



* Hamaychin; the one who makes ready, the one who prepares. In the Psalms and the Siddur, this refers to the creator who prepares our steps and makes rain ready for the earth. Preparation and making ready is an important theme as we near our year's end.

getting ready, to be prepared....

Summer is here. The year is ten months mature (Tishrei, Cheshvan, Kislev, Tevet, Shvat, Adar I, Adar II, Nisan, Iyar, Sivan,) and only three to go (Tamuz, Av, Elul) before the High Holydays cycle begins. When is a good time to start preparing for this occasion? How early should we start to tune our instruments?

Passover and the High Holydays are separated by a full half year on both sides. So you can prepare for the High Holydays for a full half year, and then you can

prepare for Pesach for the next half year, and so on. The gravity of the themes of each of these holydays warrants a lengthy orbit of preparation. Both holyday periods have in common the theme of ending of agreements which no longer serve us, and the opportunity to rededicate to new beginnings.

According to the Kabbalah, our Holydays are timed to coincide with cosmic energies which actually re-enact the occurrences of the original Holydays. For

example, Rosh Hashanah occurs on the new moon closest to the autumnal equinox. The equinox is a time of exquisite balance, and this is reflected in the symbols of Rosh Hashanah. It is a time for Din: fine discrimination, judgement, evaluating and weighing of our lives, reflecting the re-balancing happening in the cosmos.

Pesach coincides with spring and carries all of the spring metaphors of new growth and the renewal of the earth. Pesach is the holiday that stresses **liberation from oppression leading to new birth**. We cross the sea to receive the word. This rebirth takes place on personal, national, and cosmic levels.

symbolised by all the cleansing associated with Passover and the spring. Pesach offers the idea of the end of our enslavements, and the beginning potential for freedom.

Tishrei is the month that contains the cluster of Holydays associated with the coming-into being of the universe "Hayom Harat Olom" on this day was the world birthed. However, the inner themes of Tishrei don't refer so much to personal birth from scratch (like Pesach). The themes of Tishrei refer us to the opportunity for **recentering and fine-tuning of the direction of our lives**. The concept of Teshuvah central to these holydays indicates a return to the original principle, the re-alignment with the deep center and the rededication towards the goals and true direction of our life.

So with the aid of our creator, each year we get to redirect our lives. As we tend to get enslaved by our own creations, there is a holyday to focus on getting liberated (Pesach). Now we are free to co-create something finer, more appropriate to where we presently are in the world (Tishrei). This is the cycle of Pesach-Tishrei. We are now three months from Tishrei, and now we start to step up our Hachonot (preparations).

What suggestions are there for getting ready?

Here are a few ideas about physical preparations to make to be in **Kavvana (Well-Intentioned) for Rosh Hashanah-**

Gathering Information. One way to find out about the High Holydays is to read about them. There are many inspiring and contemporary books that discuss the themes of the Holydays. You can only work on so many themes at the same time, so quantity is not necessarily an effective stimulant. Find out about the issues involved called Teshuvah (return), Malchut (guidance), Slichat Avonot (cleansing from diversions/'sins') Mechila (forgiveness, opposite of guilt), and Kabolot Ol (accepting the yoke of dedication).

Teshuvah Ideas. One meaning of Teshuvah is to return to your primal vision. You might want to vision where you are now, where you really want to go, and symbolically try to bridge or map how to get there from here. You can make Teshuvah lists. Write up your short and long term goals, so you'll know what you really really want. You can have it handy at the services. In Israel, many people write out their hearts' desires at this time on a little piece of paper and stick it into the Western Wall. Put yours into your equivalent of the Western Wall here in the Bay area (where's that for you?). Some people identify one friend to be their Teshuvah buddy for this time of the year. It consists of finding someone with whom you can find support around the issues of Tishrei. You can sit close to each other during services and help each other's Davvening.

Modified Fasting. It's a time tested approach and it has a physical effect that helps with the work. Fasting consists of setting up a time to find the center. A fast is a dedication to withdraw from something addictive for a set time for the purpose of gathering energy for our higher purposes. We fast together on Yom Kippur. You might want to consider preparing for this fast with a fast. Fast from talking, from fats, unnecessary drugs, or food. A three hour fast from initiating conversation for the purpose of quieting and better listening can itself be a good Rosh Hashanah preparation. The only thing hard about fasting is that you have to schedule it beforehand.

Washing differently. It may sound odd but taking baths of varying temperature was an effective way practiced for a long time to shake out of sticky, difficult patterns. You don't have to dunk in glacier runoff, but even a little playing with the shower faucets will give you an idea of what this is about, and why it was considered a spiritual practice for a long time. Since this is not about making points you don't have to hurt yourself or catch a chill.

Gathering for Kavvana. Get together with your friends before the Holydays and talk about them.

Arriving a little early. There we are. We arrive on Rosh Hashanah evening together with our friends and others who have also gotten ready to be there. We mutually join in comm-union to usher in a 5747 that will be an improvement over

5746, with ready-spirit, open heart, trumpeting Shofar. We sing together the High Holyday Niggun,
Hineni Muchan U'M'Zuman
I am Ready and Prepared.

By David Blank

NIGHTS OF ELUL

*Like ripe fruits
 our lives have fallen back to earth
 to release their seeds on the spiral of time.
 As we lie awake in the dark tunnel of
 turning,
 the electric nights of Elul tear
 at our flesh ; in the morning
 the sound of the Shofar
 -our sole link to memory-
 breaks the air and calls the soul
 For 40 days and 40 nights
 we waver, suspended , until
 naked in its promise, the seed stands
 and the spark of judgement returns
 to ignite our life.*

Monique Pasternak 0

"I CANNOT WAIT ANYMORE! TAKE ME OUT. I WANT ISRAEL NOW!"

This is voice of Ida Nudel in her 15th year as the soul of the Jewish emigration movement to free Soviet Jews. She is also the voice of 400,000 Soviet Jews who want to emigrate to their homeland. Meanwhile there are the "refuseniks" that we read about who are constantly subject to arrests, searches, intimidation and torture. Last Month only 49 Jews were allowed to leave the Soviet Union.

The persecution of Hebrew teachers and religious activists is increasing (Hebrew is the only known language whose study and use is prohibited in the U.S.S.R.). On June 6, Alexei Magarik, a 28 year old Moscow Hebrew teacher was sentenced to three years in prison on trumped-up drug charges. This is not new...in 1984, Yuli Edelshtein was sentenced to three years when the KGB planted drugs in his apartment and in 1982 Stanislav Zubkov was also arrested on drug charged and imprisoned for three years. In hope of quieting protests in the West, the KGB chooses to incarcerate these teachers on criminal charges. Just recently, Pinchas Polansky, a religious activist in Moscow was threatened with arrest by the KGB for leading a Shabbat morning service in his apartment.

This prosecution represents a new trend in the KGB campaign against Soviet Jewry. First was the persecution of emigration and human rights activists. This was followed by a trend of persecuting Hebrew teachers, and now we are beginning to witness the persecution of Jewish religious activists.

This is a test for the West's reaction. If we protest it loud enough we might save Polansky and others in the future. To help Polansky, please

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| 1. Write to Consul General Kamenev:
Consul General Kamenev
Consul General of the USSR
2790 Green St.
San Francisco, CA 94123 | 2. Send a telegram to:
Boris Yeltsin
1st Secretary, Moscow Communist Party
Staraya Ploschad 6
Moscow 103070, USSR |
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These Jews regard themselves as Israelis held captive in an authoritarian land. They tell us that their movement will continue to grow and succeed only if the people in the West protest against every persecution.

What can you do to help?

1. Become more aware of these issues and educate your friends. Call the Bay Area Council for Soviet Jewry in San Francisco(585-1400). They will put you on their mailing list so that you can receive their monthly newsletter.
2. Attend local demonstrations and events on behalf of Soviet Jewry.
3. Get involved in the letter writing campaigns.
4. Daven daily or at least on Shabbat and Holidays- and especially for those imprisoned.

