

NEW YEAR GREETINGS — לשנה טובה תכתבו

How to Open the Gates of Repentance

By Rabbi Scott White
Temple Israel

"Today is the birthday of the world." So proclaims our liturgy on Rosh Hashanah. Birthdays are times when we look back to assess what we have gained or lost in the past year. Beginning on Rosh Hashanah and ending on Yom Kippur, G-d looks back at our lives during the past year and determines who will be inscribed in the Book of Life in the year to come.



Yet, G-d should not be the only one doing such retrospection. During the Yamim Nora'im, each of us must engage in a retrospective look at ourselves, both in a personal sense and in the sense of how we interact with others. What is the impact of my life, we must ask, on many various levels: in my house, in my community, within my people, even within my country and the planet at large?

Have I taken good care of myself, eating properly, getting exercise, staying away from hazards? Have I treated my family members with respect at all times, letting them know I love them? Did I manage to control my temper when under stress? Did I make time to devote efforts to the common weal, working towards the betterment of those less fortunate in my

community?

Did I take time to educate myself about important social and political issues in my society, getting involved in debate and opinion, refusing to remain indifferent? Did I always think about protecting the environment, recycling whenever possible, driving only when absolutely necessary, lingering not too long in the hot shower, keeping the thermostat at 75 in the summer and 68 in the winter?

The ability to make improvements in our future depends on our courage in taking an honest appraisal and coming to terms with our past. In addition to asking ourselves the tough questions, Judaism teaches that material and/or emotional compensation for past wrongs must be taken into account. Money owed must be returned and feelings hurt must be assuaged. Only when these efforts have been made does the Almighty open the gates of repentance for squaring accounts with Him.

We are afforded 10 days in which to engage in what is known as a *Heshbon Nefesh*, soul searching, from the beginning of Rosh Hashanah to the final Tkiyah Gedolah on Yom Kippur. May we use them to contemplate our role in G-d's world, bearing in mind that its perfection will be achieved only when all Her creatures begin the quest to perfect themselves.

Best wishes for a meaningful High Holy Days; may the year 5753 be a happy, healthy and sweet one for us all.

Looking to Another Successful Year

By Barry Hantman
Executive Director JCC

As we conclude year 5752 and look forward to Rosh Hashanah 5753, the Jewish Community Center has reached a milestone at Shalom Park. This past year we offered the largest, most comprehensive day camp season ever, with the addition of three new camps. We have developed excellent infant/toddler programs, after school care, programs for handicapped youngsters with special needs, a summer concert series, and much much more. For six years the Jewish Community Center has expanded and grown to become an energetic and bustling facility, filling the social, educational, cultural and health needs of a large part of our community. We have our members, those who have served on our Boards and committees, a dedicated staff and our generous supporters, including the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte, to thank for our success. As the Jewish Community Center moves from its infancy into adolescence, we have much to look forward to. An organization never stays the same, it either moves forward or falls back. If the Jewish Community Center is to continue as the common meeting ground and the cement that draws the community together, we must



continue to look for innovative ways to serve unmet needs. This coming year the Jewish Community Center will focus on expanding services in Jewish education, comprehensive day care, including special needs, and to offer a gathering place for our teenagers. Our agenda includes working toward the development of an endowment fund and exploring the possibility of acquiring a day camp site so that success in our future years will be assured. There is only one Jewish Community Center in Charlotte. There is only one Jewish Community Center with a full facility in all of North Carolina.

The lifeblood of a community center is its lay community. Board members, committee members and JCC members need to remain active so that our hopes and ideas become realities. This coming November, the Jewish Community Center will be offering a Gala Dinner-Dance/Auction which is designed to raise needed funds to continue serving our senior adults, youngsters and handicapped children. I invite every member of the community to support the Jewish Community Center so that we may continue to maintain its high standards and future successes. When approached to help, please say yes, I will support the Jewish Community Center.

We look forward to serving the community in 5753. We wish you and your family "L'Shana Tova."

High Holiday Message

By Rabbi Robert A. Seigel
Temple Beth El

Never before has there been—nor ever again shall there be—a High Holy Day season such as this one. The members of two major synagogues will converge at one location for their very first Rosh Hashanah services in their new temple buildings. And with this Holy Day season comes the realization of the dream that is Shalom Park: the entire Jewish community on one unified campus. *Klal Yisrael* is alive in Charlotte!



In the Talmud we find that one of the Rabbis considered a particular prayer to be the most meaningful of all Rosh Hashanah prayers: *Tichleh hashanah v'kiloteha*—Let the old year end with all its problems, all its frustrations and all its heartaches. *Tachel shana u'birchoteha*—Let a new year begin, a new year filled with blessing, with joy, with happiness and fulfillment. (Megillah 36)

This wisdom is so true for our own time. Let the old year end with its problems:

- It's Saturday morning; do I go straight into Gorelick Hall or right to the Luski Youth Center? Or is the service this morning, perhaps, in the Gym?

- We're about to open the portable ark. I sure hope somebody remembered to put a Torah in it this week!

- Now let's see—where can we have our bar mitzvah rehearsal

this week?

The problems of cramped space and nomadic existence belong to the old year. But so do far greater problems as well:

- We worked so hard to support the mass immigration to Israel. Where were the houses to put them?

- Middle Eastern Peace talks that started and sputtered.

- Yitzhak Shamir. (Enough said!)

- The growing horror of the AIDS epidemic.

- Ethnic and religious wars in what once was the monolithic Eastern European empire.

- An American educational system that brought home a failing report card.

- The economy: hardworking, productive Americans joining the ranks of the unemployed or fearing for their job security.

"Let the old year end with all its problems, all its frustrations and all its heartaches. Let a new year begin, a new year filled with blessing, with joy, with happiness and fulfillment."

Let us open our eyes beyond the beautiful new sanctuaries, upward toward the One whose creation of the world we celebrate this season. Let us pour out our hearts, stimulated by the shofar's blast and the coming reckoning on Yom Kippur, asking the Eternal One to bring to an end the problems of the old year and create for us a new year, a new opportunity, a new beginning.

And then—and then, my friends, let us pledge to so live our lives in this new year that we truly become coworkers with G-d. The dream of Messianic fulfillment begins with us.

The New Year: A Time to Work Together

By Daniel Z. Lepow
Director JFGC

Last year at this time my family and I worshipped at a small synagogue built by Jewish settlers in the late 1800s. They came mostly from eastern Europe seeking a better life for themselves and their children. While this Norma, New Jersey synagogue had no running water and could barely seat 100 people, their Rosh Hashanah prayers expressed the same hope that we today have for a better world.



Today, we look forward to worshipping at the newest and most modern temples one could imagine. Almost 100 years later we continue to create environments where we can come together. It is a source of great pride to leaders of the Charlotte community to have put together a center of Jewish life.

This past year, two major Jewish organizations (Jewish Federation and Foundation) merged to create an entity ready to accept the challenges of tomorrow. While some may look at it only as a legal procedure, it was actually far more. Much thought and planning went into its governance structure to assure that all voices

would be heard. Many hours of deliberation went into forming each committee so that each partner would have input and every voluntary organization would be part of the ongoing activities of the community.

However, buildings and governance plans mean nothing without the people. A synagogue is not simply a Rabbi or Cantor standing on the Bimah but a congregation praying together. A Jewish Federation is not simply a nameless caller asking for an annual gift but a community coming together to plan for tomorrow. The Federation surely needs everyone's help to raise the dollars. The issue is in the planning for the use of those

5753—A Year Of Big Wonders

By Rabbi Yossi Groner

As we approach the new year, we wonder what it has in store for us. However, with proper reflection and planning we could make it into a great year.



Each year has its own individual character which makes it different yet unique in its own way. In a sense, the birth of the new year is similar to the birth of a new child. And as with children, if you invest in them through education and proper care, you will reap nachas and joy for years to come. So it is with the new year. Invest properly and listen to its message and you will experience the magnificent power of the new year.

Each year has its own name, based on its numbers. Thus the new year by its numerical value assumes a name which could shape the coming 355 days of the year.

The new year of 5753 corresponds to the Hebrew letters of Hey-Tov-Shin-Nun-Gimel. These letters also make up an acronym of Hebrew words which could be applied to the new year. They are: Hayoh, Tehey, Shnat, Niflaot, Gedolot. This translates to the words: May it be a year of big wonders!

According to many Bible scholars, wonders are even greater than miracles. A wonder evokes a feeling of amazement

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