

# A Holiday for Mankind

by Rabbi Reuven Mann

One of the most significant aspects of Rosh Hashana is its unique prayers. What do Jews pray for on their New Year celebration?

Most people would imagine that, given the awesomeness of the moment—when we appear before the Creator for judgement—our supplications would focus exclusively on our personal well-being and that of family and close ones.

But that is not the case. Our High Holiday prayers, which some Christian theologians have described as “noble,” concentrate on the most sublime matters. “And so too, O Hashem, our God, instill Your awe upon all Your works and Your dread upon all that You have created. Let all works revere You and all creatures prostrate themselves before You. Let them all become a single society, to do Your will wholeheartedly.”

The main theme of Rosh Hashana is the coronation of Hashem as the King of the Universe. It’s ironic that we are petitioning for the Creator to become Sovereign of the world. The notion of humans praying *for* G-d is absurd, even blasphemous. (Who would we address such a prayer to?)

Still, we *do* pray that Hashem should emerge as the world’s Ruler. And we know He doesn’t need our help to become the Master of Mankind. However, His “desire” is that we humans should acknowledge Him as a result of our own understanding and free will. He will not impose Himself on the world.

Therefore, we pray that Hashem should orchestrate the earth-shattering events that the world’s inhabitants will take to heart and proclaim as one that He alone is the Being we must answer to.

The second theme of Rosh Hashana is Divine Judgment. “...It is true that You alone are the One who judges, proves, knows, and bears witness...Like a shepherd tending his flock, making sheep pass under his staff, so shall you cause to pass, count, calculate, and consider the soul of all the living; and You shall apportion the fixed needs of all Your creatures and inscribe their verdict.”

This great “accounting” is not limited to the Jews. On this day, *all* of G-d’s creations come under his scrutiny, Jews as well as gentiles. And our prayer is that *all* people of every race and background will unite in accepting the Kingship of Heaven.

Thus, I believe that Rosh Hashana is the most universal Jewish holiday, when we pray for *Tikkun Olam*, mending and perfecting the world. We want to inspire all of mankind to renounce hatred and affirm the dignity of all people, who are created in the image of G-d.

I therefore respectfully affirm that you don't have to be Jewish to acknowledge and experience the holiness of Rosh Hashana. All who have been created must recognize their Creator. We must all humble ourselves before Him and resolve to live in a way that brings honor to His Name.

On a purely practical level, all of us, Jew and gentile alike, should be aware that we are being judged, and our fate for the coming year is being determined. Thus, none of us should presume that we have nothing to fear or be concerned about.

We need to look within, examine our deeds, and make amends to those whom we may have offended. This should be a time of repentance and determination to raise our existence to a higher level.

May the Jewish people lead the way, setting the example of wise and compassionate behavior that will inspire the world to follow suit. That is truly our mission as a "Kingdom of Priests and Holy Nation." Shana tova to all.

Shabbat shalom v'shana tova.

Dear Friends,

In this time of social isolation, we should seek ways to avoid boredom by staying occupied with meaningful activity. The world of virtual reality allows us to stay in touch with friends and attend all kinds of classes available online.

But that can only take you so far. Comes Shabbat and Yom Tov, and you need books, especially on the parsha. I personally recommend *Eternally Yours on Genesis* <http://bit.ly/EY-Genesis> and *Exodus* <http://bit.ly/EY-Exodus>, and my newest one on *Numbers* <http://bit.ly/EY-Numbers2>. They are easy to read, interesting, and thought-provoking conversation starters. I am especially interested in your feedback and hope you can write a brief review and post it on Amazon.