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TIME AND GOD'S "NACHES"

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Time has a way of slipping through our fingers. Horace Mann once put this announcement in a newspaper's lost-and-found column: "Lost – somewhere between sunrise and sunset – two golden hours, each set with 60 diamond minutes. No reward is offered . . . for they are gone forever."

For us as Jews, Rosh Hashanah is our annual wake-up call that time matters – in fact, it matters supremely. In that spirit, a few suggestions for the year ahead:

Even in the computer age, learning does not just happen by itself. Intellectual growth takes effort, energy and commitment. In a world changing at breakneck speed, there is a vast array of inquiry and culture awaiting our exploration. Our mind is one of our most precious assets – and we must not let it lie fallow.

To paraphrase Hillel:

"If not now, then – when?"

With all its shortcomings and problems, we live in a wondrous country. Most of us are the children and grandchildren of immigrants, who when they first arrived on these American shores could never have fully envisioned the good fortune which would become theirs and ours. With a presidential election on the immediate horizon and stark choices before us – we should engage vigorously and extensively in the political process – as we determine both the leaders and the policies of the years ahead. "If not now, then – when?"

There are so many in need – the unemployed, the sick, the poor, the homeless, the lonely. We must open our eyes and our hearts and empower ourselves to reach out to them. Each of us can bring a measure of joy and uplift to others. If not now, then – when?"

Our gift of time also enables us to grow as Jews. Here at B'nai Israel, our Program Guide for 2012-2013 is a treasure-trove with an abundance of opportunities to shape and strengthen our Jewish identity even further.

Peruse the pages – select what appeals to you – and make an investment in yourself and in our B'nai Israel community. “If not now – then when?”

One of my favorite stories describes an elderly Jewish woman, who wanted to extend a wish to God.

“God, she wondered: “Shall I wish You life? After all, You live forever.”

She went a little further in her thoughts:

“God, shall I wish You wealth? You already possess the whole Universe.”

And then after some additional moments of reflection, she prayed:

“God – may You have naches, spiritual pleasure and pride, from us, Your children.”

In the year ahead, may God derive that naches from us – God's children – and by the choices we make – may we achieve it for ourselves, as well.