded a tightening of many of our policies and procedures. Please note that our procedures may continue to evolve as additional medical information is received.

Whenever possible, we strive to make our community's decisions in line with the Jewish values we hold dear, including:

שמירת הגוף shmirat ha-guf - protecting the body, and guarding the health of our entire community and especially those who are most vulnerable;

כבוד הבריות Kevod ha-briyyot -- honoring all people, and affirming that all people of all ages, life stages and health conditions are valued parts of our community

כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה Kol yisrael arevim zeh baze -- All members of the Jewish community are responsible for one another, so we balance our commitments to self and to others when making communal decisions

And of course we have to create policies that are not overly complicated and can be readily administered by our synagogue's small office staff.

With no doubt, some elements of these policies will not be what you personally would have chosen. It is our hope that the wide variety of experiences we are offering -- in-person indoors at the synagogue, in-person outdoors at the synagogue, in-person outdoors in public parks, and online -- will help you find options that meet your needs for these High Holy Days.

Indoor Services at the Star of Israel Sanctuary, United Synagogue of Hoboken

Synagogue members and their guests are invited to participate in High Holy Day services at the Star of Israel Sanctuary at the United Synagogue of Hoboken, within the guidelines presented below.

As safety is our highest priority, this option has a higher risk of Covid transmission and therefore our policies regarding this option are more restrictive.

In particular: **attending services in the sanctuary on Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur is specifically for people who have been vaccinated. Those who are not vaccinated (including children under age 12 who are not yet eligible for vaccination) are invited to attend services online and/or to attend services outdoors.**

We have made the difficult decision -- though in line with the policies of many other synagogues and institutions in our region -- to require that those attending indoor services submit verification of their vaccination status. The easiest way to do this is to take a photo of a vaccination card and to submit it online with the pre-registration form, <https://www.hobokensynagogue.org/ushhighholidays2021>

The name badges that function as High Holy Day tickets for all services will be available to people after they have submitted their evidence of vaccination. We encourage you to submit evidence of vaccination before August 31. Your vaccination documentation will be kept confidential and the images will be deleted immediately after the processing of High Holiday tickets.

USH members can also purchase tickets for their guests, and non-members can purchase tickets. All admission to the sanctuary, however, requires the uploading of proof of vaccination in advance of the holiday.

Additionally, **anyone who is experiencing any covid-like symptoms whatsoever should not attend indoor services.** Those arriving for services will be asked to verify upon arrival that they are symptom-free.

As temperatures in early September in our un-air-conditioned sanctuary are often high, we are acquiring temporary air conditioning for the week of the High Holy Days. This means, however, that windows will be closed in our sanctuary.

Participants in the sanctuary agree to wear a mask throughout the services. We ask you to put on your mask outdoors before you join the line to approach our security volunteers. (While participants in our indoor in-person services will be masked and many leaders will be masked, some leaders and speakers who have been vaccinated and recently tested for Covid, who will be keeping appropriate distance from others, will be temporarily unmasked so that they can be better understood by people in the room and people who are accessing services online.)

We will not be filling the sanctuary to capacity. While we don't anticipate turning away USH members or those with tickets (who have followed the procedures above regarding verifying their vaccination status), we reserve the right to do so if the sanctuary is getting so full that appropriate distancing is impossible.

Shofar blowers at all services will be vaccinated and also will have received a negative covid test in the previous few days before the holiday.

Outdoor Services and Events

We are excited to offer outdoor services this year, including youth and family services on the evenings of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, Tashlikh on the first day of Rosh HaShanah, public shofar blowings on both days of Rosh HaShanah, youth and family services on the afternoons of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, public Yizkor memorial service on Yom Kippur afternoon, and the Yom Kippur Neilah service and the final shofar blast at the conclusion of Yom Kippur. Most of these outdoor services and events require preregistration but do not require payment or uploading of any other materials. These programs are open to people of all ages.

While the United Synagogue of Hoboken strongly encourages all who are eligible to be vaccinated to do so, our outdoor programs will not require proof of vaccination. While masking is not required in outdoor events as a matter of course, please bring a mask to these outdoor events, because we reserve the right to require masking at outdoor events if we deem that appropriate distancing cannot be maintained.

Events that are scheduled outdoors will take place outdoors, rain or shine; events in the parks will be moved to the gazebos (in the center of Church Square Park and at the end of Pier A Park) if necessary.

All shofar blowers will be vaccinated and will also have had a negative covid test in the few days before the services.

Online Services

Online access to services is open to anyone who preregisters for this access on our synagogue web site, <https://www.hobokensynagogue.org/ushhighholidays2021>. (When you register for access, the service link(s) will be sent to you.) If you benefit from online access to our synagogue services, we encourage you to make a donation to our synagogue, in recognition of this challenging year and the ways that our synagogue's normal funding procedures are transformed this year. Online access this year will be one-way (participants outside of the sanctuary will be able to see and hear the events in the sanctuary but will not be able to be seen or heard).

If you have questions about our plans, we invite you to reach out to David Swirnoff, High Holy Day committee chairperson, at david.swirnoff@gmail.com, and/or to Jeremy Morley, USH president, at president@hobokensynagogue.org, and/or to Rabbi Robert Scheinberg at rabbi@hobokensynagogue.org.

Whether you are joining us indoors, outdoors, online, or some combination thereof, we are looking forward to celebrating these holy days together with you. We wish you and your loved ones a new year of happiness, good health, fulfillment, and peace.

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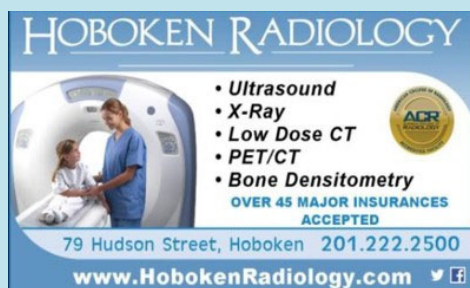
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