

A Year of “New Days” Begins



The High Holy Days are here. The beginning of a new cycle. A fresh start.

A song begins. “Every day. Every day is a new day.” It is a song of hope and optimism. That each new day brings opportunity and hope.

Time is fast and furious. A Townes Van Zandt song says “Time, she’s a fast old train. She’s here, then she’s gone, and she won’t come again.”

Yes, moments of time are fleeting. We live at the intersection of past and future; the moment when one becomes the other is barely perceptible.

Sometimes we live, stuck in the past. We think it was better then. We feel time has betrayed us as we face the eternal challenges, what I like to call the three “Fs”: Finances, Family discord, and PHysical ailments. Sometimes we can’t get over the slights others have committed against us, the indignities and the disrespect. We are consumed with anger because life is unfair. Whether we are caught in an idealized past, or burdened by painful memories that have seared our souls, the past overwhelms our ability to live in the present moment, and make something good out of our lives.

Sometimes the future dominates us. We are working for an elusive goal. Or we are afraid of losing what we have, or the hope of having what we yearn for. Every day we live defensively. We feel that the present moment is of no value because uncertainty and danger lurk around every corner.

Rosh HaShanah and *Yom Kippur* teach us that’s not life.

The holy days teach us to treasure the opportunities we have, not waste them because of a past that might have been better, or whose poisons continue to assail us, or because of a future that has not yet happened and could deprive us of all that is precious.

Rosh HaShanah and *Yom Kippur* teach us that each day is a new day, and each day gives us the opportunity to find healing and accomplishment, and achieve gratitude.

Rosh HaShanah and *Yom Kippur* ask us to forgive those who have wronged us, and to forgive life when it has wronged us. The holy days ask us to forgive ourselves for our own mistakes whose legacy darkens our souls. Without forgiveness our souls can never be open to the potential of new moments.

Over the summer, I read a book by Dan Senor and Saul Singer called *Start-Up Nation*. It asks the question of how Israel, one of the smallest of nations, living with the constant threat of hostility, has so many entrepreneurial successes and is a society filled with daring innovation. I was struck by one observation. They write, “Israelis have been keenly aware that the future—both near and distant—is always in question. Every moment has strategic importance.”

Israelis do not dwell on the past, and they don’t delay for the future. They recognize that “every moment has strategic importance.”

It is the nature of life that not one of us knows what the next moment will bring. We must cherish the moments in time that we experience today. The past is gone. The future may never happen. We only have the moment.

In Psalm 95, the first Psalm we recite each Friday night at *Kabbalat Shabbat*, to welcome the Sabbath, we read, “Today, if to God’s voice you would but attend.” The *Midrash* explains that if “Today” we would but attend to God’s voice, the Messiah would come.

As I read the text and reflect on the interpretation, I would modify it slightly. Today, if we would only pay attention to what is really important in our lives—and really, don’t we all know what that is?—we would find a level of contentment worthy of the coming of the Messiah.

Now I know this is not so easy, and not always possible. We are at any moment the product of the past that has shaped us and the future we aspire to create. But we must also be mindful of a present that is so rare and precious that we must strive to embrace it with Messianic potential for peace and thanksgiving.

Cindy and I and our children wish you a meaningful High Holy Day Season, and a year when we embrace the present moment more, and give thanks for the blessings that are ours in a spirit of appreciation and gratitude.

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