

*May you be inscribed and sealed*

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*Sometimes even the corniest of old jokes has a profound lesson to teach us.*

*“How many psychologists does it take to change a light bulb?”*

*“Just one. But he has to be willing to change!”*

*Willingness to change is a rare trait among humans. People are often frightened of anything new and tend to stick to the status quo even if it keeps them in a rut.*

*Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, in many ways is to inspire a willingness to change.*

*Quoting Ecclesiastes: “For no man is perfect in this world, doing only good and never sinning”, the central message of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur for the Jew is that we all need to improve, we all need to change.*

*It would be good for us to embrace our Judeo-Christian heritage and realize that this is a central message for us as well.*

*In a nutshell, Rosh Hashanah celebrates the birthday of humankind, the day on which God created Adam and Eve. It’s a time when God’s people reaffirm their desire to serve God every day, and God is proclaimed as the one and true King.*

*At the same time, it’s a time when God reviews the status of His creation and determines if each person merits another year in this world. On Rosh Hashanah, everyone is judged by God based on his or her actions during the previous year. The resulting judgment is inscribed by God and a person’s future is determined for the following year. Though that judgment is inscribed, it is not yet sealed and can still be changed for another ten days. God waits until Yom Kippur to seal the book for the year. The ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is the time for soul-searching and an opportunity to change personal judgment for the better.*

*How can a person change their judgment for the better? According to the teachings, God looks chiefly at three areas during these ten days: Teshuvah (repentance), Tefillah (prayer), and Tzadaka (charity). By doing teshuvah with true regret for the past and commitment for the future, a person can improve his judgment before it is sealed on Yom Kippur. Similarly, by praying with greater concentration before God, and by giving charity with the proper spirit, one can also upgrade one’s status. A combination of repentance, prayer, and charity can improve one’s standing with God.*

*On the first night of Rosh Hashanah, a special greeting is used, "May you be inscribed and sealed for a good year." A Jewish friend shared, “Every time we wish each other a Happy and Sweet New Year, we are really saying, "I hope that you are successful in your attempts to change yourself and improve yourself in the coming year."*

*It is in that spirit that I wish each of you a Happy and Sweet New Year! May you all be inscribed and sealed for a good year.*

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