

Chagim uMoadim

— from the Masorti Movement



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ROSH HASHANAH 5778

A couple of weeks ago I had an experience very simple, so simple that I even hesitate to share it. But the moral inspired this brief message to start together this new 5778.

All those present here know that every day new technological inventions go on sale. We see lighter, faster and more sophisticated computers. Personally I, who am not as tech savvy, discover new tasks that I can do even from my telephone. It is interesting to observe our children's faces when one explains that the phones we used as kids were Landlines. Some adults here even remember when the only way of talking on the phone was via an operator.

But we are in another era, where from the phone one can find the address of the restaurant closest to where we are, check the menu, and if already a good customer, ask them to prepare the meal of your choice and arrive to have it waiting for you on the table. If you have the correct app, you can see if the film of your choice is playing at your closest theater and buy tickets from your phone. If you have the correct app, you can learn of how investments in the stock market are doing and while driving (something I do not recommend) buy or sell on the stock exchange.

There is no limit to what you can do with your phone (including talking on the phone)

And this brings me to the incident I wanted to share with you.

The other day I placed a call to an acquaintance and was connected to his answering machine:

"If you would like to leave a message, press 1".

That is exactly what I did, I pressed 1 and left my message, and when it was finished, automatically the machine asked: "If you would like to hear the message you have recorded, press 2."

Not really sure why, but probably out of curiosity, that is what I did and I heard the message that I had recorded and I realized that it sounded awful! Cold and distant and as a rabbi that is the last thing I would like to be. My message was so basic that I had limited myself to say that I was trying to contact him PERIOD. Not a Word from where I was calling, or who wanted to congratulate him on the graduation of his son (who I had watched grow up) or even leave a number where I could find if it was that he would like to contact me in return.

All I did was leave a brief message, and I must admit it left much to desire. That is not the way in which one should talk to someone or even to their answering machine.

While I felt that way, the machine continued and this time it said: "If you are satisfied with the message that you have recorded, press two." "If you have been satisfied with the recorded message press 2, If you would like to erase this message and send another one in its place, press 3." This time I was more careful and I said "what a shame that you weren't in, I wanted to congratulate you on the graduation of Gaston, I remember his Bris and I'm happy for all the Najes that he is giving you." I'm calling from Miami my cell is such and such and then I pressed the 4 and recorded my message, and I felt relieved!

How lucky that someone invented this application on an answering machine and I could repair my words! Like everything that happens to me in the 60 days before Rosh Hashanah in my life, I try to see if it can be applied to a sermon. I thought, "Wouldn't be great if we had an application like that, not only on our phones, but also for our mouths or for our souls?"

For some reason we were not created like that, with an alarm that can ask us that question at that time, to realize that we humiliated ourselves, maltreated or hurt someone, thus having a second chance.

THAT ANSWERING MACHINE GAVE ME THAT SECOND CHANCE AND MADE ME THINK HOW CRUEL HUMAN EXISTENCE WOULD BE IF THERE WERE NO SECOND CHANCES!

The idea of an existence without second chances is devastating. You imagine how terrible it would be to live with the idea that all errors are forever. The wrong work, the wrong race, the wrong couple.

This is precisely the role of the theology of Rosh Hashanah. It is to present the need and urgency that we have as humans, to remember that this is the only life we have and when God metaphorically says "In these days it is determined who will live and who will die. It is also saying: "You think you have to stay stuck in a wrong decision the rest of your life, or this year you will register yourself in the book where one will take his own life seriously?" Judaism adheres to the idea of an existence without 2nd chances is devastating and since its inception, it is in our DNA.

The first tables of the Torah, written by God himself experienced a failure. Having just received them, the people abandoned them, and Moshe broke them symbolizing that the Pact between God and the people had ended. The second set of tables were carved by Moshe. It is true they are more humane than divine, but for us they represent the renewed Covenant, and have survived persecution, pogroms, exiles and Nazis and it's loyalty to them that we have arrived at this point in time. It gives me much hope knowing that the second set are the ones with which we agreed and not with the first.

My Rabbinate has been inspired by those who knew how to become better husbands, parents and better people and by Jews after having failed. Second chances are probably one of the many points that we have in common among those assembled this evening.

I hug each of you dear readers from Miami, USA where 15 years ago I started my second chance in the Rabbinate, and from here I wish you the strength to take your second chance with renewed conviction .

In this 5778 May you all be inscribed in the book of life.

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Rabbi Mario Rojzman, born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, he graduated from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem with a Bachelor of Arts in Jewish Philosophy and Education and a Master's degree in Education and received his Rabbinical Ordination from the Seminario Rabínico Latino Americano. Rabbi Rojzman received an Honorary Doctorate from JTS, commemorating his over 25 years of serving the Conservative Movement. He served as Rabbi at Bet El Community in Buenos Aires, for 11 years. His interest and involvement on social affairs granted him invitations as a guest speaker from different prestigious institutions, such as Inter-American Development Bank, the UNESCO and the World Bank. For two years he co-hosted a TV Show with Bishop Justo Laguna, with whom he co-wrote the book "All Roads Lead to Jerusalem...and also to Rome," in both English and Spanish. Since 2003 he is the Rabbi at Beth Torah Benny Rok Campus in Miami. He is married to Gisela Ludman and together they have 5 children Henri, Sarit, Igal, Daniela and Annie.



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