

D'var Torah by Rabbi M. Jaroslawicz for Parshas Nitzavim 5775 (2015)

Normally, whenever Rosh Chodesh comes out, we are “Mevoraich Ha'chodesh” (we “bentch” Rosh Chodesh) on the preceding Shabbos.

I'm sure you noticed I just said “normally” -- and you know that, early next week, we are about to enter into Rosh Hashana, the biggest “Rosh Chodesh” we have. So the obvious question is: Although this Shabbos is just before Rosh Hashana, we will not be saying Birchas Hachodesh. Why not? This is the last Shabbos of the year! Hire the best Chazan and get a great choir! Why not go out with a big bang?

The Shem Me'Shmuel offers the following insight:

Why do we Bentch Rosh Chodesh every month on the Shabbos just prior to the day? It's because we are trying to imbue some of the Holiness of the Shabbos into the very special day of Rosh Chodesh. Yes, Rosh Chodesh is special and up high on the spiritual ladder of life. However, Shabbos is even higher and even more spiritual.

However, on this Shabbos, the last Shabbos of the year, things are a bit different. And this “Rosh Chodesh” is a bit different from the other 11 (or 12).

Regarding Rosh Hashana, our Torah tells us:

“Zeh hayom techilas ma'asehcha, zichron le'yom rishon [This day is the beginning of your actions, commemorative of the first day].”

What this means to say is that, in the very beginning, the creation of the world was not brought on by any “Hisorrerus,” any inspiration, as there was nobody yet created to offer inspiration and there was no previous thought upon which to base its creation. There wasn't even a previous Shabbos to infuse the coming week with potential and with energy. Mankind is instructed to duplicate that day, that moment in time that had “no history,” and allow ourselves to move forward unhindered by any previous actions, thoughts or feelings and start anew, from scratch, as if we and the universe were just created.

This needs to be our mindset on Rosh Hashana. This way of thinking allows for endless growth and the greatest individual potential.

It is for this reason, says the Shem Me'Shmuel, that we do not “Bentch” Rosh Hashana. There really is NO intro for our upcoming Rosh Hashana. It is all “new beginnings” for each of us.

To quote the terminology used in this week's Parsha, Netzavim, my Rebbetzin and I would like to extend our heartfelt Bracha to all, “Asher yeshno po eemanu... v'ais asher ainenu po eemanu ha'yom,” [those who are here with us today and those who are not]. We wish for you all a year of good health and fortune. We bless you to have Yiddishe nachas from all of your children, grandchildren, great grandchildren and the rest of your extended families.

We hope that we were somehow successful in touching your lives and making a positive difference, as you all have touched us and made a big difference in our lives.

May we spend many more years together, exploring new beginnings and working towards our common goal of a larger, better, all-inclusive Shul. A place where Jews of all denominations can feel comfortable to come and bask in the warmth of our Modern Orthodox family, and turn to us to be a beacon of light to help enhance their own spiritual growth.

We must look forward, only forward, to the future. To new beginnings unhindered by any previous actions, thoughts or feelings. To start anew. From scratch. As if the universe were just created.

We should all be inscribed in the Book of Life, and see Shalom with all of Acheinu Kol Bais Yisroel. In America, overseas, and, of course, in Eretz Yisroel, Eretz ha'Kodesh, and its eternal Capital, Yerushalayim Ir HaKodesh.

L'shana Tovah Ti'kaseivu

Good Shabbos

