

Tzipi Livni, Gilad Shalit, and Thoughts on the New Year

By Hagar Shahak

The High Holiday period actually begins in Elul, the Hebrew month preceding Rosh Hashanah. Elul is an important period of introspection, of clarifying one's life goals, and of coming closer to God. On Rosh Hashanah, each individual stands before the Almighty and asks for a successful new year.

During Elul, many people perform a daily "Cheshbon Nefesh" - a spiritual accounting, where we step back and look at ourselves critically and honestly, with the intention of improving.

I am proud to start the New Year as an Israeli because Kadima, the political party now in charge of the government, chose Tzipi Livni to lead Kadima after Ehud Olmert decided to retire from being prime minister. Tzipi Livni will be Israel's second female prime minister, the first being Golda Meir 1969-1974. Of the four possible candidates for prime minister, she was the only female candidate and determined by her peers to be the best.

During the last few weeks, I guided a program about Selichot (forgiveness) and Tshuva (repentance). I told the story of Gilad Shalit. In June 2006, Gilad Shalit was captured by Hamas on the border with Gaza. Today Gilad Shalit is still being held by Hamas, more than two years later. Because Israel has received a letter and an audio tape from him, we know for sure that he is still alive.

When Gilad was eleven years old, he wrote a story about the shark and the fish whose families are not comfortable with one another. The shark and the fish wish to get to know one another despite family animosity, and work towards creating more warmth between families. Gilad's family decided to publish this book in the hopes that he will be released.

I believe that this book describes Gilad's upbringing; his parents have educated him to believe in hope for love and peace. Therefore I reminded the students in Hebrew High that somewhere someone may be in need of help. The help can be a reminder for hope, love and peace or the help can be a friendship. The teens of Hebrew High and Charlotte Jewish Preschool made an ocean of little fish and sharks that support hope, love, and peace. Their efforts are currently displayed near the main entrance to the LJCC.

I wish you Shana Tova and hope that we will share the new year together. ☆



Hebrew High students created "The Shark and the Fish" board in hopes of Gilad Shalit's imminent release.

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