

## **August 2010      Message from Rabbi Bob Mark**

It's the end of July and around the corner are the High Holidays. In fact, I wrote this article for the July bulletin, only to learn that we do not have one. I can't recall thinking of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur so early in the summer season. In fact, unless we get the High Holiday issue of our newsletter out quite early in August, it's quite possible that some of our members will not get it until after Rosh Hashana. This year, the first night of Rosh Hashana falls on the Wednesday night following Labor Day. It is going to be a very short summer for many of us.

The days leading up to the High Holidays are a time of reflection; a time to consider what we have accomplished in the past year. What have we done this year that made us proud, what have we not done that also made us proud? And of course, what have done or not done that makes us not so proud of who we are and what we did? Did you resolve last year to make any improvements in your life style other than materialistic ones? Did you consider coming to services more often, trying to participate in services more, learning how to lead a service or read the Torah? Have you thought about giving more charity or spending more time with family members who would be appreciative of your time? Have you contemplated volunteering at a food bank or providing a day of rest to a beleaguered caregiver by providing respite care for a day? Have you considered providing a meal for one whose husband or wife is in the hospital or making a phone call to someone you used to see all the time but is now homebound? Have you considered making an effort to be more observant, perhaps start eating kosher when you go out to a restaurant or putting away your cell phone on Shabbat? Have you considered spending a day to support Israel at a rally or to make calls for the Jewish Federation? There is so much to do and for each and every one of the things that we should do, there is an excuse for why we have not done it. However, realistically, the excuse may not necessarily qualify as a legitimate reason and that is something we all should really be thinking about.

In one paragraph, there are enough things to think about to have kept you busy for a whole year and maybe more. The fact is that many of us have indeed considered several if not many of the items listed above. The question however is: How many of us have followed through on the things we have thought about? Thinking about something is one thing, doing something about it is quite another.

Many of us at Beth Tikvah are no longer spring chickens. There many things we can be thankful for, amongst them being the fact that we are still here. Still here to enjoy our friends and families, hug our children and grandchildren and for some, great grandchildren, and to consider our legacy. Do you have your health or at least most of it? There are many people who do not. Are you able to maintain yourself and your family in your home, have what to wear and what to eat? Many do not, especially

this year.

I fully understand that this topic may be far from your minds at this time of year. However, if I waited till the September issue to discuss it, you would have no time to act upon it before the High Holidays.

Life sometimes offers us opportunities to make contributions in the smallest ways that amount to the biggest things for those we help. Not long ago I was behind a very elderly lady in the supermarket who had a small order and amongst her items were several she made sure to put at the end of the checkout counter in a specific order. Frankly, I was puzzled but figured that here was just another meshuganah who had nothing better to do with her time. I was wrong. As the cashier rang up the order the lady paid close attention to the rising total. When it hit a certain number she told the cashier to please return the rest of the items to the shelves and she added that she couldn't afford them. A jar of applesauce, a very small tube of skin cream to prevent itching, a six pack of Ensure and a sponge. Certainly not big luxuries in life, but for this woman it was a loss. She told the cashier she can use her old sponge for another two weeks and will live without the cream, the Ensure was for her bedridden husband and he might have just enough to last the week, the applesauce was a special treat for her that would have to wait. I felt like I knew this woman for a long time as I listened to her story. The cashier totaled her order up and started to put away the items left on the counter. I told her to leave them there and start my order but to include the items on the counter and pack them with the elderly lady's order.

One would have thought from the lady's reaction that she had just won the lottery. Oh my G-d she said, I can't believe my good fortune. Thank you, thank you a hundred thank yous. I was starting to think that I was Sheldon Adelson for a minute. I got so much nachas from that woman it was worth every penny and more. All without administrative expenses, salaries and phone calls.

While things like that don't happen every day, you will find opportunities to do a mitzvah if you really want one. If you can't find them, please call me and I will be happy to turn you on to one. If you want to take the easy way out, you can write a check to the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund and you will get two mitzvot; one for giving it to the fund, and another for giving it to the individual or organization to whom it is subsequently contributed.

For several years now my wife and I have hosted a counselor from Israel who arrive(s) here with teens from Israel who have been directly affected by Arab terrorism in Israel. If you saw the smiles on the faces of these kids who go to the YJCC for a few weeks in the summer and are hosted by families from all over Bergen County, you would not need to be asked to write a check, you would ask the program to take it. Opportunities abound.

Some opportunities cost nothing but your time and good will. It is July, Rosh Hashana is on September 9<sup>th</sup>. **Prepare now so that when you say: Teshuva (Repentance), Tefilla (prayer) and Tzedaka (charity) overcome the negative decree, you can say so with authority and with the knowledge that you have done all three.**