

RABBI'S MESSAGE

Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur and Back

Many people say they've lost track of time during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Is it Tuesday already? One of my rabbinic colleagues gave a label to this confusion about time: she called it O.T., standing for "oblivious time." Sports fans will recognize the same acronym as "overtime." Overtime is played when teams haven't reached a conclusion by the end of the game. Oblivious Time is when we are unaware of what is happening or what is supposed to be happening. Time sometimes feels like our friend and other times like an adversary. When we are in school or at work and have a deadline to turn in an assignment or finish a project, it seems as if time is against us. Vacations end too soon, and weekends fly by. For taxpayers, April 15 creeps up on us. When we are with people we love, time runs out quickly. When we are in an uncomfortable situation, time drags on. Einstein quipped that his scientific "theory of relativity," could be summed up by perspective: when the experience is pleasant, an hour can seem like a minute; when the experience is painful, a minute seems like an hour. Time can seem much too short or much too long, especially at the end of life. We don't want to lose our loved ones, but when someone is suffering, we don't want their pain to drag on.

Time is a gift to be cherished. We appreciate the time we spend experiencing life, enjoying nature, celebrating with loved ones, enriching our minds, enhancing the lives of others and being enriched. The Jewish calendar gives us many ways to measure time. When the liturgy states, "On Rosh Hashanah it (the Book of Life) is written and on Yom Kippur it is sealed," it can feel like a last-minute deadline. Let's hurry up and do as many good deeds as we can in those ten days to ensure a good year. Quick! Before it's too late! Let's start "*mitzvah-ing!*" Even the liturgy suggests at the end of Yom Kippur that "the gates are closing," and we need to make our final Yom Kippur prayers extra-sincere so they will be heard and answered.

I like to think of Yom Kippur as a reminder rather than a deadline. Not a rush to sudden action, but a reminder to always look for ways to improve ourselves and the world. Rabbi Harold Schulweis commented:

"The last word has not been spoken, the last sentence has not been written, the final verdict is not in. It's never too late to change my mind, my direction, to say no to the past and yes to the future, to offer remorse, to ask and give forgiveness. It's never too late to start over again, to feel again, to love again, to hope again..."

Every day we have the opportunity for *teshuva*, the concept of moving closer to the best we can be. Reminders, like Yom Kippur, make us accountable. While conceding our transgressions, we must also recognize our attributes. It's a way to start over and build on our accomplishments. The "Days of Awe," the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, are said to be of utmost importance; but it's even more important to spend all those days between Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah fulfilling our truest potential and appreciating all the gifts of the world. Perhaps we can make these next months the "Days of Ahhhhhhhhh." Then, we will have just enough time.

L'shalom,

Rabbi Dan Gordon