

CONGREGATION AGUDATH JACOB

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*From the Desk of
Rabbi Ben-Zion Lanxner*

**The Month of Elul is around
the corner, TESHUVAH IS IN
THE AIR.**

**Prayer as a starting point of
“RETURN”.**



A few years ago, a wonderful young person I know began to spiral downward. Though he couldn't see it or admit it at the time, alcohol was seriously hindering and sabotaging his life. A few of their very close friends and I coordinated to confront him in an attempt to help him. Fast forward, a few years – those friends and I attended an open AA meeting to celebrate as he received a medallion recognizing two years of sobriety.

I have had the privilege of attending recovery meetings before to celebrate milestones of sobriety and each time I have walked away extremely proud of the celebrant, grateful and humbled to have been included, but most of all, enormously inspired. I don't know a room of people that are more

vulnerable, genuine, raw, and more united in their effort to tackle a self-destructive urge and inclination.

Parts of the standard AA meeting are consistent and the same while others change and fluctuate. This particular meeting focused on the third step of recovery - "Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of G-d as we understood Him."

At the core of recovery is a recognition that we cannot do it on our own, that we find the strength by relying on G-d.

At the core of recovery is acceptance and submission to G-d, a recognition that we cannot do it on our own, that we rely on G-d and can only find the strength to endure and persevere if we attach ourselves to Him. In the heart of the meeting, attendees have the opportunity to share. I was blown away by the insight, depth and sincerity of those who opened their hearts.

One young man, relatively new to recovery, talked about how he always saw religion, G-d and prayer as something for the weak, for those who need a crutch and can't do it on their own. Each time he stumbled, each time he fell, he continued to choose fear over faith.

Only when he hit rock bottom did he realize that surrendering and submitting to G-d is a sign of strength, not of weakness. He began to pray daily and though he was an atheist his whole life, he now realizes that the only way he can find the strength to stay sober is by choosing G-d.

I was reminded of the story of a young girl and her father who were walking along a forest path. At some point, they came across a large tree branch. The girl asked her father, "If I try, do you think I could move that branch?" Her father replied, "I am sure you can, if you use all your strength." The girl tried her best to lift or push the branch, but she was not strong enough. She said, with disappointment, "You were wrong, Dad. I can't move it." "Try again with all your strength," replied her father. Again, the girl tried hard to push the branch. She struggled but it did not move. "Dad, I cannot do it,"

said the girl. Finally, her father said, "My daughter, I advised you to use 'all your strength,' but you didn't. You didn't ask for my help."

Using all of our strength means seeing ourselves as dependent, not independent, as needing G-d, not living without Him. A woman described her last memory when addicted to alcohol was yelling and cursing at her young daughter who was asking her not to take the next drink. She ended up in rehab, worked the steps including this third one, and when she surrendered to G-d and turned to Him for help, her life turned around.

She shared that now she prays twice a day, expresses gratitude regularly and always asks G-d for help. Sometimes she asks for help to be honest that day, sometimes to work hard, other times to overcome the urge and impulse for self-destructive decisions and behaviors. Each day, after she prays, she spends a few moments in meditation. She described that when she prays, she is talking to G-d and when she meditates, she clears her mind, listens, and feels He is talking to her.

As I sat there listening, I thought about our regular meetings called minyanim and our daily prayers. Are they the exercises in humility and personal growth they were meant to be? Do we close the prayer book and feel we have spoken to G-d and have heard Him speaking to us? Have we taken the step of surrendering and cleaving to G-d?

The authors of the Silent Amidah, the Men of the Great Assembly, had a divine inspiration in composing a prayer that would capture the universal needs of mankind transcending time and place. We utilize their formula daily to articulate our gratitude, dreams, aspirations and needs.

But they never intended on their words being the sum total of our prayers. They only offered the template, and we are supposed to fill in the blanks, we are meant to write our own personal, individual thoughts, feelings and needs in between the lines.

We must recite the liturgy, read the inspired script each day to benefit from the brilliant formula. But turning in the words of the prayer book without

personalizing them, without a sincere conversation with our Creator, without expressing our specific gratitude, needs and requests is incomplete and deficient. It isn't that G-d needs more, it's that we do.

As I just started a few weeks ago a new class on Conversion to Judaism to a group of 4 wonderful and dedicated individuals who are yet to read our Prayer Book in Hebrew, I told them that even though they do not understand the Hebrew prayer I chant from the pulpit, they can either follow the English translation and the beautiful commentaries, or just sit down, relaxing, closing their eyes and meditate.

One of them told me that she so much feels different when sitting in the Sanctuary and listening to the engaging melodies, that she rather not read the prayers, but while listening to the suiting melodies of our Jewish traditional liturgy, she talks to G-d, composing her own prayers...

This is exactly what Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav, the grandson of the Ba'al Shem Tov suggested to all of his followers. The term of this formula is "Hitbodedut". It is a way of seclusion in nature and talking to G-d in listening to the music of the silence in the wind...and believe me, it works wonders. I do this almost every morning before officially starting my morning prayers...

Whether during praying, while driving, cooking, exercising or simply sitting still, talk to G-d in your own words, ask Him for help with what you need that day, thank Him for the blessings and gifts in your life and when you are done, spend a moment in quiet meditation and see if you can hear Him talking back to you, and please, do not give up after the first time you did not hear Him back or you could not find the connection. It takes time and resilience, but I know you can do it. I do it, so can you.

I ran out of the meeting late to my next appointment. I got in the car and instinctively grabbed my phone to make a call. But then I remembered what I had just heard and decided to make a different kind of call, one that required me to turn my phone off, not on. I spent that short ride talking to

G-d and let Him know among the things I was and am so thankful for, was being at that meeting.

ותשובה ותפלה וצדקה מעבירין את רע הגזרה

But Repentance, Prayer and Charity remove the evil of the decree.

Rabbi Ben-Zion Lammeter

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As some of you already know—and for the rest this will be the formal reveal—I am now president of the board of the *shul*, a few months ahead of schedule. Our now past president, Judy Hersh, has chosen to step aside a bit early so that she can devote her full-time efforts to all of her family responsibilities as well as to running the Jewish Federation of Waco, which is a labor of love for her. When she made this decision, I let her know how grateful I am, and all of us are, for all the work that she's done for the past year and a half. As I told her, she's gotten at least five years' worth of work done during her tenure, from financial, legal, and organizational stuff to overseeing the operations of the *shul* and the office to outright *schlepping*, literally. Some of the old-timers may recall that this was Judy's second stint as president: she led the *shul* when Lea and I first joined, many years ago. So, please make sure and let Judy know how grateful we all are to her. She's earned some bigtime R&R!

It's easy for an organization's new leader to come in and say, "Everything's gonna change now," and then hit the ground running. Just an alert: that's not in the cards at present. Well, maybe the hit-the-ground-running part, but not the everything's-gonna-change-now part. Like the old adage, if it ain't

broke Things will continue to function as usual, although moving forward I would imagine that I may identify new priorities and that, together, we will implement innovative ways to bolster the religious and social life of the *shul*, grow the membership, and secure our financial future. We all have a role to play—each one of us—in plotting the course to a wonderful future, *b'ezrat Hashem*, and I look forward to working with everyone and hearing your ideas. I welcome your input and most definitely welcome your tangible help and prayers.

As we approach the High Holy Days, this will be the busy religious time of year for all of us, so our main priority for now through October will be to focus on our preparation for the Jewish new year and on the various opportunities for reflection, repentance, and renewal. Then, in November or December—exact date TBA—we will have our annual congregational meeting, including the voting on board members and officers. In the meantime, because I have become president and my former position has become open, I have asked Joseph Settle to serve as vice president, and I am so happy that he has agreed. (I hope he knows what he's signed onto!) My idealized model for the position is something along the lines of a COO in relation to the president's role as CEO/chairman. But there's a critical role here for everyone. I want all of us, including the executive committee—which also comprises the treasurer, secretary, and past president—the other board members, and the entirety of the membership of the *shul* to work together as a team. We are also blessed, of course, with our wonderful and beloved Rabbi, as well as our Rebbetzin and our office administrator, Shannon Reynolds. So, we already have a lot of terrific human capital to draw on, and I'm hopeful that each one of us will find meaningful ways to participate as we move forward.

L'shalom,

Jeff Levin

September Service Schedule

Friday, September 6

Kabbalat Shabbat 6:00 pm
Candle Lighting 7:27 pm

Saturday, September 7

Shacharit 10:00 am
Shabbat Ends 8:21 pm

Friday, September 13

Kabbalat Shabbat 6:00 pm
Candle Lighting 7:18 pm

Saturday, September 14

Shacharit 10:00 am
Celebration of Gabby Jortner Bat Mitzvah
Shabbat Ends 8:11 pm

Friday, September 20

Kabbalat Shabbat 6:00 pm
Candle Lighting 7:09 pm

Saturday, September 21

Shacharit 10:00 am
Shabbat Ends 8:02 pm

Friday, September 27

Kabbalat Shabbat 6:00 pm
Candle Lighting 7:00 pm

Saturday, September 28

Shacharit 10:00 am
Shabbat Ends 7:53 pm
Selichot 8:30 pm



September 11

Stormy Rogers

September 12

Abbye Silver

September 19

Lesley Rosen

September 27

Joseph Settle

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY



September 1

**Martin & Loren
Schwartz**

September 5

**Inez & Gerald
Bonneville**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- ❖ Offices will be closed Monday, September 2, for Labor Day.
- ❖ Celebration of Gabby Jortner Bat Mitzvah on September 14, 10:00 am.
- ❖ Saturday, September 28, 2024 there will be a **Havdalah: 8:30 p.m. followed by Refreshments & Movie Selichot Service IN-PERSON & LIVE STREAM at 10:00 p.m.**
- ❖ Order your Lulav and Etrog sets by September 24. Payment must be included for order to be placed.



Order Your Lulav & Etrog Set

Each set includes Etrog, lulav, myrtles,
willows and a lulav bag.

Quality Set \$60

Payment is required with order by

September 24, 2024



2024

5784/5785 Selichot: Saturday, September 28, 2024.

Havdalah: 8:30 p.m. followed by Refreshments & Movie

Selichot Service IN-PERSON & LIVE STREAM at 10:00 p.m.

Rosh HaShanah: Oct. 2 – Oct. 4

Erev Rosh HaShanah: Wednesday, Oct. 2, 6:00 p.m. **IN-PERSON & LIVE STREAM**

Rosh HaShanah: Thursday, Oct. 3, 10:00 a.m. **IN-PERSON & Live Stream**

Tashlich: Thursday, Oct. 3 at 4:45 p.m. Brazos Park E. 3516 N. MLK, Jr. Blvd.

Rosh HaShanah Day 2: Friday, Oct. 4 10:00 a.m. **IN-PERSON & Live Stream**

Shabbat Shuvah: Saturday, Oct. 5, 10:00 a.m. **IN-PERSON & Live Stream**

Kever Avot: October 6

Sunday, October 6, 10:00 a.m. at CAJ Cemetery

Yom Kippur: October 11-12

Erev Y. K. Kol Nidre: Friday, October 11, 7:00 p.m. **IN-PERSON & Live Stream**

Yom Kippur: Saturday, October 12, 2023.

Shacharit, 10:00 a.m., Yizkor, 12:30 p.m., Mussaf, 1:30 p.m.

Mincha, & Neilah: 5:30 p.m. IN-PERSON & LIVE STREAM

and Break the Fast at 7:30 p.m. in our Social Hall

Sukkot: October 16-25

Erev Sukkot: Wednesday, October 16 6:00 p.m. **IN-PERSON & LIVE STREAM**
with Kiddush in the Sukkah.

Sukkot Day 1: Thursday, October 17, 10:00 a.m. **IN-PERSON & Live Stream**
Followed by Kiddush & Luncheon in the Sukkah.

Shabbat Chol Hamo'ed: Friday, October 18, 6:00 p.m.

Shabbat Chol Hamo'ed: Saturday, October 19, 10:00 a.m.

Shemini Atzeret & Simchat Torah,

Thursday, October 24, at 10:00 am **IN-PERSON & LIVE STREAM**
Followed by YIZKOR at 11:15 a.m.

Thursday, Oct. 24, at 6:00 p.m. **IN-PERSON & LIVE STREAM**

Followed by Kiddush in the Sukkah.

THANK YOU for your donations in August!

Shabbat

Javis Howeth

Judy Hersh

Michael Pesses

Mr & Mrs George

Keller

Susan Raphael

Joseph Settle

Jeff Levin

Susan Lanxner

Henry Hacker

Inez Bonneville

In Memory Of

Samuie Gordon

Anna Papernov

Robert Settle

Joseph Settle

Marilyn Ellis

Harry Harelík

Haskell Harelík

Harry Harelík

Julius Jacobson

Esther Lipinsky

Fannie Lieberman

Jeff Levin

Y A H R Z E I T S

The following names of dearly departed will be read aloud by the Rabbi preceding the Mourner's Kaddish on Shabbat morning. It is fitting and customary that the nearest of kin be present in the synagogue for the recitation of this special prayer in their memory. Attendance not only honors the departed but also enhances and guarantees that a Minyan is present to recite the Kaddish.

Kaddish will be read on September 6

Elul 3	Chester Zeichner
Elul 4	Morris Marcus*
Elul 5	Minnie Rae Fink
Elul 7	Esther Brown*
	Jake Aaron Hayman*
	Julius Jacobson*
Elul 8	Dora Berlovitz*
	Marthe Bloch Heyman*
	Bennie Markusfeld*
	Gina Marie Perry-Valusky
Elul 9	Jacob Halpern

Kaddish will be read on September 13

Elul 10	Bessie Chernoff*
	Isaac Wolpo
	Anna Wolstein
	Jonas Samuel Zackin
Elul 11	Fannie Lieberman
	I (Doc) M Mott*
Elul 12	Mrs I Adams*
	Harry M Dalkowitz
Elul 13	Hannah G Rosenblatt
Elul 14	Pauline Kempfer
	Louis Kolom*
	Nell Miller*
Elul 15	Pearl Koppman Wise*
Elul 16	Ada Edleman
	Dave Greenspan
	Rene Kluk
	Joe A Novich*

Kaddish will be read on September 20

Elul 17	Mrs Abe (Pearl) Lewis*
Elul 18	Louis Harelik
	Mrs Ben (Fannie T) Kaplan*
	Nettie Marcus
Elul 20	Pearl Jacobson*
	Johanna Levy*
Elul 21	Charles Harris*
Elul 22	Mollie Feldt*
	Morris C Kleiman*
	Myron Rubel
Elul 23	Gerald Robert Smith*

Kaddish will be read on September 27

Elul 25	Morris Chernoff*
	Virginia Perry
	Rae Trustman*
	Zell Tobolowsky Wizig*
Elul 26	I Diamond*
	Ronie Hoppenstein*
	Edith (Sandy) Sacks
Elul 27	Mrs I J Gollob*
Elul 28	Java Alonzo Howeth
	Sarah Jacobson
	Meyer Koppman*
	Sam Schaeviz
	Ellen Schwartz
	Micheal Stewart
Tishrei 1	Jake Sampson