

THE TRIBE WEEKLY

ROSH HASHANA

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We now call upon the Judge: Our Father, Our King



**BATSHEVA
WOLF**

Secondary and Youth
Education Manager
of Tribe

Imagine the following scenario. As you walk into your house from school one day, you notice a letter on the doormat addressed to you. You open it and as you skim the letter, your eyes widen. You have been charged with a crime and have to appear in court the next day. You start trembling. The whole evening is spent asking people for advice; everyone tells you that a no-show is not an option. They also tell you that first impressions matter, so you'd better dress smartly. So, the next morning you get up, get dressed in your finest and go. You are shaking, sweating, nervous like you have never been before. As you stand on trial, you beg them to see the truth, to judge you favourably and to let you go free. And even after you walk out, waiting for the jury to rule, you are white as a sheet, unable to shake the fear and anxiety of this ordeal.

Can you feel the fear? Now let me ask you: how is Rosh Hashana different?

Rosh Hashana is the day on which we are judged. Whether we will live, be healthy, be provided for depends on this day. This reality should move us, perhaps even make us shake in our boots. Yet, Rosh Hashana is

a *chag*, a festival. We celebrate by wearing clothes that befit a happy day, eating foods that befit a king, not a potential criminal. Why do we show all these signs of celebration as opposed to signs of worry?

On Rosh Hashana we say the prayer *Avinu Malkenu* - Our Father, our King. In that prayer, we plead for all the things we want for the year ahead: health, happiness, peace, forgiveness, livelihood. We plead for our lives. Yet, the prayer starts with the words, "our Father". Whereas in a normal court you stand in front of a judge and jury that you do not know, on Rosh Hashana we stand in front of our Father, Who has our best interests in mind. The fear that you feel in a normal court can disappear when it comes to God, our Father. He loves us and only does what is best for us (even when that is sometimes hard to see). Whereas in a normal court a no-show is not an option, and your dress is based on fear of making the wrong impression, on Rosh Hashana, showing up is about showing God how much we care and how good we are, and the way we dress is a sign of confidence in a positive outcome.

Rosh Hashana is not just about us. It is about our relationship with God. And that relationship is not just defined by fear. Quite the opposite: it is shaped by love and trust. At the beginning of the year, this is what we celebrate.

