

# The Ten Days – A Pep Talk

By HaRav Ariel Bar Tzadok

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*Another Roller Coaster Year... This is the best way I can describe what we can expect for this New Year 5770 that I pray has come upon us all in peace.*

*I know of many who have had dreams and premonitions of what the New Year will hold, but I am not one who believes in dreams and premonitions. All too many people see all too many things, all too much of which never materializes. The reasons for this are many and need not be enumerated.*

*What we need to emphasize is that while there very well may be special individuals out there who have earned the ability to gaze into Heaven; their visions are not for public dissemination. Therefore, cast aside all rumors and stories you may hear from sources familiar or strange. If someone has indeed seen something or has been given some kind of a message, rest assured the individual will come forward personally to deliver it. There will be no rumor or innuendo about it. Still, whether or not such words will come to fruition, only time will tell.*

*Prophecy will indeed return before the coming of Mashiah, this does appear to be the view of our Sages. Yet, we have not yet achieved this lofty goal. No one has come forward in the Name of HaShem with a message for the entire Jewish nation. This and this alone is prophecy. It will always begin with the words, "Koh Amar HaShem" (thus says HaShem). I have a personal "feeling," that as the Kabbalah teaches us that the klipah (husk) always comes before the peri (fruit), so too will Nevuah Sheker (false prophecy) come before the Nevuah Emet (true prophecy). Maybe this is what we are seeing now in the numerous rumors and sayings that proliferate over the internet and by word of mouth.*

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*Let us stay focused on the here and now and watch our every step. By keeping our eye on the future we lose sight of the present. When we do this we always trip up and fall. There is never any excuse for this. We must avoid the dangers of trying to become so heavenly minded that we become no earthly good.*

*One can add on to one's religiosity all one wants; one can become more and more ethnically religious if one feels that this makes one closer to G-d; but never should one allow oneself to become deceived into thinking that because one is now more ethnically Jewish that somehow one has been transformed into actually being closer to G-d. Spirituality and ethnicity are often mutually exclusive.*



G-d is not impressed with statements of ethnicity. Heaven is impressed on the other hand with statements of humanity. So instead of embracing cultural accoutrements that make you think that you are more religious, try acting more and more human, fulfilling the Laws of Torah that regulate our relationships with fellow human beings. These alone make us more human. These alone are what impress Heaven. These alone are what make us truly religious.

Heaven did not put us here on Earth to be religious. G-d put us here on Earth to be human. G-d did not give us His Torah to teach us how to be religious. HaShem gave us His Torah to teach us how to be fully human. Throughout the Torah there is no word that we can define as religion or religious. Such concepts are foreign to Torah. Torah is about mitzvot. Mitzvot are things that we do. The things that we do define for us who we are. Yes, we are defined by our actions, not by our thoughts or intentions.

There is an old saying, “the road to Hell is paved with the best intentions.” Intentions are what you desire to do. Mitzvot are what you actually do. Remember, Yom Kippur is very close. Yom Kippur atones for those things that we have “screwed up” between us and G-d. G-d knows how confused we mortal humans are. When we confess to Heaven our lack of clarity and the actions that have come forth because of it; Heaven is sympathetic and forgives.

Yom Kippur atones for us when we repent of “screwing up” our relationship with G-d. Yom Kippur does not atone for us when we “screw up” our relationships with each other. (Mitzvot Beyn Adam L’Makom Yom Kippur Mikhaper, Mitzvot Beyn Adam L’Havero Yom Kippur Lo Mikhaper).

When we “screw up” with one another, by acting less than human, Yom Kippur does not atone, Heaven does not forgive. The great rule is what we “screw up” we have to “unscrew.” Torah teaches us to be a “screwdriver.” We can choose to make things nice and tight and work properly, or we can choose to disregard the proper repair, allow things to become unstable and to eventually break. Yes, repairing life is not all too different from repairing an appliance. All one has to do is have the right tools, the right parts and follow the right directions. Then, and only then, everything will operate correctly.

In life, we have the right tools: the human heart and the human mind; we have the right parts: our abilities to materialize intentions into deeds; and we have the right directions, Torah. When we use all of these in proper combination; we can actually and realistically fix whatever is broken in our lives.

Do not go looking to Heaven for miracles, to magically make all your problems go away. You have a great deal of work ahead of you. It will be hard work and it will take a lot out of you. But so what? This is what is necessary. This is what each of us has to do.

The Ba’al Shem Tov long ago revealed a profound secret. He said that each of us has a spark of the Mashiah within us. Before we can expect to bring Mashiah to world, we must first actualize the spark of Mashiah within each of us personally. Mashiah is said to be the first complete human being, rectified of all our human frailties. While we may never individually accomplish such a level of human perfection, we can still nevertheless try. We have Torah to guide us how to become fully human. Torah has shown us the way how we are supposed to act as members of the human race and as members of Am Yisrael.

Rather than talk the part or dress the part; it is time that we acted the part. You are not a good Jew because you dress like one; you are a good Jew because you act like one, not just towards G-d but more so towards our fellow human beings, Jews and non-Jews alike.