



# TESHUVA ON OUR DREAMS

September and October have different religious associations in people's minds. For most Jews it is the time for the High Holidays — Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur always fall out during the early fall months. But for most Americans, there is a different association: baseball. In America's Cathedral, in baseball stadiums throughout the country, October is baseball playoffs time. During a recent trip visiting the Jewish community in Milwaukee, I found myself thinking about both.

On my visit, I had the opportunity to meet with Bud Selig, former commissioner of Major League Baseball and past owner of the Milwaukee Brewers. Mr. Selig told me how proud he was to be the first Jewish commissioner of baseball and how the game reflects and impacts American society. While discussing

the history of segregation in the United States, he told me a moving story about his old friend Hank Aaron, the famed home run hitter. Selig and Aaron were once walking home late one night reminiscing about their respective childhoods. "Who could've dreamed," Aaron told Selig, "when we were kids that some day I was going to break the most famous record in sports and you were going to be the ninth commissioner in baseball." Mr. Aaron was from a poor town in Alabama — as a child he could not even afford baseball equipment. Mr. Selig was a child of a Romanian immigrant. Mr. Aaron and Mr. Selig both had very modest beginnings, but as they progressed in life so did their dreams.

My rebbe, Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, once noted that there is a special responsibility to do teshuva during

Yomim Noraim. What makes the teshuva during this time of year, he asked, any different than the responsibility to do teshuva the rest of year? Surely, if you do something wrong it should be addressed immediately — we don't wait to better ourselves just before Yomim Noraim. There are two types of teshuva, Rav Aharon explained. One teshuva, the teshuva of the rest of the year, is focused on whether or not we are actualizing our dreams. We begin with goals, and we spend the rest of the year trying to reach and actualize those goals. During Yomim Noraim, we do teshuva on the goals themselves. We ask ourselves, where are we trying to reach, what are we trying to become? On Yomim Noraim we do teshuva on our dreams.

The Talmud (*Rosh Hashana* 10b) notes that Rosh Hashana is the day

when Yosef was freed from prison. As he wallowed in incarceration, his fortuitous interpretation of dreams eventually led to his leadership of Pharaoh's Egypt. This is more than a calendric coincidence. Yosef descended when he focused on his youthful dreams of majesty, but ascended when he attributed his success to God and began to use his gifts in the service of others. At the heart of Rosh Hashana is the question of our personal actualization — do we have the right dreams? Are we dreaming of others submitting themselves to us or how we can submit ourselves in service to others?

Are we dreaming of our own greatness or creating opportunities to spread the greatness of God?

And that is what Hank Aaron's dream taught me. Everyone dreams in their youth of how their life will unfold. We can spend our entire lives measuring ourselves based on our childhood dreams or we can revisit and reimagine the dreams themselves. This was the power of Yosef's dreams. As a child, he dreamed of his own power. Yet he only rose to power when he began to dream for others. This form of teshuva is much more profound than simply fixing past mistakes as it cuts to the core of our

very character and aspirations. Life has a way of creating perspective and clarifying one's priorities. Teshuva on our dreams means teshuva on how we define success and experience true happiness. The Yamim Noraim create an opportunity for us to pause and consider these larger questions, and as such give us the opportunity to find greater meaning and inner joy.

Our dreams must evolve and it is on Yomim Noraim that we do teshuva on our aspirations. It's not that we dream bigger, but that we dream deeper. And we dream new dreams of what we can become.

**CORE TORAH VALUES**

Yeshiva University is a unique ecosystem of educational institutions and resources that prepares the next generation of leaders with Jewish values and market-ready skills to achieve great success in their personal and professional lives, endowing them with both the will and wherewithal to transform the Jewish world and broader society for the better.

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**TORAT EMET**  
אמת  
TRUTH

We believe in truth, and humanity's ability to discover it.

The pursuit of truth has always been the driving force behind advances in human understanding, from Socrates' wanderings through the streets of Athens to the innovations of the Industrial Revolution. People of faith, who believe in a divine author of Creation, believe that the act of discovery is sacred, whether in the realm of philosophy, physics, economics or the study of the human mind.

The Jewish people in particular affirm that beginning with the Revelation of the Torah at Mount Sinai, God entrusted eternal teachings and values to us that we must cherish and study diligently above all else, for they represent the terms of the special covenant that God made with us. All people, regardless of their faith background, should value the accumulation of knowledge because it is the way to truth and a prerequisite to human growth.

**TORAT CHAIM**  
חיים  
LIFE

We believe in bringing values to life.

Jewish thought asserts that truth is made available to human beings not simply so that they can marvel at it but also so that they can use it. Students studying literature, computer science, law, psychology or anything else are expected to take what they learn and implement it within their own lives as well as apply it to the real world around them.

When people see a problem that needs addressing, their responsibility is to draw upon the truths they uncovered during their studies in finding a solution. They must live truth in the real world, not simply study it in the classroom.

**TORAT ADAM**  
אדם  
INFINITE HUMAN WORTH

We believe in the infinite worth of each and every human being.

Judaic tradition first introduced to the world the radical proposition that each individual is created in the divine image and accordingly possesses incalculable worth and value.

The unique talents and skills each individual possesses are a reflection of this divine image, and it is therefore a sacred task to hone and develop them. The vast expansive human diversity that results from this process is not a challenge but a blessing. Each of us has our own path to greatness.

**TORAT CHESED**  
חסד  
COMPASSION

We believe in the responsibility to reach out to others in compassion.

Even as we recognize the opportunities of human diversity, Jewish tradition emphasizes the importance of common obligations. In particular, every human being is given the same responsibility to use his or her unique gifts in the service of others; to care for their fellow human beings; to reach out to them in thoughtfulness, kindness and sensitivity; and to form a connected community.

**TORAT ZION**  
ציון  
REDEMPTION

We believe that humanity's purpose is to transform our world for the better and move history forward.

In Jewish thought, the concept of redemption represents the conviction that while we live in an imperfect world, we have a responsibility to strive toward its perfection. Regardless of a person's personal convictions about whether social perfection is attainable or even definable, it is the act of working toward it that gives our lives meaning and purpose. This common striving is an endeavor that brings all of humanity together.

The Jewish people's task to build up the land of Israel into an inspiring model society represents this effort in microcosm. But it is part of a larger project that includes all of humankind. If the arc of the moral universe bends toward justice, then redemption represents our responsibility to work together in the service of God to move history forward.



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