

EREV ROSH HASHANAH 5779  
INTRODUCTION OF HOLIDAY THEME

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A pastor visited a group of women who survived the Darfur genocide of 1994. He takes out a newish Rwandan Franc. He holds it between his two hands and asks, "how much is this worth?"

The women pause with looks of puzzlement. After all, they were told he was a religious leader of great esteem in the U.S., yet he asking them a plainly obvious question. They indulge him and reply, "5,000 francs." He holds it in his hands and then dramatically crumples it, stomps on it, and dirties it on the floor. He even tears the corner and spits on it. Everyone watches with semi-suspended confusion and growing discomfort. He holds it between his two hands again, "And now, how much is it worth?" The women reply, "it's still worth 5,000 francs;" their discomfort and confusion hang in the air. The pastor explains, "And so are you. Nothing you have experienced, nothing anyone has done to you, can change your value. You are still worth the same."

Most of us have not experienced such an intense trauma, but each of us has faced crises. A theme we will explore these high holidays is resilience, or perseverance in response to adversity. We will discuss why this is an important quality to cultivate, and how. Finally, we will link resilience to Jewish identity.

Over the next few days, I ask you to consider one or more difficult moments in your life. How did you manage? What helped you to come out on the other side?

Albert Camus (Al-bear Kam-oo) wrote, "In the depths of winter, I finally learned that within me lay an invincible summer." I believe that God blessed us with inner strength, and I hope that together we will gain new insight about resilience this holiday season. Shanah tovah!

