

MIFGASH



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On strengths and weaknesses – thoughts for the New Year.

By L. Jack Davidson – UJCL President

As the “*Yamim Noraim*” approach, we are called upon to evaluate our deeds of the past year and atone for our sins. This “cleansing” is supposed to help us in asking for, and hopefully being granted, a New Year of wellbeing. It is a ritual that we have been going through for generations and it brings us together within the frame of Judaism, certainly a valuable and worthwhile process, worthy of being upheld.

Perhaps we can enlarge the scope of this time of introspection by suggesting the inclusion of an analysis of our strengths and our weaknesses, an evaluation of what aspect of our lives we are strongest in and with that in mind make an effort to maximize these. To this we could add identification of our weaker sides and an acceptance of these, with plans to strengthen them.

So too in our Union, we can use these days to evaluate what point we are at in our development. We can be very proud of our annual Conventions, Youth Encounters and our newest source of pride, the “Mifgash”. We have managed to maintain close, effective and friendly communications between the members of UJCL and the bond between us is stronger than ever; I would dare say that those of us who keep in contact regularly, feel closer to each other than ever before and the feeling of a united, virtual, family has been achieved. The first UJCL organized trip to Israel became a successful reality. We are a viable and recognized entity in the Jewish World, and our efforts are receiving support from many organizations, especially from the WUPJ.

While we may pat ourselves on the back for our achievements we must also realize that the road ahead is full of challenges. We have not been able to organize regional youth encounters throughout the year, a longtime dream of the UJCL. There are still many small Communities that, in spite of our efforts, we have not been able to convince of the benefits of being an active part of UJCL. Because of this many young people in our area have less of a chance of experiencing the full richness of life as a Jew.

May this coming year see the fulfillment of more of our hopes and dreams and may we be blessed with the joy of sharing these dreams, achievements and “good times” with our “virtual *Mishpacha*” in friendship and peace.

Leshana tovah tikatevu to all our members and friends, may we pray together for a better world; a world of peace, justice, equality and wellbeing.

Shalom!

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SHANAH TOVAH: Happy or GOOD year?

By Rabbi Gustavo Kraselnik

When the clock strikes 12 on the night of December 31, we greet one another wishing us a Happy New Year! On the contrary, today, at the beginning of 5766 on the Jewish calendar we shake hands, merge in a hug, and wish each other **Shanah Tovah!** A good year!

Undoubtedly, both greetings are distinct. Nevertheless, the main difference is not rooted in the language it is expressed, but rather in what is underlying in each of the celebrations. The profound significance of the festive day is reflected in the expression of wishes transmitted on each occasion.

January 1 marks the beginning of our secular year. But the act of changing the year on this date is simply a custom, an established agreement. If we all agree, the year could perfectly well begin on April 1 or October 14 without anything significant occurring, and the first of January would pass as any other day on the calendar.

This way, there remains evidence that this day, the first of January, does not contain any particularity other than the act of marking the artificial point of inflection, a break. A new cycle begins, a new stage, but there is no continuity with the past. The year just passed has no influence on the one about to begin.

Through this, the wish for a “happy year” is repeated invariably year after year and it follows that each space of time is independent of the other. And the happiness it represents is almost like a utopia, a permanent aspiration whose acquisition may be real at certain moments.

With a totally distinct focus, Jewish Tradition established the beginning of the year precisely on the same day that the world was created (the scholars discussed in the *Talmud* if on the 1 of *Tishrei* the world was created or if man was created) and together with this, developed the idea that on this day all creatures are judged by G-d for what we have done in the year just ending.

The *Mishna* teaches that “on *Rosh Hashanah* each individual passes before the creator as a flock before its pastor” (or “as an army in front of its commander” in other versions) to be judged. Thus, the beginning of the New Year is intimately related to our actions of the previous year and it is for this that it is a time of reflection, introspection, and repentance where we accomplish a **Cheshvon Hanefesh**, a balance of our acts with the purpose of correcting the errors we made and improve on our successes.

From this perspective, *Rosh Hashanah* includes a message that crosses all human experience: The necessity of each individual to act responsibly because all of his actions will be evaluated, and the conviction that this New Year we will be better people, enriched by past experiences. This message is reflected in all rituals and symbols of the holiday and also in the

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greeting. Imbued in this spirit of reflection and hope, on **Rosh Hashanah** we wish a **Shanah Tovah**, a good year, a year in which all our actions are inspired by kindness, a year that, when analyzed the following **Rosh Hashanah** we will be able to feel really proud about what we have done, a year where we know that we will have happiness and sadness (such is life) but in it we aspire to give the best of ourselves to benefit our family, to benefit our congregation and our country, and to benefit the State of Israel and the Jewish people.

Lastly, it depends on each one of us and on our actions that this New Year begins as a **Shanah Tovah**, a good year.

Shanah Tovah! This is what we wish, it is up to reach of us to transform this desire into a reality.

LeShanah Tovah Tikatevu

A good year and May we inscribed in the Book of Life



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The Yamim Noraim Arrive

By Claudio Epelman

An old American Indian was speaking with his grandson.

He told him: "I feel as though I had two wolves fighting in my heart. One of the two is an angry wolf, violent and vengeful. The other is full of love and compassion."

The grandson asked: "Grandfather, tell me which of the two wolves will win this fight in your heart?"

The grandfather responded: "That which I feed upon".

The ***Yamim Noraim*** is the moment when we need introspection to see if during the the year we acted as furious wolves or as compassionate ones, reviewing our conduct, accepting that we made errors, but acting to amend them. This is the message of Judaism. We are not perfect, but we do look at our actions and we find the errors and develop the ability to not commit them again. This is the way we work to live in a world that is each time more just, judging ourselves instead of judging others.

We are approaching the *Yamim Noraim*, an invitation to reflect upon what we did to improve our Jewish life and to improve our communities. This is an opportunity to assume the challenge of change in ourselves, and from that, provoke change in our families and in our communities. In Judaism it is mandatory to repair the world- *Tikun Olam*. May it be G-d's will that we are capable of discovering that revolution begins with us and not by pointing to others.

Shana tova u chatima tova!

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**Union of Jewish Congregations of Latin America and the Caribbean
Unión Judía de Congregaciones de Latinoamérica y El Caribe**

September 20, 2005

Simon Wiesenthal Center

Att. Rabbi Marvin Hier

It is with sadness and a great sense of loss that we, at the Union of Jewish Congregations of Latin America and the Caribbean, received the news of the death of one of the “Just Men” of our times: Mr. Simon Wiesenthal Z”L.

Our heartfelt condolences to all whom he left behind, which includes, perhaps as some of the closest mourners, the Jews of the Diaspora for whom he fought so bravely. He worked for all of us and contributed so much to try and insure that “it never happens again”.

History created his role, his greatness and courage fulfilled it.

We have been privileged to have had a man of his stature represent us and be our spokesperson.

Shalom!

**L. Jack Davidson
President**

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ROSH HASHANAH AND OUR CAPABILITIES

By Rabbi Marcelo Bater

If there is something that *Rosh Hashanah* offers us it is to have the opportunity to exercise our capabilities, many times dormant during the year. The skill to realize a spiritual stock-taking, introspection of every one of us of the year that is leaving, is not an easy task to accomplish. All of this with only one objective: to be able to face a new year in a thorough way, with all that this implies, new challenges, and projects.

Generally we are immersed in a world where these abilities and skills are passed over by others. Today, many of us are valued by what we are able to do, more than by who we really are. And this is the point which I wish to reflect upon with you, dear readers, hours before we begin a new *Rosh Hashanah* starting with an “example” for our lives.

In the month of September, the world lost one of its greatest celebrities: Simon Wiesenthal (z”l). Known in the history of humanity as the “Nazi Hunter”, he led through his example, the way to the right conduct in life. To be able to further exemplify these words, I want to invite you to read the following dialogue reproduced by the prestigious daily “New York Times” in the year 1962:

Simon Wiesenthal was spending Shabbat at the home of a friend, a known jeweler from his city. In the middle of dinner, the owner of the home asked: “Simon, if you were once again an architect, as you were in the past, you would probably be a rich man today. Why don’t you try?” Simon replied: “You are a religious man. You believe in G-d and in life after death, as I also do. Now then, when we arrive at this Olam Haba (the world to come) and we find ourselves with our 6 million Jewish brothers who died in the Shoah, and they ask us: WHAT WERE YOU DOING ALL THIS TIME?, there are going to be different types of responses to this same question. Surely you will answer: “I was dedicating myself to being a good jeweler”, another person will say: “I dedicated myself to constructing houses, as the good architect I am” and I will say: “I never forgot you”.

Many times we are what we do, but at other times we do what we are not. *Rosh Hashanah* invites us to reflect, and this year we have the live example of someone who surely has already been able to answer in the *Olam Haba* what he preached by example during his life, a *mentsch*.

May it be G-d’s will that this New Year we will be able to develop our abilities and skills, in order to form a more humane society with health, justice, love, and happiness.

For all: **SHANAH TOVAH U’GMAR CHATIMAH TOVAH!!**

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About Black, White, and Shades of Grey

By Rabbi Rami Pavolotzky

The ten days between *Rosh Ha-Shanah* and *Yom Kippur* are called *Yamim Noraim*, literally the “terrible days”. That name derives from the fact that according to tradition, on *Rosh Ha-Shanah* we are judged for our actions of the past year while on *Yom Kippur* we receive our sentence.

There is a very interesting source of reference on this theme in the *Talmud*: “Said Rabbi Yochanan: three books are open on *Rosh ha-Shanah*, one for the completely wicked, one for the perfectly just, and the other for those in-between. The perfectly just are judged and their verdict of life is immediately certified. The completely wicked are judged and their verdict of death is immediately certified. The in- betweeners have to wait until *Yom Kippur*—if they are absolved they are inscribed for life, to the contrary, they are inscribed for death” (*Rosh Ha-Shanah* 16b).

According to this source only the “in-betweeners” have to wait until *Yom Kippur* to receive their final verdict which contrasts with the fact that each year we commemorate *Yom Kippur* as a day of forgiveness, the day in which we are able to obtain absolution.

I believe that this contradiction is only apparent and that possibly Rabbi Yochanan is offering us a way of seeing the world in a very particular...and very Jewish way. According to his words the perfectly just men should be directly absolved on *Rosh Hashanah*. This effectively is so, but it occurs that these men...don’t exist. In Judaism there are no saints, no perfect men, no demi-gods. We all have the possibility of becoming better people each time, while at the same time we can make mistakes. The same goes with respect to the entirely wicked: we all have the doors open for return, repentance, for *teshuvah*. This is one of the principal messages of the *Yamim Noraim*. This is why the Day of Forgiveness exists.

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Possibly, what Rabbi Yochanan is trying to tell us is that all men are in the “in-between” category. This in no way is to say that we are all the same, we know that this is not so. What it means is that there are no infallible remedies so as not to make mistakes, that the possibility of error is always near us. And thank G-d, that the possibility of forgiveness always exists. Whenever we are strong and we dare to ask for forgiveness, we are able to pick ourselves up again and move forward. Condemnation and failure do not exist eternally.

Life appears to be like this, without much white nor black, mostly grey, different tones of grey. May we in this newly beginning year be able to confront our myths concerning those which surround us and concerning ourselves, remembering that there are no “perfects” nor “perfectly imperfects”.

Shanah Tovah!

Greetings from the Youth of the UJCL

By Jonathan Sasson (Aruba)

In this New Year 5766, we wish everyone happiness and prosperity, and that we all will be able to meet at our next Conference in January, 2006 in Guadalajara, Mexico.

May we, the youths, be able to learn from our elders, and that they may learn from us at the same time.

A strong hug for each and every one of you and once again, *Shanah Tovah!*

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COMMUNITY SCHOOL ARLENE FERN **(BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA)**

With this article taken from the web page of the Judaica Foundation, we would like to offer our friends a view of the different Jewish education proposals in Latin America. With the support of the WUPJ, and thanks to the tireless efforts of the rabbis, parents, and educators this educational institution offers new alternatives. In future articles we will be referring to other schools in our region.

We invite our readers to send us information about their Jewish schools, whether they are full time or non formal Jewish education. The challenge is the same, and we face it with creativity and resources within our reach, and most certainly, with much dedication.

We are aware that the children represent our Jewish continuity and they will inspire us to achieve that which at times appears impossible. We continue to build our future!

WHO WE ARE / DESCRIPTION

The Community School Arlene Fern was founded in 1995 within the framework of Congregation Emanu-El by Rabbi Sergio Bergman, Lea Vainer, and a group of very dedicated families with the mission to build an “educational community” that provides for solid training based on Jewish values for the students, their families, and the community in its entirety. In 1997, thanks to the generous donation of the new building on the part of the parents of Arlene Fern, the school carries her name and is dedicated to her blessed memory.

All of the members of the educational community were, and still are involved with the plan. In this way, the family is part of a whole that sustains, contains, and gives meaning to an educational strategy of a school in which values, content, and attitudes are experienced and not only learned.

General Director: Lea Vainer

PROGRAMS

Within the pedagogic parameters the following can be emphasized:

- _ “Intense” instruction in English with external audit
- _ Jewish studies in the Hebrew, Spanish, and English languages
- _ Integration of all classroom and daily routines
- _ Swimming and outdoor sports
- _ Integrated School

The Community School Arlene Fern has academic agreements with the Melton Jewish Education Center of Hebrew University in Jerusalem and with the Multimedia Laboratory of M.I.T. (Massachusetts Institute of Technology). It is joined to the network of schools of the World Union for Progressive Judaism with headquarters in the United States, England, Canada, and Australia.

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SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

The philosophy-practice that inspires the school is a creative Judaism which incorporates without limitation of curriculums, and languages advanced educational technologies, framed within a concept of Judaism as an ample cosmopolitan vision.

The Community School Arlene Fern is inspired by Jewish values, oriented toward integrating with the Argentine society and the inclusion of all children who, with different abilities can assimilate and participate in an educational project that offers a top notch Jewish education. It is for this that the school assures a vacancy on each grade level reserved for children with special educational needs, as well as with an integrating educator, and co-educator at each grade.

Source: www.fundacionjudaica.net

Around the Communities...

Beth Israel Synagogue: ARUBA

Dear Friends:

May the New Year bring a wealth of blessings and joy; may it open new paths to explore and love the richness of Judaism, with true openness and caring for our fellow man.

May we always be able to share our unique heritage with our children and grandchildren, in freedom and peace.

May this New Year bring all the blessings to the UJCL Youth, our leaders of the future in whom we pride.

May they find their voice to express their concerns, hopes, dreams and aspirations, and may we be inspired to really listen and act accordingly.

Leshanah Tovah Tikatevu

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The Jewish Community of CUBA

*May this New Year 5,766 bring you and yours an abundance of Health,
much Happiness, an overflowing of Prosperity, Unity of family, and Peace for all.*

Best wishes from Marlen and David Prinstein and family.

SHANAH TOVAH U'METUKAH

B'nei Israel Community: COSTA RICA

The B'nei Israel Community wishes all the members of the UJCL
a year full of group projects and work.

Shanah Tovah Umetukah.

Jewish Community of EL SALVADOR

*"... ma navu al hearim raglei mebaser, mashmia shalom, mebaser tov,
mashmia ieshua, omer letzión melej.*

*How beautiful are the footsteps over the mountains of the one who brings good news,
who proclaims peace, who announces the good, who proclaims salvation,
who tells Zion "Your G-d has been proclaimed King..." Isaiah chap. 52*

PROCLAIMING THE BEGINNING OF A NEW YEAR, WE BECOME AWARE THAT A NEW YOM HA DIN HAS ARRIVED, THE DAYS IN WHICH WE RETURN TO FIND OURSELVES WITH THE MOST PROFOUND PART OF OUR BEING. THE SOUNDS OF THE SHOFAR HAVE RETURNED TO CALL TO US AND ALREADY ECHO IN OUR EARS, TO AWAKEN US FROM THIS LETHARGY INTO WHICH WE HUMAN BEINGS HAVE BEEN ACCOSTUMED TO ENTER.

ADONAI,

GRANT US LIFE AND PEACE IN THIS YEAR, 5766. IN TISHREI, WE "OPEN A DOOR" ANNOUNCING THAT IT IS TIME TO PREPARE OURSELVES IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO ENTER THROUGH IT. IN TISHREI WE "OPEN A DOOR" TO BE INSCRIBED IN THE "BOOK OF LIFE" PROVIDED WITH HUMILITY, SIMPLICITY, AND HUMANITY, TO FACE THE DAYS WE MUST EXPERIENCE.

THAT EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US BE ABLE TO BE THE ONE WHO COMES DOWN FROM THE MOUNTAINS BEARING GOOD NEWS, PROCLAIMING PEACE, ANNOUNCING THE GOOD. PERMIT US TO BE ABLE TO GRASP HUNDREDS OF SPARKS OF BLESSINGS, TO BRING CLOSER TO OUR LIVES, IF ONLY A PART OF THIS GIFT THAT YOU HAVE GIVEN US, BEGINNING WITH THE BLESSING THAT WE MAY ALWAYS BE WORTHY TO CONTINUE TO BE MAKOR HABERACHA. A SOURCE OF BLESSING.

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THAT WE BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN THE LIGHT OF TORAH, UNITED IN OUR COMMUNITIES,
WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE CONTINUITY OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE, FOR THE
EDUCATION OF OUR CHILDREN, AND FOR THE CONSTANT STRENGTHENING
OF OUR TIES WITH ISRAEL.

OUR SCHOLARS WRITE THAT OUR DAYS ARE AS A *SEFER TORAH*,
WE MUST WRITE ON THEM THAT WHICH WE WISH TO BE REMEMBERED.

TOGETHER, MAY WE BE ABLE TO GUIDE OUR HANDS ACROSS THIS PARCHMENT AND WRITE THAT
TODAY, NOW, IS THE MOST IMPORTANT DAY OF OUR LIVES.
AND THAT ON THIS SAME PARCHMENT *ADONAI* WRITES AND SEALS OUR NAMES, FOR PEACE, FOR
HEALTH, AND FOR BLESSING.

FOR EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THE COMMUNITIES THAT COMPRISE THE UJCL, FROM EVERY ONE
OF THE MEMBERS OF THE *COMUNIDAD ISRAELITA DE EL SALVADOR*:

**FOR A GOOD AND SWEET YEAR,
FOR A YEAR OF ACCOMPLISHMENT AND TRUE PEACE,
IN OUR COUNTRY, IN THE WORLD, AND IN THE LAND OF ISRAEL,
FOR US, AND FOR EVERY ONE OF OUR JEWISH BROTHERS.**

RABBI PABLO BERMAN CLAUDIO KAHN PRESIDENT

Jewish Community of JAMAICA

Monday evening we begin our observance of *Rosh Ha'Shanah*, the New Year of 5766. The Jewish New Year concept is unlike that of most other peoples' New Year celebrations, *Rosh Ha'Shanah* is not a time for celebration but rather the beginning a ten-day spiritual journey of self- contemplation and religious reflection. From the Jewish perspective the changing of the date is much less important than the personal confrontation with the soul.

These days are points on our spiritual calendars: the moments where "time" meets upon "place," where the "spiritual" intermingles with the "material," where we look back at "yesterday" while at the same moment looking forward toward "tomorrow."

Rosh Ha'Shanah offers us a myriad of spiritual messages. One of its messages is that humans are distinct from other species of life in that we are expected to take spiritual inventories of our lives. These are the days when we ask ourselves: What did we do well, both on an individual and collective basis in 5765 and what did we do poorly? Whom did we hurt and who used the excuse of being hurt as a tool for manipulation? How have we helped our community and how have we failed it? These are the hard questions that *Rosh Ha'Shanah* asks of us and demands that we answer them honestly not only before G'd but before ourselves.

This last year has been a challenging one. We have watched how both human and natural disasters have swept away dreams, homes and lives. We have witnessed the negative and the positive,

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the bitter and the sweet. Judaism more than anything else however, is a religion of hope and optimism. The changing of the calendar means that we have a chance to renew our commitments before G'd, to each other, and to ourselves to become *mtkanei-ha'olam* (fixers of the world). Let us work together to make 5766 a year of blessings, goodness and peace.

My entire family joins me in wishing each of you a “*Shanah Tovah uMetukkah: A Sweet and Happy 5766. L'Shanah Tovah Tikkatevu: May each of you be written down in the Book of Life.*”

And may I add “mine too!”

Written by: Rabbi Peter Tarlow

Sent by: Ainsley Henriques (Jamaica)

[Hebrew Community of Guadalajara](#)

Dear Friends,

On its second anniversary, The Hebrew Community of Guadalajara once again celebrates these *Yamim Norahim* with the satisfaction of a spiritual stock-taking that reaffirms us in our mission to be the option of continuity and belonging for many Jewish families in our city.

This reality of continual growth and of tightening the bonds as a community with the society in which we live, with sister communities, and with the State of Israel is the motivation that we need to begin this year 5766 with the intention to fortify our relations and to increase our deeds with a view of a future becoming each time more committed.

May it be G-d's will this New Year that we will be capable of renewing that which is meaningful to us in our Jewish family life and community.

A year of peace, health, and well being.

Shanah Tovah

**Eduardo Moel
President**



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Nassau Jewish Congregation

To all the UCJL congregations:

On behalf of Nassau Jewish Congregation of the Bahamas, it is our deep and sincere wish that this New Year, 5766, may bring abundant blessings, peace, and prosperity for each one of us. May our lives always be an instrument to bring Tikkun Olam to our neighbors and to ourselves.

Ricardo Herrera Trigueros
Nassau Jewish Congregation

V.P B'Nai Shalom – Trinidad Tobago

From our small community here in Trinidad, we wish the UJCL communities Shanah Tovah. We extend best wishes for the coming New Year and hope to build stronger links of friendship with the congregations.

We will be celebrating on Monday at the home of the newly appointed Canadian High Commissioner, whose wife was born here and is happy to return and find that we are still present, trying our best to survive.

Shanah Tovah.

Thank you,

Barbara Malins-Smith

TIME SHARING

By Martha E. Lichtenstein

Life is a delicate balancing act, and some people have the power of making us ponder the deeper meaning of our existence.

Mr. Levy was such a person. For two weeks every August he would show up at our *Kabbalat Shabbat* services, and then leave quietly right after the *Kiddush*.

His somewhat mysterious attitude naturally piqued my curiosity. One Friday evening I made up my mind to approach him before he had a chance to leave undetected.

“*Shabbat shalom*, Mr. Levy,” was my opening line.

He removed his thick-lens glasses, wiped the perspiration from his bald head, and offered this non-committal, and totally unrelated reply: “Aruba is always warmer in August.”

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We were alone in the tiny garden separating our temple from the Rabbi's house and I, feeling like a budding private investigator, was not about to let his natural reserve come in the way of my inquiry.

Maybe it was the special magic of the starlit evening, perhaps my ill-concealed inquisitiveness but, slowly, he told me bits and pieces of his life.

"I was born in Poland. My parents were observant Jews but I was a very assimilated, "enlightened" one. Although it was very hard at the time, I attended the University of Warsaw. When I finally obtained my PhD in Philosophy I was married to Hannah, and we had a beautiful blue-eyed, loquacious daughter, Sophie, who was 2 years old in 1939."

Mr. Levy wiped an imaginary speck from his glasses, and then went on with his story.

"Like so many other Jewish families, our happiness would be short lived. After the Nazis invaded what we still thought was our country, I was stripped of all privileges and lost my position as Assistant Professor in the Philosophy Department. Soon all Jews were forced to live in ghettos. I thought I could save my family by pretending to be Aryan, with false documents. You see, Hannah and our baby did not 'look' Jewish."

His breathing became agitated but he continued: "One morning, while I was roaming back alleys trying to find some food for the family, the SS men, tipped by a *helpful* neighbor, broke into our tiny apartment and dragged Hannah and our little daughter to the street. Sophie was killed on the spot 'to teach those damned Jewish swine a lesson,' and my Hannahah right afterwards because she 'resisted arrest,' which is how they described her grieving and crying."

With great effort he continued: "I almost lost my mind. Thanks to some Polish friends that I still had I was able to keep hiding until I reached the forest and joined the Partisans."

I was already beginning to feel sorry for eliciting these painful memories, but it was too late to stop his reminiscing.

"When the end of the war finally came I was still broken-hearted and confused. My older brother, who had left Europe in 1930 to go to America, located me at a displaced persons camp, and took care of all the papers and my ticket to the States."

"Did you find some happiness there?" I interrupted him.

"Well. I never found my soul mate again. I never remarried. I'm teaching several Jewish Philosophy and Holocaust courses at Columbia, and my students have become my surrogate family," he said with a sad half-smile.

At that point I asked our classic question to visitors: "And what brings you to Aruba?"

"My brother and I bought time-sharing here five years ago, and we have been coming to Aruba ever since." And then he added: "You see, school does not start until September, so it works out really well."

I felt that I had to do something for this kind and lonely man who had suffered so much, so I invited him to a grand tour of the island.

"Thank you for a wonderful, unforgettable day!" Mr. Levy told me when, that Sunday, I dropped him off at his Eagle Beach hotel.

My son, who was in Aruba on his College vacation, and always loved to act as tour guide, had joined us, and our new friend had immensely enjoyed his company.

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“You are most welcome. We enjoyed it as much as you did. Let’s keep in touch,” I added, and we exchanged addresses.

Since he was leaving on the next day, I volunteered to take him to Reina Beatrix airport. That was the least I could do for Mr. Levy.

The farewell was short and poignant. “My daughter would have been about your age, had she been allowed to live,” he remarked sadly.

I could only answer with a hug, after which I watched him go towards his gate, with the peculiar step of someone who carries a heavy grief on his shoulders.

His letters kept arriving regularly, and I replied promptly. Several months ago I received a small package from a Manhattan lawyer. There was a brief note inside, in which he informed me that Mr. Levy had passed away. In his will he had bequeathed money to our Hebrew school, and to me a gold chain with a tiny Star of David that had belonged to his child.

Finally, Mr. Levy would be able to share timeless time with her.

Aruba, September 2005 / Elul 5765

Connection After Disengagement

By Tamara Schagas (WUPJ)

H*itnatkut*, disengagement, exit from Gaza. It is no longer the time to discuss the decision that was made. The subject is not about whether or not it was good to leave Gaza or if it was an error. We are no longer speaking about how we arrived at establishing ourselves in those territories; who were the leaders that promoted the settlements, the time elapsed since they were founded. We also cannot continue with conversations about which party was the first to propose the exit, and to whom the recognition is due.

This process took place in three major stages, non of them easy. First came the times when one would decide his position, the great debates, the voting, the conflicts between sectors of the same parties, the people wishing to be heard, being for, or against. A country divided between the Oranges who asked to take a step backward with the decision, and not leave the lands and the Blues, who trusted that this was the correct step to take up again the dialogues with the Palestinian people and promote a historic change in the peace process. Approaching the date of departure from the territories, things that we would never imagine someone would think of, and even less, say were heard in Israel and around the rest of the world. The people spoke of the possibility of a conflict between brothers, soldiers who would refuse to carry out orders and colonists who would attack the soldiers who wanted to remove them from their homes. Part of the nation saw in the *Tzahal*, the symbol of defense of our State and our people, the enemy. The country appeared to be truly divided and it was difficult to predict what would happen.

The disengagement process lasted two weeks. First, they entered the territories and gave warning that in 48 hours the people had to leave their homes and after those two days the army would enter and remove those who did not want to leave on their own accord. This is the second stage. They were two very difficult weeks. Although many believed that part of the country was happy because they were in favor of the *hitnatkut* and finally they had put it into practice, one did not see people smiling in the streets. No one was pleased to see the images.

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None of us wishes to see our brothers leave their homes and much less removed by another brother who is perceived as obliged to evict them. The most profound desire was that there would not have been the necessity of such a thing but this is Utopian, unreal.

The most difficult thing for me was to see it on television and read it in the newspapers. I had this sensation that history was passing before my eyes and I did not want to see it from far away. That even if it was something so difficult, so painful, it was also mine and I had to act upon.

It was then when we realized that the third stage of the process was nearing and that this was probably that which presented the major challenge. The following day...what would happen? No one spoke much of this. When will the dialogues begin with the Palestinian leadership? How real is the future establishment of a Palestinian State? Perhaps the disengagement would bring about the end of terror? All of these questions did not have answers then, nor do they have them now, but there was one, one that especially echoed in my mind: How are we going to connect after the disengagement? What are we going to do so that the disengagement from the land does not have the same effect on us? How can we avoid the feeling of "factions"? How can I in some way help those who left their village, their home, part of their history, whether on their own accord or not, to relocate? How to let them know that we value what they did? That we understand their pain and it is also ours and that we sincerely hope that it is the best for everyone? How to reconnect this country that has been divided by ideas, beliefs, colors, and by territories?

The first thing I then decided to do was to volunteer. Groups of youths went to disassemble the houses that the colonists had left intact. Because of some paperwork, we were not able to go to Gaza that day and instead went to Shajar, a *moshav* where they were sending some of the colonists and their families. Our work consisted of assembling the hothouses. Truckloads of plants from Atzmona arrived in Shajar for us to classify and put into place.

Once again I had the feeling that this third stage that I described was going to be the most difficult. Among the volunteers with whom I worked that day there were only 5 in a group of 40 who were not Orthodox. The majority were women between the ages of 17 and 23 who came as a group with *B'nei Akiva* (the Modern Orthodox Zionist Youth Movement). The majority of volunteers were people who had been in opposition to the disengagement and came to help because they identified with those who had to leave their homes. This did not surprise me, but on the other hand it hurt me not to be integrated with the group of volunteers. It was clear that we did not think as they did, that we belonged to the other side. I do not want to be misinterpreted, they appreciated our presence and valued our participation but there was a certain distance and lack of understanding as to exactly what we were doing there. It was as though they did not comprehend why we wanted to help.

I consider that here lies the great challenge. I believe that this is the question for which I would like to find an answer this year. What to do to go on to the reconnection after the disengagement? *Am Israel* is one, with an array of possibilities but One people. To be recognized in the other, knowing how to be responsible for our actions and for the ones of those around us is our challenge. We are responsible to make peace, in ourselves and between ourselves, and thus, be bearers of the message of *Shalom* and bring it to the world each day through our actions.

When the country was divided between blue and orange ribbons the Reform Movement in Israel made white ribbons with the inscription "Love your neighbor as yourself". May this always be the message of our actions. May we never forget that we are brothers, may our differences only make us grow and see a little beyond ourselves and to share and debate but never to confront.

May it be G-d's will that this be a year of peace for all, the House of Israel, and humanity. That we may know how to be heard through our deeds and work together for a better world with more love, more justice, more harmony.

Shanah Tovah Umetukah, Gmar Chatimah Tovah

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WISHES and DREAMS

By Cheryle Tacher

Peace of mind,
A restful soul,
A life of tranquility,
That is my goal.

These Days of Awe,
I wish for you,
To truly understand,
What it means to be a Jew.

Prayer, and *tzedakah*,
Are only a part,
Of the many obligations,
That must come from the heart

Tikkun Olam,
Morality and virtue,
Educating our young,
Are merely but a few.

The words of *Torah*,
Powerful and pure,
Echo throughout our being,
As we near *Yom Kippur*.

Truth, fairness, open mindedness,
Equality for all,
Practice them boldly,
As we proudly walk tall.

This New Year,
Unlike no other,
Seek only the best,
When dealing with your brother.

We are the model,
All eyes are upon us,
Day after day,
Of this we must be conscious.

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I dream of unity,
This is not trite,
Throughout our history,
Without it, no might.

A genuine smile,
A pat on the back,
Thinking of others,
Will keep us on track.

Shanah Tovah,
Only the best,
We are the chosen,
Set apart from the rest.

To all of you,
A sweet year I wish,
Full of love and family,
The UJCL I so cherish!

