

# Rosh Hashanah – Time to Remember Tradition



By Karen Schoen

This week begins the most holy time in the Jewish calendar. As a child I remember putting on my finest dress and going to Grandma and Poppy for Rosh Hashanah. Oh the food. The table set with a long line of never ending delicacies. I of course “helped” Grandma cook. I remember the huge chopping bowls, the rounded chopping knives, the hand meat grinder I used to chop the liver and help make the gefilta fish. I can even smell the matzoh ball soup cooking ever so slowly. Sadly when I go back to recapture some of those recipes, the food never tastes the same. That is the down side of learning the dangers of cooking with chicken fat. We have replaced those cholesterol fill recipes with healthy cooking, replaced the chopping knives with a food processor, replaced the hand grinder with an electric one, and the slow cooker with a microwave. All done in the name of progress.

But what good is progress if we forget our roots, values and traditions along the way?

School texts now eliminate Christianity and Judaism and students are forced to pledge to Allah. As a former teacher, I remember teaching classes called religion where we explored and discovered how religious beliefs are so interwoven that it makes trying to separate the underlying values difficult. The purpose was to give an understanding to my students so when they grew up they would not demonize or continually misunderstand traditions. I felt it is important to know all religions. It is the lack of understanding of religious values

keeps us separated. If you do not understand heritage, it is almost impossible to understand motivations.

As we prayed in temple, I remember asking G-d for forgiveness of my sins but also thanking G-d that we lived in America where I would not have to suffer the atrocities bestowed upon the Jews of the past. I felt safe at peace, at home.

Rosh Hashanah, the celebration of the Jewish New Year, 5781 begins at sundown on Monday, Sept 5. Why 5781? Because the Jewish calendar begins at the dawn of man, BC (Before Christ).

The Jewish HOLIDAYS are never the same days every year because the Jewish calendar is based on the LUNAR (moon) cycles with 13 months each 28 days.

Rosh Hashanah is a quieter holy day time celebrating the creation of the world, lasting 10 days and ending with Yom Kippur aka the day of Atonement. Yom Kippur is the holiest day whereby Jews all over the world fast, pray for forgiveness and ask G-d to be written in the book of life for another year.

During this week the Torah (Jewish holy scroll) is read and the passage tells of the time when Moses delivered to Jews to Canaan (later called Israel). When Moses left to get the Ten Commandments, he did not return in a timely manner. No cell phones, so calling to say he will be late is out of the question.

The Jews fearful of Moses demise abandoned G-d and made false idols aka the golden calf and began worshiping the golden calf. When Moses returned with the Ten Commandments, G-d told Moses the people must pay for their sins of worshiping a false idol. So for forty more years the Jews were forced to roam the desert.

Moses replaced Ten Commandments but was never allowed into the promised land. Instead the people were told that they must choose. They must choose a life with G-d in the promised land

or darkness by wandering in the desert. They choose G-d and Joshua led the Jews into Canaan. The Shofar (Rams Horn) is played to begin Rosh Hashanah and to end Yom Kippur.

Today I feel we are back to the beginning. G-d is with us but only if we follow his path. Today I feel that we are being asked to choose. Choose the path of life with morality and G-d or life with darkness worshiping man and government. I fear that the Afghanistan disaster was planned. This plan is filled with lies and deceit will lead us down the path of darkness. Following the Regime to me is following the golden calf. The good news is Americans are realizing the golden calf is hollow.

As we learned in history the road to freedom is never easy or fair. But we are blessed. We live in America and Americans will not give up their freedom with ease. This week I will pray. I will pray not only for myself and my family but for America. I know we are strong and I know now is the time to face the uncertainty together.

“L’shana tovah”: is the way Jews greet each other on Rosh Hashanah with the Hebrew phrase “L’shana tovah,” which translates to “for a good year.” I wish you all “L’shana tovah” and may you all be written in the Book of Life..

In Liberty, Karen Schoen

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