

## Ten Short Ideas for Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur

As we approach Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and the start of the Jewish year, here are ten short ideas which might help you focus your davening and ensure you have a meaningful and transformative experience.

Number one. **Life is short.** However much life expectancy has risen, we will not, in one lifetime, be able to achieve everything we might wish to achieve. This life is all we have. So the question is: How shall we use it well?



Number two. **Life itself, every breath we take, is the gift of God.** Life is not something we may take for granted. If we do, we will fail to celebrate it. Yes, we believe in life after death, but it is in life before death that we truly find human greatness.

Number three. **We are free.** Judaism is the religion of the free human being freely responding to the God of freedom. We are not in the grip of sin. The very fact that we can do teshuva, that we can act differently tomorrow than we did yesterday, tells us we are free.

Number four. **Life is meaningful.** We are not mere accidents of matter, generated by a universe that came into being for no reason and will one day, for no reason, cease to be. We are here because there is something we must do; to be God's partners in the work of creation, bringing the world that is closer to the world that ought to be.

Number five. **Life is not easy.** Judaism does not see the world through rose-tinted lenses. The world we live in is not the world as it ought to be. That is why, despite every temptation, Judaism has never been able to say the messianic age has come, even though we await it daily.

Number six. **Life may be hard, but it can still be sweet.** Jews have never needed wealth to be rich, or power to be strong. To be a Jew is to live for the simple things: love, family, community. Life is sweet when touched by the Divine.

Number seven. **Our life is the single greatest work of art we will ever make.** On the *Yamim Noraim*, we step back from our life like an artist stepping back from their canvas, seeing what needs changing for the painting to be complete.

Number eight. **We are what we are because of those who came before us.** We are each a letter in God's book of life. We do not start with nothing. We have inherited wealth, not material but spiritual. We are heirs to our ancestors' greatness.

Number nine. **We are heirs to another kind of greatness: to Torah and the Jewish way of life.** Judaism asks great things of us and by doing so makes us great. We walk as tall as the ideals for which we live, and though we may fall short time and again, the *Yamim Noraim* allow us to begin anew.

And number ten. The sound of heartfelt prayer, together with the piercing sound of the shofar, tell us that that is all life is - a mere breath - yet breath is nothing less than the spirit of God within us. **We are dust of the earth but within us is the breath of God.**

So, if you can remember any of these ideas, or even just one, I hope it will help you to have an even more meaningful experience over Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

Together with Elaine, I wish you and your families a *ketiva v'chatima tova*. May we, and all of *Am Yisrael*, be written in God's Book of Life for a year of blessing, fulfilment and peace. *Shana tova u'metukah* to you all.