

AHAVAS YISROEL SYNAGOGUE

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בס"ד

Rabbi's Rosh Hashana Message

Preparing for the New Year

As the days of Elul and the *Yomim Noraim* approach, it is appropriate for each one of us to reassess his or her year.

What are the good things we accomplished this year? We should resolve to continue and strengthen those things. The sages tell us, "Ma'alim bakodesh," we must be going ever upward and increasing the good that we do.



[Artwork by Avigail Litvak, age 10]

What are the things which are not so good, the things which need improvement? We must face those things squarely and honestly and implement real change as needed.

But it's not enough to work on deeds, what we do or don't do. We must work on our character traits as well. As the Rambam writes (*Hilchot Teshuva*), "Do not say one has to repent only for sinful deeds... One must also investigate and repent of bad character traits." We must learn to be more kind, more patient, more loving. We must learn to curb our anger, laziness, or self-indulgence.

All of these changes in deed or character have to come from a place of true desire and conviction. If we don't reach that place within us, our efforts are doomed to failure. That place is the place of *tshuva*. But how do we reach it?

We reach it by cultivating our relationship with Hashem. We must talk to Hashem when we daven. For instance, when we say, "Enlighten our eyes in Your Torah... Unite our hearts to love and fear Your Name," we should not just mouth the words, but they should be heartfelt pleas. A proper davening is inspiring and uplifting and motivates us to do good.

We also come closer to Hashem by finding times for reflection and quiet thinking, as for example, during the bedtime Shema. We must also study inspirational aspects of Torah such as Chassidus, Aggadah, Tehillim, etc. Reflection about Hashem and our relationship with Him is indispensable to developing and molding our characters and in improving our deeds.

May Hashem bless us and all of Klal Yisrael with a good year, both physically and spiritually, and may we merit the Geulah Shlaima.

Rabbi Chaim Zev Citron

Join us for uplifting services for Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur! Come daven, sing, and hear stimulating *divrei Torah* at Ahavas Yisroel Synagogue for the High Holidays and Sukkos. Individual membership is \$100. Family membership is \$250. (Membership includes High Holiday seats.) Please use the enclosed envelope to send in your membership donation.

**Kesiva v'Chasima Tova. May you all be written and inscribed in the Book of Life.
We wish you a good and sweet new year!**