Zoey Henrich

**Personal Prayer: Rosh HaShanah 2018**

A couple weeks ago, I was faced with a dilemma. I got a text from a friend, inviting me to her sleepover birthday party that began the evening of September 18th and ended around lunch time the next day. As I’m sure many of you know, that’s when Yom Kippur is. What to do? Should I go to her party or come to services? It was hard to pick because both are really important to me. I ended up finding a compromise that made it possible for me to do both. But at the same time, I was concerned that maybe I was a bad Jew. Would a good Jew have had a hard time deciding what was more important? After all, Yom Kippur is one of the most important holidays of the whole year. If I was a bad Jew, did that make me not as good a person? That night, I wasn’t sure how to answers to these questions and I became less happy with myself. Was I still a good person, even though I couldn’t honestly put services as more important to me than my social life? In time, I’ve come to realize that this experience doesn’t define me and I’m still a good person. But I was surprised how much of an impact one thought could have on my view of myself. In Judaism, we are always being told to love our neighbors as ourselves. But if everyone followed this, there would be too many unloved neighbors. Why? Because there are too many people who are unloved by themselves. People who think that they are too rude, too fat, too mean, too tall, too short, too dumb, or too ugly. This is a problem. Being happy with yourself is crucial to happiness in general. I’m not saying that we should all be egotistical and ignore our faults, but I am saying that we would do well to appreciate our amazing qualities. To remember the many bright sides of ourselves and not get bogged down by the math problem that we couldn’t solve, the pimples on our nose, or whatever imperfections we see in ourselves. Science has proven that loving yourself has
internal benefits. Research has shown that hugging yourself can make you feel better when you’re upset and reduce physical pain. Here’s the truth: We are all, at some point, going to mess up. We are all going to make a mistake, probably a lot of mistakes. That’s okay; no one’s perfect. The important thing is that we strive to not let that mistake change our view of ourselves or define how we think of ourselves. So, bearing all of this in mind, yehi ratzon milfanecha, may it be your will that we can each give ourselves the unconditional love that we deserve.