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"Playing With Strange Fires." Rosh Hashanah sermon.  
September 1953.

For more information on this collection, please see the finding aid on the  
American Jewish Archives website.

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*you  
and  
judaism*



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*Illustration from a Minagim book  
printed in Amsterdam in 1662.*

# MAKE THEE A NEW HEART

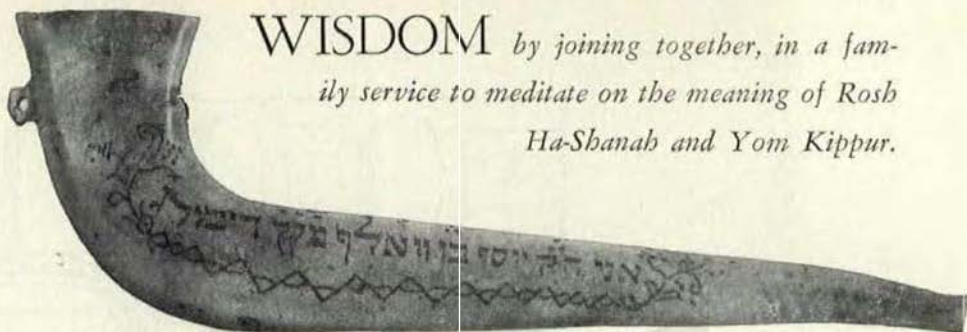
*A collection of*

*thoughts and practices for the days preceding the New*

*Year, and for all the days of our years.*

# GET THEE A HEART OF

**WISDOM** *by joining together, in a family service to meditate on the meaning of Rosh Ha-Shanah and Yom Kippur.*



*A German shofar of the 18th century from the  
Seminary's Museum collection*

**T**HESE THOUGHTS and home ceremonies have been arranged in the spirit of the *Selichot* period—a time for Teshubah, for repentance and self-purification. They are intended to help to create the High Holy Day mood in preparation for synagogue services.

## SABBATH EVE

The parental blessing of the children, customarily performed before the recitation of the Kiddush on the eve of the Sabbath and festivals, may be added to regular home rituals throughout the year.

**Father:**

**For sons:**

May God make you like  
Ephraim and like Manasseh.

**For daughters:**

May God make you like Sarah  
and Rebekah, Rachael and Leah.

**The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. (Numbers 6:24-26)**

## SATURDAY NIGHT

Just before the Havdalah ceremonies, mothers for generations have recited this lovely prayer for their families—a prayer which is transmitted as a precious inheritance from mother to daughter:





*Erev Yom Kippur—From 17th century Minagim book in the Seminary Library. Minagim books contain popular descriptions of Jewish customs.*

Mother:  
 God of Abraham, of Isaac, and  
 of Jacob,  
 Protect your dear people of Is-  
 rael with your love.  
 The good and holy Sabbath  
 nears its end,  
 Now turn to us in tenderness,  
 and send a happy week . . .  
 I rise at dawn, and there on  
 high  
 Our dear Lord sits in the sev-  
 enth sky.  
 Have pity on me, dear God,  
 and on  
 My husband and my little ones.

Show me the way, a path that is good,  
 Your faithful hand will dole me good,  
 And what you dole will be my stay  
 Today and every day.<sup>1</sup>

#### SUNDAY EVENING

On the Sunday before Rosh Ha-Shanah, it is customary to visit the graves of departed parents and relatives. For those who are blessed with the living presence of their parents, it is suggested that the following paragraph from the Grace after meals be recited in unison in its appropriate setting:

Children: May the Compassionate One bless my father and teacher, the master of this house, and my mother, the mistress of this house . . . Even as our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were blessed, each with fulness of His blessing, so may He bless us with a perfect blessing: and let us say, Amen.<sup>2</sup>

#### MONDAY EVENING

The law of establishing peace with one's fellow man is one of the most significant ethical customs in all of Jewish life. *Asiyat Shalom*, the making of peace, is the action demanded by the Jewish tradition as the sign of having made peace with oneself and with God.

Family individually: Repentance and the Day of Atone-ment only secure forgiveness for transgressions against God . . . But transgressions against one's fellow-men . . . are never pardoned till the injured party has received the compensation due to him and has also been appeased. Even though he has made the compensation, the wrong-doer must also appease the one he has injured and ask his forgiveness. Even if a person only

annoyed another in words, he has to pacify the latter and entreat him till he has obtained his forgiveness.

It is forbidden to be obdurate and not allow oneself to be appeased. On the contrary, one should be easily pacified and find it difficult to become angry. And, when asked by an offender for forgiveness, one should forgive with a sincere mind and willing spirit. Even if one has been much vexed and grievously wronged, one is not to avenge nor bear a grudge. Forgiveness is natural to the seed of Israel, characteristic of their upright heart.

— Maimonides, *Hilkot Teshubah* 2:9-10

The final evening of the Jewish year should be spent in discussion and in preparation for the coming festival.

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלֹהֵי  
אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁתְּחַדְּשׁ עִלֵּינוּ שָׁנָה טוֹבָה  
וּמְתוּקָה.

May it be Thy will, O Lord our God and God of our fathers  
to renew unto us a happy and pleasant year.



NOTES: 1. *Traditional mother's prayer reprinted from Language of Faith, edited by Nahum N. Glatzer, with the permission of the publishers, Schocken Books, N. Y. The translation was prepared by Olga Marx.*

2. *Children's blessing reprinted from the Haggadah of Passover, translated by Maurice Samuel, with the permission of the Hebrew Publishing Co., N. Y.*

*We Celebrate*

**THE HIGH HOLY DAYS**

By Rabbi Leonard J. Mervis

AMERICAN JEWISH  
ARCHIVES



The Union of American Hebrew Congregations



## WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE OF YOU?

Rosh Hashono—a holiday with four names but no history. Rosh Hashono is not connected with any story or hero in Jewish history. The real hero of this holiday is you—and the story is the story of your life.

The best-known name for this holiday is Rosh Hashono, which means, "head of the year." Actually Tishri, the month in which it occurs, is not the "head" of the Jewish calendar, but the seventh month. But Rosh Hashono is the beginning of the religious year, and it is the time when we seriously use our *rosh*—our head. We take a close look at ourselves. What are our faults? What can we do about them?

Another name for Rosh Hashono is Yom Teru-a, the day of the blowing of the shofor. The shofor says to us: "Be careful." It is easy to repeat the mistakes of the past. It takes real effort to change for the better. The shofor cries: "Wake up. Don't look for excuses for your bad habits. You can replace them with good ones if you try."

A third name for this holiday is Yom Ha-Din, or Day of Trial. On Rosh Hashono each of us is on trial. The judge is our own conscience. What is conscience? It is the silent voice within each of us which reminds us when we are not walking on the path of goodness, as we have learned from our parents and our teachers. We should listen to our conscience every day, but especially on Rosh Hashono.

Still another name for Rosh Hashono remains. It is Yom Ha-zikoron, or Day of Remembering. There are many things worth remembering on this day. Foremost is God and His commandments, and all the fine people who love Him and have tried to live by His laws. In thinking about God, we can learn more about what He requires of us—a life that makes us one with Him and with all other people. We remember God on Rosh Hashono, the God of all the world, the Creator of us all.

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COMMISSION ON SYNAGOGUE ACTIVITIES

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838 Fifth Ave., New York 21, N. Y.

## ROSH HASHONO SERVICE

*(Mother lights candles and says):*

Bo-ruch ato adonoi elohenu me-lech ho-olom asher kid'shonu  
b'mits-vo-sov v'tsi-vo-nu l'had-lick ner shel yom tov.

Praised be Thou, O Lord our God, Ruling Spirit of the  
universe, who hast sanctified us by Thy laws and commanded  
us to kindle these holy day lights.

May Thy light, O God, enter our home at the beginning of  
this New Year and remain with us. Give us health and peace,  
prosperity and joy. Amen.

*(Father lifts the cup of wine and says):*

Ovinu mal-kenu, our Father, our King, we thank Thee for Thy  
help to us in the past year, and we pray that Thou wilt continue  
to shield us in the year ahead. Help us to lead worthy lives  
and to practice the teachings of our faith.

*ALL (raise cups and sing or say):*

Bo-ruch ato adonoi elohenu me-lech ho-olom bo-re p'ri ha-  
gofen.

Praised be Thou, O Lord our God, Ruling Spirit of the  
universe, who hast created the fruit of the vine.

*(A piece of apple is passed to each member of the family)*

FATHER: Bo-ruch ato adonoi elo-henu me-lech ho-olom bo-re  
p'ri ho-ets.

Praised be Thou, O Lord our God, Ruling Spirit of the  
universe, who createst the fruit of the tree.

*ALL (dip apple in honey and say):*

May it be God's will to grant us a good and sweet year.

*(Father cuts chalo and gives a piece to each person)*

*ALL (sing or say):*

Bo-ruch ato adonoi elo-henu me-lech ho-olom ha-motsi le-chem  
min ho-orets.

Praised be Thou, O Lord our God, Ruling Spirit of the  
universe, who bringest forth bread out of the earth.



*(Father places hands on the head of each child and silently blesses him)*

ALL: L'shono Tovo Tikosevu. Happy New Year.

ALL: Bo-ruch ato adonoi elo-henu me-lech ho-olom shehecheyonu v'kiyemonu v'higiyonu luz-man ha-ze.

Praised be Thou, O Lord our God, Ruling Spirit of the universe, who hast kept us alive, preserved us, and brought us to this day of the New Year. Amen.

## YOM KIPPUR

Yom Kippur, the Sabbath of Sabbaths, is the holiest day of the religious year. What makes it so holy?

On Yom Kippur, *all* our thoughts should be directed to God. We try to come closer to Him than on any other day. We try to understand His will, and how far from His laws we have lived during the past year. For twenty-four hours we give up fun, and even food. We think of how we can take the teachings of God with us when we return to school, to work, to our lives with other people.

On Yom Kippur we are supposed to be entirely honest with ourselves. Our prayers try to make us see ourselves as we really are. Instead of making excuses for our shortcomings, as we often do, on Yom Kippur we try to be repentant. This means that we admit our mistakes, and promise to do better in the future. Changing ourselves for the better through prayer and repentance is possible, and is the most important thing we can do. After we have done so, we find it easier to be with ourselves.

Our prayers on Yom Kippur emphasize the great idea of the Torah: "Love thy neighbor as thyself." Over and over again on Yom Kippur, we read that the good life is the life of good deeds. Looking for God is not enough. Asking God for forgiveness is not enough. We are supposed to ask people whom we have hurt for forgiveness. We promise them and ourselves that we shall try very hard not to be greedy and thoughtless.

Because Yom Kippur plays such a large part in bringing us closer to God and to other people, it is the holiest day in the year.

### YOM KIPPUR SERVICE

Before the family sits down for the last meal before Yom Kippur, on Kol Nidre evening, this service takes place:

ALL (*sing*): Kodosh (*Union Hymnal*, page 439)

*f Andante*

Ko dash ko dash ko

dosh A - do - noy ts' - ro -

os an' lo ehol ho -

o - rets k' - ro - - - - do.

FATHER: U-n'sane to-kef k'du-shas ha-yom. Let us remember the holiness of this day. Let us strive to be like our God, merciful as He is merciful, just as He is just, holy as He is holy.

Let us, as Jews have always done, give an offering of ts'doko, of charity, which is righteousness, as the symbol of our desire, on this Yom Kippur, to try to learn to do good at all times during the year ahead.

*(All place offering in Kaporos box or plate  
[see page 15] and say):*

May the words of our mouths and the works of our hands be acceptable unto Thee, O Lord, and be of use and service to all. Amen.

*(Mother lights the candles and says):*

Bo-ruch ato adonoi elo-henu me-lech ho-olom asher kid'shonu b'mits-vo-sov v'tsivo-nu l'hadlick ner shel yom tov.

Praised be Thou, O Lord our God, Ruling Spirit of the universe, who hast sanctified us by Thy laws and commanded us to kindle the lights of this Yom Kippur.

ALL: Bo-ruch ato adonoi elo-henu me-lech ho-olom ha-mo-tsi le-chem min ho-orets.

Praised be Thou, O Lord our God, Ruling Spirit of the universe, who bringest forth bread from the earth. Amen.

### FOR YOUR INFORMATION

*The Jewish Calendar:* The calendar we use in our daily activity is solar, based upon the movement of the earth around the sun. The Jewish calendar (luach) is both solar and lunar, and is based upon the revolutions of the moon around the earth. As the moon takes  $29\frac{1}{2}$  days to travel around the earth, the Jewish year has twelve months of 29 or 30 days each, 354 days in all. In order to bring the calendar in line with the solar year, a leap month is added 7 times every 19 years.

In olden days there was no fixed calendar in Palestine. Each month was proclaimed when the new moon was seen by two witnesses who reported it to the Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish court. Inasmuch as communities outside of Palestine received the information about the new moon very late, all the festivals were celebrated for two days instead of one. In Palestine itself, only one day was observed, except for Rosh Hashono, which was celebrated for two days everywhere.

*Yo-mim no-ro-im:* The High Holy Days are known as Yomim



Noroim, or awe-inspiring days. This description comes from the solemn nature of both Rosh Hashono and Yom Kippur.

*Aseres y'me T'shuvo*: The ten-day period beginning with Rosh Hashono and ending with Yom Kippur is called Aseres y'me T'shuvo, the ten days of penitence. Traditionally, Jews went to persons they had harmed and begged forgiveness during this period.

*Shabos Shuvo*: The Sabbath between Rosh Hashono and Yom Kippur is known as Shabos Shuvo, the Sabbath of Return. Its name is taken from the Haftoro read on that Sabbath, which begins "Shuvo Yisroel," "Return O Israel unto the Lord thy God." (Hosea 14:2ff.)

*Memorial Light*: On Yom Kippur eve a memorial light, to burn for 24 hours, may be kindled in the home to recall departed loved ones.

*Kaporos*: It is customary to give a donation to charity on the day before Yom Kippur. The offering is called Kaporos and is reminiscent of the offering of a sacrifice in the ancient Temple on that day.

*The Shofor*: The shofor is made from the horn of a ram. It is blown at the morning service on Rosh Hashono and at the end of N'ilo, the closing service on Yom Kippur. The great Jewish philosopher, Saadia Gaon, gave ten reasons for blowing the shofor. Among them were:

1. To proclaim the sovereignty of God on the anniversary of the creation of the world. (According to tradition, God created the world on Rosh Hashono.)
2. To stir man to repentance.
3. To remind us of the message of the prophets.
4. To remind us of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac, which legend holds took place on Rosh Hashono. Instead of Isaac, Abraham eventually sacrificed a ram, according to the Bible.

*Fasting*: In ordaining Yom Kippur, the Bible says: "Ye shall afflict your souls." This is the basis of fasting, the abstinence from food and drink on Yom Kippur. The purpose of fasting is to emphasize the spiritual nature of man. Children usually begin to fast at the age of 13.

**Kol Nidre:** The eve of Yom Kippur is called Kol Nidre. The inspiring melody chanted at the beginning of the evening service speaks of God's forgiveness of religious vows unfulfilled through negligence or persecution. Kol Nidre is more inspiring in our day for its fervid melody than for its limited verbal significance.

**White Mantle:** The Torah and Ark are decorated with white covers during the High Holy Day season. White is the symbol of purity, as we read in Isaiah: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."

L'SHONO TOVO

The musical score is written on five staves in 4/4 time, with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are written below the notes.

Staff 1: L' Sho - no To - vo L' Sho -

Staff 2: No To - vo Hap - py New Year we wish to

Staff 3: You. L' Sho - No To - vo L' Sho -

Staff 4: No To - vo Hap - py New Year to

Staff 5: You.

By permission of NATIONAL JEWISH WELFARE BOARD, NEW YORK

# I HEARD THE CANTOR SINGING

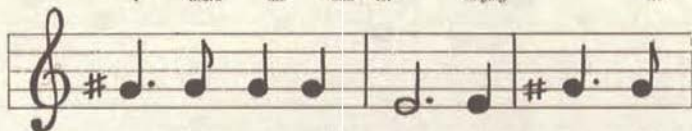
From Ben Aronin's "Jolly Jingles"

(Yom Kippur)

Adapted from Kol Nidre  
By H. Reinich



I heard the Can - tor singing He



sang the Kol Nid - re, And as he



sang the peo - ple prayed, I heard my



father say, "If I for - got a prom - ise



made - For - give me, God, this day, Oh



hear with love, dear God a - bove, My



pray's, the Kol Nid - re."

By permission of the Board of Jewish Education, Chicago



## MOTHER TOOK SOME HONEY

(For Rosh Ha-sha-na)

From Ben Aronin's "Jolly Jingles"

Music by H. Reznick

The musical score is written on six staves in 2/4 time. The melody is simple and catchy, with lyrics written below the notes. A large, faint watermark 'AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES' is visible across the center of the page.

Moth - er took some hon - ey and an  
ap - ple, too. Then she said, "Come  
here, my child; I have a gift for  
you. Let's be - gin the New Year With this  
lit - tle treat, May the year be  
hap - py! May the year be sweet."

By permission of the BOARD OF JEWISH EDUCATION, CHICAGO

# V'TAHER LIBENU

rhythmically

V' - ta - her li - be - nu V' .

ta - her li - be - nu V' . ta - her li - be - nu L' .

1 ov - d' - cho be - e' - mes. L' .

2 ov - d' - cho be - e' - mes. La,

la, la, etc.

la, la, etc.

D.C. al Fine

By permission of NATIONAL JEWISH WELFARE BOARD, NEW YORK

## GAMES

### *High Holy Day Quiz*

1. What is the Hebrew word for calendar?
2. What is the name of the Sabbath between Rosh Hashono and Yom Kippur?
3. What are the four names for Rosh Hashono?
4. What is the eve of Yom Kippur called?
5. What is N'ilo?

### *Scrambled Words*

resesa emy' uot'hsv  
 orsohf  
 oymmi imroon  
 moy upprik  
 rshtii

AMERICAN JEWISH  
 ARCHIVES

### *Resolution Charades*

Have each player act out a resolution that he makes for the New Year. The rest must guess the resolution.

### *Prayer Book Contest*

Match the prayers in the column on the left with the prayer book source on the right.

Our Father, our King,  
 grant unto us a year  
 of happiness.

Yom Kippur morning

O Lord our God, help  
 us to see ourselves  
 as Thou seest us.

Rosh Hashono morning service

Is not this the fast  
 I have chosen? To  
 loose the fetters of  
 wickedness, to undo  
 the bands of the yoke . . . ?

Yom Kippur afternoon

Let us affirm the majesty  
 and holiness of this day.

Rosh Hashono evening service

Penitence, prayer, and  
 charity avert the stern  
 decree

Yom Kippur Haftoro



Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?

Shofar service

Happy is the people that know the joyful sound.

Rosh Hashono Torah reading

(For answers see *Union Prayerbook*, pp. 28, 234, 256, 77, 62, 158, 243, 68, 224.)

## FOOD

### TEIGLACH

4 cups flour	$\frac{3}{4}$ lb. honey
1 teaspoon baking powder	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar
3 tablespoons oil	$\frac{1}{2}$ lb. filbert nut meats
4 eggs	ginger

Mix and knead first 4 ingredients until smooth. Form into roll  $\frac{1}{3}$ -inch thick and cut into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pieces. Boil honey and sugar, add pieces of dough, place in hot oven, 375 degrees F. Do not stir until dough is well puffed and just beginning to brown, then add nuts, chopped, let cook until brown, stirring occasionally. Take from oven, turn out onto wet board; cool slightly. Pat until flat with hands dipped in cold water, sprinkle with a little ginger and put in icebox. (SETTLEMENT COOK BOOK)

### CARROT TSIMMES

1 cup brown sugar	2 cups carrots, diced
1 cup water	2 tablespoons butter or fat

Make a syrup of the sugar and water by boiling 10 minutes. To this syrup add the diced carrots which have previously been browned in hot chicken or goose fat or butter. Cook all together until carrots are tender. Sprinkle with salt and flour, brown in oven or cook a little longer. (SETTLEMENT COOK BOOK)

Round farfel in chicken soup and kreplach are also appropriate for Rosh Hashono and eve of Yom Kippur.

For a recipe for Kreplach, see Purim booklet, "We Celebrate Purim," page 12.

For a recipe for Honey Cake, see "We Celebrate Shovuos," page 13.

## THINGS TO DO AND MAKE

by MRS. LOUIS SCHMERLING, Chicago, Ill.

### 1. Book-Mark

Make a personalized marker for each member of your family for use in their holy day prayer book. Cut an 8" strip of light blue satin ribbon. Notch or bevel the ends of the ribbon to avoid raveling. With a dark blue wax crayon decorate the ribbon with a monogram, a holiday symbol—the shofor, Happy New Year—plus the Jewish year, or the Hebrew words for the holiday greeting. Place the decorated ribbon face down on brown paper, cover with a lightly dampened cloth and iron dry.

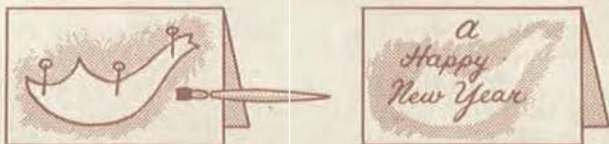


### 2. New Year's Card

(a) Cut small stencils of the Torah, the shofor, Happy New Year—date, etc., out of heavy paper. Use blue folded note paper or stationery (with envelopes). Fasten the stencils to the cover sheet with pins. With a paint brush dipped so that there is just a touch of paint (poster paint, water color, colored inks, etc.) on the bristles (called dry brush), carefully brush with outward strokes from the edge of the stencil onto the paper. Carefully lift off the stencil and repeat procedure on other cards.

(b) Another easy method to make a New Year's card. Use a large size soap eraser to make a stamp. Make a small stencil of the Torah or shofor to fit the largest surface of the eraser.

Carefully cut away the surface around this stencil leaving the symbol raised at least a  $\frac{1}{8}$ ". With this stamp and a blue ink pad you can make lovely designs on the cover of the note paper. Write "Happy New Year" over the design or on the inside sheet. Several symbols can be carved on one eraser by using the opposite sides.



3. *Need help with your New Year's resolutions?*

Keep your resolutions posted as a constant reminder and perhaps an aid. On a sheet of white paper draw the outline of the Tablets of the Law almost as large as the paper. Within this outline make your own Ten Commandments.



4. *Make a Kaporos box (charity box)*

Select a metal can with a hinged or removable lid. A can that held bandages serves the purpose admirably. Cut a strip of blue or silver paper to fit around the can and another to fit the top. Glue in place with household cement. Decorate with the word Kaporos and Jewish symbols. Coat the paper surfaces with clear nail polish or shellac to protect and make the covering durable.



5. *Ka'aro Plate (charity plate)*

In an art supply store or in some paint supply stores a self-hardening powdered clay can be procured. Included with the powder is a plastic bag in which the clay powder and water are kneaded together. Flatten the clay ball to a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " thickness with a rolling pin and fit like pie dough into the inside of an attractively shaped dish. Be sure that the dish has no undercuts to hold the clay. Cut the top edge off and smooth. When the clay is semi-hard an appropriate design can be scratched into the clay or it can be decorated after it has dried with glazes that can be set by slow heating in your own kitchen oven. When the clay hardens it will shrink away from the dish used as a mold. Remember to use only the inside surface of a mold as the clay shrinks inward and will crack if put on the outside surface. Rub the finished plate with paste wax to give it a durable surface and soft sheen.

This type of pottery is not meant to hold liquids.





## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

### *For the Children:*

BRILLIANT, NATHAN AND LIBBIE L. BRAVERMAN, Supplement to  
*Activities in the Religious School*

GAMORAN, MAMIE G., *Days and Ways*, pp. 20-50

———, *Hillel's Happy Holidays*, pp. 21-57

GOLUB, ROSE W., *Down Holiday Lane*, pp. 3-17

WEILERSTEIN, SADIE R., *What the Moon Brought*, pp. 4-27

ZELDIN, FLORENCE, *Animated Disc on the Jewish Calendar*

### *For the Parents:*

SCHAUSS, HAYYIM, *The Jewish Festivals*, pp. 112-169



"  
PLAYING WITH STRANGE FIRES"

This morning we read from the Torah the story of the Sacrifice of Isaac. Rashi says that this tale is read on Rosh Hashonah day in order that God might recall the episode for our benefit. He was pleased with it then, and will deal kindly with us ~~now~~, because of Abraham's obedience.

The Talmud asks the question, "Why do they blow on a ram's horn?" And God himself answers, "In order that I may remember the sacrifice of Abraham and attribute to them the same willingness to make sacrifices for Me."

The story of the sacrifice is a great story. It has in it the positive lesson of a great faith - and a capacity to suffer for that faith. The Supreme test was applied to Abraham and he met it. The proof of a man's love of God is his readiness to sacrifice the nearest and dearest, life itself. Abraham introduced the ideal of martyrdom, which has been a beacon all through Israel's storm-tossed career.

At the time of the ~~M~~accabbees, Hannah exemplified it with her seven sons. In one version of the story, Hannah said to her youngest child, "Go to Abraham our father and



tell him that I have bettered his instruction. He offered one child to God; I offered seven. He merely bound the sacrifice; I performed it."

In the Middle Ages, this memory of martyrdom gave mothers and fathers the superhuman courage to immolate themselves and their children, rather than to submit to baptism and idolatry. You all know the soul-stirring tragedy at the Castle of York in England during the Crusades. Five hundred men, women and children committed suicide rather than submit to the evangelistic lust of the Crusaders. A modern poet described that episode in this verse:

"We have sacrificed all. We have given our wealth,  
Our homes, our honours, our land, our health,  
Our lives- like Hannah her children seven-  
For the sake of the Torah that came from Heaven."

The Midrash describes in a very human story how absolutely unshakable was Abraham's obedience. Samael, a wicked angel, went to Abraham and upbraided him, saying:



"What means this, old man? Hast thou lost thy wits? Thou goest to slay a son granted to thee at the age of a hundred?"

"Even this I do," replied Abraham.

"And if God sets thee an even greater test, canst thou stand it?" asked <sup>the angel</sup> ~~Samael~~.

"Even more than this," Abraham replied.

"Suppose tomorrow He will say to thee, 'Thou art a murderer and art guilty!'"

"Still I am content," Abraham rejoined.

Seeing that he could achieve naught with him, Samael approached Isaac and said, "Son of an unhappy mother! Abraham goes to slay thee."

"I accept my fate," Isaac replied.

Yes - there is no doubt that this is one of the noblest stories in the Bible. Religion consists of those aspirations for which we are ready to sacrifice comfort,

position and even safety. We do not truly live for our ideals unless we are ready, if necessary, to <sup>suffer</sup> ~~die~~ for them. ~~ideals of Judaism. There is, after all, not a single noble~~

The inspiration of the Akedah, the Binding, made for unwavering steadfastness to the religious and ethical ideals of Judaism. There is, after all, not a single noble cause

~~cause~~, movement or achievement that does not call for great sacrifice and martyrdom. Liberty, science, truth - all have exacted their toll of heroes. The people of Israel has been the very symbol of martyrdom on behalf of freedom, justice and truth. ~~and this is true.~~

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There is an immediate application of this truth which I would discuss with you this morning. Democracy in America is in danger because there are men who are destroying it in the name of protecting it. Just as Abraham would have broken the commandment of murder in the name of serving the God who ordained the commandment, so there are those in our land today who would smash forever the precious system of freedom in the name of defending it. There is no greater danger for the future of America - not even the danger of an armed attack by an external enemy.

This nation was born in revolution. The truth was held to be self-evident "that whenever any form of government becomes destructive, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it." On the basis of this theory we rebelled against the tyranny of England. From that day to this, our genius has been a free environment which permitted free inquiry, free thought, free political expression. We are a



nation of dissenters whose glorious heritage has always been to strike out on new paths, to pioneer, never to allow ourselves to be hemmed in by rigid orthodoxies.

This tradition is the only tradition America has.

We are too young, in terms of Europe's achievements, to have developed many traditions of art, culture, architecture.

But the great treasure we do have is the freest air in the world, which permits every man to do and think and feel and say as he pleases - provided he represents no danger to the common welfare.

This liberalism is dying before our very eyes. It is being slain by a new orthodoxy which is establishing standards of what is right and what is wrong to think. Conformity rather than dissent is the order of the day. Unpopular opinions expose one to criticism, ridicule, investigation. People are becoming afraid to talk, to join organizations, to protest, for fear of reprisals, loss of jobs, threat of being labelled. In spite of the fact that Whittaker Chambers <sup>does not</sup> ~~doesn't~~ feel academic freedom

is being threatened, Robert Hutchins does - and said so very strongly. "The miasma of thought control that is now spreading over this country is the greatest menace to the United States since Hitler."

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"I recall reading recently, twice in one day, the words of individuals who proclaimed that if certain other people did not get up and join actively in the denunciation of communists or communism, they would thereby themselves be suspect. What sort of arrogance is this?

I have lived more than ten years of my life in totalitarian countries. I know where this sort of thing leads."



And so does Justice Robert Jackson of the Supreme Court know where this leads, for he sounded a warning recently at the American Bar Association:

"If we carelessly let liberty be abused in the name of preserving it from external danger, will we then suddenly become vigilant to rescue it from the internal danger of that very abuse?" Jackson asked us to develop "the insight and farsight to identify and forestall the first approaches

of despotism." *The first approaches are the most important. When liberty is already breached, and they are holding the machine-gun at your head, there is very little left to do. It is already too late.*

I think the first approaches have already occurred and I think the first abuses have already shaken liberty's foundation. I see four sure signs of this.

First, and most important of all, there has been an encroachment on the legal process. Our most treasured possession was the presumption of innocence until there was proof of guilt. Today this is reversed, and many a witness before a congressional committee labors to prove his innocence under an implied cloud of guilt. One is guilty in the public mind simply upon being summoned to testify. This is horrendous.



Charges are offered without proof - accusations made with insufficient evidence - the accuser may remain anonymous - innuendo is accepted as evidence and often proof - political power is introduced into quasi-legal proceedings - and the list of abuses could be multiplied.

Second, <sup>beside legal rights</sup> there ~~has~~ <sup>is being</sup> been destroyed one of the most significant of <sup>social</sup> human rights - the trust of man in his <sup>fellow-man.</sup> neighbor. People are genuinely afraid of being reported to the FBI, whose raw files contain every word of unsubstantiated gossip which any disgruntled person can insert into the record against his neighbor. Remember how horrible we thought it was when we learned that the Nazis encouraged children to spy on their parents and report to the Gestapo any treasonous words they heard? The only difference is that today our government does not encourage this - but certainly permits it, and the overzealous patriots take full advantage. Fear of one's neighbor is now a new element in American life, because there is an informer system in full operation.

Third, in addition to legal rights and human rights, we have invaded economic rights. For the vigilante attitude

of investigating a man's ideas has cost many a person his job, his very livelihood. I speak not now of open and avowed communists who have been dismissed from positions which might affect the security of our nation. Surely the duty of the government to protect itself from espionage is axiomatic. I speak rather of countless <sup>innocent</sup> men and women whose fate is typified by the experience of the Deputy Superintendent of Schools in Houston.

He was accused of being pro-communist. The school board decided to investigate these charges, and hired a firm of former FBI men to do the job. Their report concluded that the man had never been a communist, or a fellow traveller, or disloyal to the United States. The most it showed was that in the A.V.C., a chairman of which he had been in 1947, he had failed to take a strong stand against the communist faction. *That was the extent of his crime.*

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chairman nevertheless voted against him, saying: "The community is already split wide open over this matter. If he stays in the position, I can only see further conflict."

The educator was out of a job, and the school board chairman ~~degraded~~ <sup>sabotaged</sup> America by his surrender to the atmosphere of the day.

Fourth, and last for this sermon, although the abuses are many more, we have been guilty of destroying intellectual rights, as well as legal, social, and economic.

We have banned and/or burned books, although Mr. Eisenhower is not sure whether we did or we didn't. And there seems to be some confusion as to whether the forbidden volumes were just stored in some inoffensive cellar or were sold to a pulping company for new paper manufacture. In any case, say those who defend the action, we did nothing so barbaric as ~~H~~ <sup>But</sup> Hitler's bonfires. <sup>^</sup> What is the difference? Freedom-

loving people abroad watched us dim the lights of reason and justice and morality - and they grew sad. For they saw us

reverting to the very methods we were supposed to be combatting.



All these crimes against democracy are being committed not by nazis, fascists, or totalitarians of whatever stripe. They are committed by 100% Americans, the potency of whose patriotism is reflected in the strength of their intolerances. This makes it all the more sickening, for they protest their innocence and claim that they are merely attempting to safeguard America.

God would not permit Abraham to do murder in order to display loyalty and obedience. <sup>to Isaac</sup> <sup>we must not permit the brutal and the cynical to do violence to liberty in order to prove their patriotism.</sup> Overzealousness must be

tempered by calm judgment. Somehow we must find the voices "Stop! Lay not thy hand upon the fragile flower of freedom", just as God said, in our nation to say "Stop! Lay not thy hand upon the lad."

America is in danger of being slain through the hysterical zeal of self-appointed high priests. Somehow the insanity must be halted. Out of the basic themes of Judaism, American democracy was born. Perhaps out of the lesson of this Rosh Hashonah story ~~can~~ <sup>democracy can</sup> American yet be saved.

From the highest towers let every lover of liberty <sup>plea to the ~~spirit~~ <sup>Soul</sup> of America</sup> shout this ~~plea~~ in a mounting chorus until the very stones understand:

"O great and wonderful land of the free - mother of freedom - father of the right to be different - crush not your children in a vise of fear. As our fathers Jefferson and Lincoln were noble, *let* lesser men today aspire to their <sup>strength</sup> ~~elegance~~, their confidence, their faith.

The God of Israel lit your torch, America. Like the ancient burning bush, let it never be consumed. For if you whore now after strange ways and corrupt yourself, the bright flame of liberty will no longer warm you with its glow, *but* will turn into strange fires, leaving you a blackened husk in the forgotten alleys of history. Become not the great disappointment of ~~freedomloving~~ men the world <sup>Rather ~~not~~ higher & higher</sup> ~~over~~. Rise <sup>ever</sup> to your true destiny as the great hope of the free world."

The soul of ~~the~~ ageless Judaism, <sup>this</sup> speaks to the soul of young America on this holy holy day.



## "PLAYING WITH STRANGE FIRES"

This morning we read from the Torah the story of the Sacrifice of Isaac. Rashi says that this tale is read on Rosh Hashonah Day in order that God might recall the episode for our benefit. He was pleased with it then, and will deal kindly with us now, because of Abraham's obedience.

The Talmud asks the question, "Why do they blow on a ram's horn?" And God himself answers, "In order that I may remember the sacrifice of Abraham and attribute to them the same willingness to make sacrifices for Me."

The story of the sacrifice is a great story. It has in it the positive lesson of a great faith - and a capacity to suffer for that faith. The Supreme test was applied to Abraham and he met it. The proof of a man's love of God is his readiness to sacrifice the nearest and dearest, life itself. Abraham introduced the ideal of martyrdom, which has been a beacon all through Israel's storm-tossed career.

At the time of the Maccabees, Hannah exemplified it with her seven sons. In one version of the story, Hannah



said to her youngest child, "Go to Abraham our father and tell him that I have bettered his instruction. He offered one child to God; I offered seven. He merely bound the sacrifice; I performed it."

In the Middle Ages, this memory of martyrdom gave mothers and fathers the superhuman courage to immolate themselves and their children, rather than to submit to baptism and idolatry. You all know the soul-stirring tragedy at the Castle of York in England during the Crusades. Five hundred men, women and children committed suicide rather than submit to the evangelistic lust of the Crusaders. A modern poet described that episode in this verse:

"We have sacrificed all. We have given our wealth,  
Our homes, our honours, our land, our health,  
Our lives- like Hannah her children seven --  
For the sake of the Torah that came from Heaven."

The Midrash describes in a very human story how absolutely unshakable was Abraham's obedience. Samael, a wicked angel, went to Abraham and upbraided him, saying:

"What means this, old man? Hast thou lost thy wits? Thou goest to slay a son granted to thee at the age of a hundred?"

"Even this I do, " replied Abraham.

"And if God sets thee an even greater test, canst thou stand it?" asked the angel

"Even more than this," Abraham replied.

"Suppose tomorrow He will say to thee, ' Thou art a murderer and art guilty'?"

"Still I am content," Abraham rejoined.

Seeing that he could achieve naught with him, Samael approached Isaac and said, "Son of an unhappy mother! Abraham goes to slay thee!

"I accept my fate, " Isaac replied.

Yes - there is no doubt that this is one of the noblest stories in the Bible. Religion consists of those aspirations for which we are ready to sacrifice comfort, position and even safety. We do not truly live for our ideals unless we are ready, if necessary, to suffer for them.



The inspiration of the Akedah, the <sup>Sacrifice</sup> Binding, made for unwavering steadfastness to the religious and ethical ideals of Judaism. There is, after all, not a single noble cause, movement or achievement that does not call for great sacrifice and martyrdom. Liberty, science, truth - all have exacted their toll of heroes. The people of Israel has been the very symbol of martyrdom on behalf of freedom, justice and truth.

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