



Yom Kippur

A Message for Yom Kippur

As we approach Yom Kippur, I am mindful of the fact that we are currently in the era of the unpredictable.

Here in the UK it commenced with the Brexit referendum which spun us immediately into a period of economic and political uncertainty, where we did not know what the next day would bring. That was followed by Covid where our diaries were cleared out, and we needed to plan anew. Many of us, were isolated for long periods of time. It was a time of deep anxiety as we feared for our very lives. And that in turn was followed by the 7th of October and the awful period that we have been enduring during the past two years.

And throughout it all, we have cried out with the words of our daily davening, "va'anachnu lo neida mah naeseh", we do not know what to do, "ki eilecha eineinu", our eyes are turned Heavenwards to You God, and we trust in you that you know why this is all happening, and please God, we will have a bright and happy future.

In our prayers every morning we say the verse, "rabot machshavot b'lev ish va'atzat Hashem hei'takum", many are the intentions of people, but it is the will of God which will prevail. That really has been an description of the drama that we have endured during these uncertain times and ultimately, we place our trust in Almighty God.

But fascinatingly, Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, the Rosh Yeshiva of the Be'er Yakov Yeshiva, has a beautiful alternative explanation, and this is how he presented it:

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"Rabot machshavot b'lev ish", "many are the thoughts in the hearts of people", means that people plan. They say let us do this, let us do the other. This will be the way forward, not that. "Va'atzat Hashem hei", and what is the eitzah, what is the advice of the Lord when we are stuck, and we do not know what to do? His advice is, "takum", stand upright. Be proud of what you are about, be proud of your Jewish identity and what you are living for.

And I find this to be such valuable advice to us right now because, on so many occasions, we wonder what should Israel do next? How will we see the end of Hamas's rule in Gaza? How will we be able, please God, to see every one of the hostages back home? What can be done? What should be done when around the world Jewish communities are facing such challenging times? The best way forward for us is "takum". We can, and indeed, should stand tall.

We can be exceptionally proud of our values and our identity during these difficult times. We can be proud of our families, of how we have been coping, of our wonderful communities and their response. We can be proud of the resilience, the fortitude, the tenacity, the charity, the selflessness. We can be proud of world Jewry's contribution to our environment. We can be proud of the State of Israel and its ongoing multifaceted contribution to our civilisation. This is indeed a time for all of us to stand tall.

May you all be blessed with an easy fast and may we all indeed have a Shana Tova.

This is a transcript of a video, which is available to view via chiefrabbi.org/dvar-torah