



## HIGH HOLIDAYS 2024/5785

### **“Remembering 5784” Erev Rosh Hashanah Sermon, 5785/2024 Rabba Kaya Stern-Kaufman**

Tonight we begin a journey of memory. Rosh Hashanah- referred to in the Talmud as Yom Hazikaron- the Day of Remembering, demands that we look back before we can set forth into the new year. It is the holy work of both personal and collective accounting. It is the ground from which we can make the needed repairs in all of our relationships.

And yet, how challenged we are this year. How painful it is to look back at the trauma and pain of this past year. It was almost exactly one year ago, on Sh'mini Atzeret that our world was irrevocably changed. From that moment on instead of magnifying God's name, as we recite in every kaddish prayer, pain and suffering were magnified throughout the entire year.

Difficult as it is, it is our duty to remember, for in remembering, we connect a thread of life to all those souls whose lives have been taken.

I'd like to share a poem with you, written by Rabbi Rina Levanon who lives in Kibbutz Kfar Blum, located on the northern front line. It is titled:  
Remember.

We remember our brothers and sisters, the loyal and faithful,  
the brave and courageous,  
whom we lost amidst the horrors of war.  
We remember the shining eyes, the warm embrace, the  
confident heart,  
the photo albums, the life stories, the homes built with great



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effort and burned in an instant.

We remember the loving families, the beauty, the hope,  
the eyes that look upon us with trust.

May the souls of those who have left us be bound up in the  
bond of life,

and their memory be connected to us by a thin thread of life,  
like a bouquet of wildflowers and rainwater...

golden puddles, almond trees,

oleanders and mulberries,

laughter carried on the flight of swings,

a beating heart, tenderness, and compassion.

May our souls be connected to theirs in deep memory and  
gratitude,

and may we choose life.

We remember

and we choose life.

In the gentle hand extended,

in the thin ray of dawn,

in the sprouting stem,

in the breath of the earth.

This past Hebrew year was 5784 is expressed by the Hebrew letters Tav, Shin, Peh, Dalet. If we were to read these 4 letters as a word it would be: Tashpad. We do have a tradition to consider the meaning of the year's letters as a kind of forecast for the year. I don't usually pay much attention to this kind of Jewish soothsaying but this past year it was hard to ignore. The word Tashpad in Hebrew means to skewer or to spear. It is an image of aggression and warfare. Tonight, as we move into a new year, let us leave those letters and those images behind. This new year the letters that make up 5785 are Tav, Shin, Peh, Hei. The root of this word is *Safah* which



means language, and the full word, Tav, Shin, Peh, Hei. means, “You Will Speak.”

Dear God, Dear humanity, We pray that this new year will bring us the gifts of noble speech. May we lay down our spears and elevate language to resolve our conflicts, to open up new pathways for redemptive possibilities. May we use speech to magnify holiness, to build connections between all people, to facilitate healing and reconciliation. May this new year, Tav, Shin, Peh, Hei, TaSHPAH - 5785 bring us all the blessing of peace.  
Ken Yehi Ratzon.