

In my friend's bathroom, there's a picture of a little kid doing a summersault. And next to the child is a message that says:

*God puts each fresh morning,
each new chance of life,
into our hands as a gift,
to see what we will do with it.*

I asked my friend what she thought of the picture. She said, "Hmm, I never noticed it." But when I looked at it, I thought, "That's perfect for Rosh Hashanah."

First off, it begins with "God" – in the same way, we come here at the very beginning of the year to acknowledge, praise, and thank God for this New Year. There are lots of ways that the message could have been written, like it could have said "Nature has put...", or it could have said "By random chance...", or even a totally passive "You've been given..." No, this message begins by acknowledging that it is God who gives us each fresh morning, or in this case, a fresh year. And it is fresh – we don't need to carry the baggage from previous years.

We've just gone through the month of Elul, which I hope for you was a time to forgive others and to ask forgiveness from them. We can now resume our relationships, with the goal of being more loving, more caring; of listening more and talking less; of building each other up, instead of tearing each other down. That's a difficult thing to do!

I don't know about you, but I'm a creature of habit. It's easier to remain in my old ways, to continue "business as normal." But maybe, just maybe, if I set my will to it, I will make this a better year for myself and for those around me. The New Year is a new chance for life. We need to live the life we've been given, not sit around and watch life happening around us. That means actively taking part in activities, sharing commonly with others' living of life, and doing what we can to foster tikkun olam in our lives, our families, our communities, and our world as a whole.

And what has G-d given us? God has gifted us with this time. And what's the proper response to a valuable gift? To thank the giver and then put it into a drawer to be ignored? No, of course not! Have you ever held a door open for someone, only to have them just walk through it without a glimmer of recognition? Or my favorite is when they look at you and say, "I could have gotten it." Makes you wish you'd just slammed the door in their face! No, the proper response is to first thank the giver for the gift, and then use that gift for good, thereby bringing honor to the one who gave it to us. And a new year is a gift; it is not an entitlement that we deserve, or a payment for something we may have done in the past.

And finally, the picture says that God wants to see what we will do with this gift. Choose to do good. Choose to be nice. Choose to start each day and each year fresh and new. Shana Tova!