

Barrett Brown
High Holidays 2016

Rabbi Franklin – Make Our Days Fresh as They Once Were

The High Holy Days are early this year, the earliest they will ever be. Even if they were late – they are never “on time!” – we would still anticipate their arrival with mixed feelings. Hope comes with the opportunity to do things differently next year from the way we have done them before; we celebrate a new beginning. But it’s possible that we may be less than thrilled with the arrival of the New Year; we may be concerned that things will be the same as before, not better (though hopefully not worse).

Each time we return the Torah Scroll to the Ark after hearing its message, we conclude with the hopeful words *haddesh yameinu k’kedem*. This is often translated as “renew our days as of old.” In other words, “make our days as good they used to be.”

Whenever I sing those words, I hear my wise sociology professor at Yeshiva University, Nathan Goldberg, who reminded us repeatedly: “Boys, the good old days weren’t so good!”

What then do we make of these optimistic but unrealistic words? My colleagues in the Rabbinical Assembly, who prepared the translations and commentaries in our new High Holy Day prayer book, *Mahzor Lev Shalem*, addressed this question both in their new translation and in their sidebar notes.

They commented that these words “should not be seen as a plea for restoration of a formerly perfect condition; we were never perfect.” Just like Professor Goldberg said!

The *mahzor’s* new translation is helpful. It reads: “make our days seem fresh, as they once were.”

All of us remember times when our worlds looked fresh, and we were bursting with optimism and possibilities abounded. The *mahzor’s* commentary sees this prayer as “a plea for resilience, for the ability to renew ourselves after moments of crisis and dislocation.” When we recite the words *Hadesh yameinu k’kedem*, we seek to recapture that positive spirit, and not be weighed down by the bumps in the road we have encountered; we pray for resilience as long as we are alive.

As we approach the High Holy Days, Anne and Batya join me in wishing you and all your loved ones a year of resilience and renewed optimism. May the year ahead be filled with bountiful joy and blessings.

Hadesh Yameinu K’kedem – Make our days always seem fresh and full of possibilities!

L’shanah Tovah!

Wayne M. Franklin, Rabbi