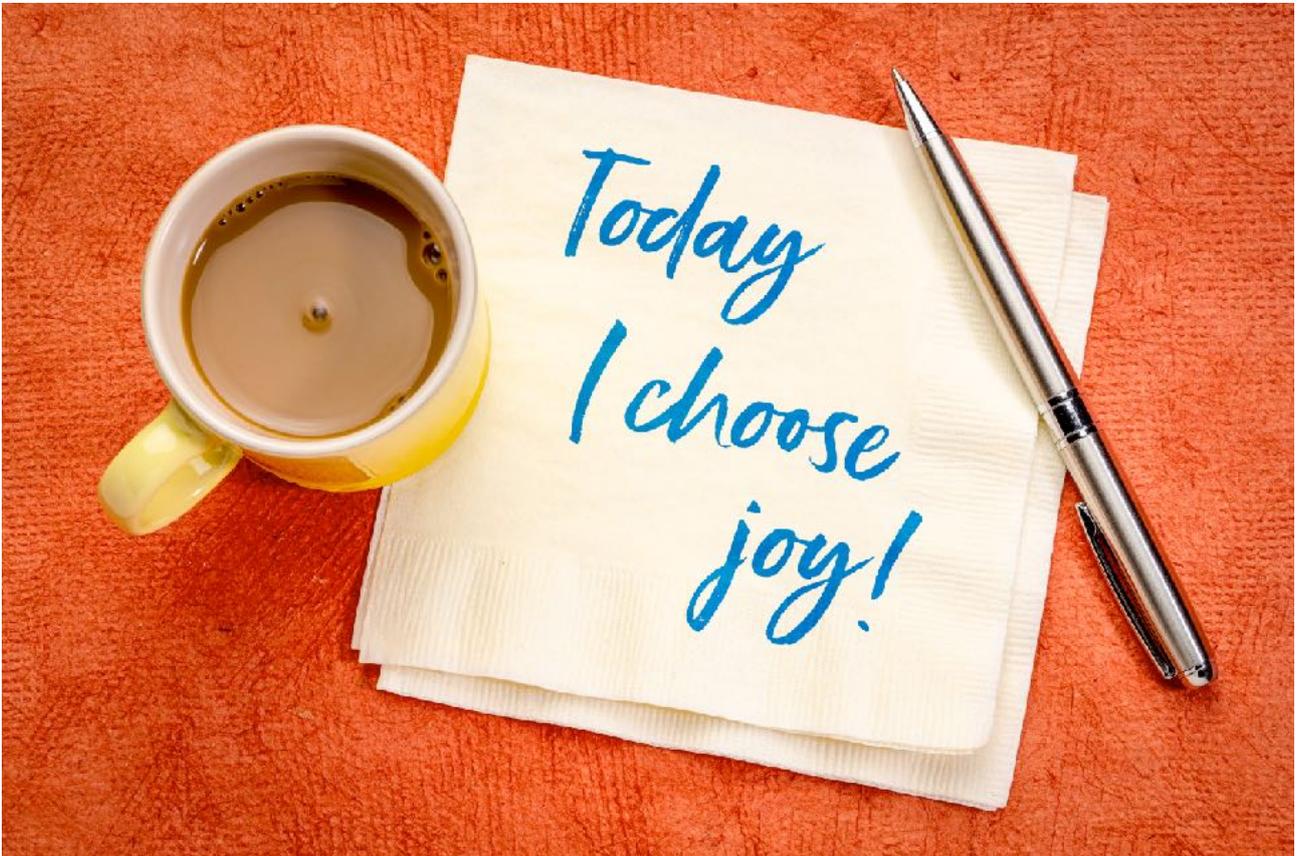


JOURNAL JOTS FOR TISHREI



G-d is not only the creator of heaven and earth. G-d is also the One “who created delight and joy.”¹

לחיות בשמחה

LIVE JOYFULLY

¹ Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Earth Is The Lord's*

When we're feeling joy there's only the moment of joy, and we take it in fully. We tend to experience more, and are newly attuned to the small, everyday flashes of beauty and grace that populate our lives. We suddenly notice the loveliness of the flowers on the side of the road, the crisp sweetness of an apple, the kindness paid to us by someone we encounter briefly. In joy, we feel more sensitized, more awake, more alive. And it's that sensitivity, that openness, that situating oneself entirely in the present moment that opens us also to the transcendent, the holy, to the sacred stream of life that flows through us, connects us, surrounds us.

And yet, as Rebbe Nachman of Breslov has said, "Finding true joy is the hardest of all spiritual tasks."²

Rabbi Alan Lew tells us, "This concatenation of ritual -- this dance that begins on Tisha b'Av and ends on Sukkot, that begins with the mournful collapse of a house and ends with the joyful collapse of a house, this intentional spasm that awakens us and carries us through death and back to life again -- stands for the journey the soul is always on."³ It's an intense dance and one we've been in for well over a month. The intensity, the passion, the heaviness, the *kavod*⁴ has been getting heavier and heavier. If it were to continue any longer we would collapse from the weight of it all. But we are now on the brink of the climax of this dance - a time in which the Sages call "the season of our joy." It is our hope and our prayer that these Journal Jots may stir your soul into living more fully in the delight and joy our Abba created for us, remembering always - joy is precious to G-d.

Free me, G-d. Breathe a new spirit into me. Give me strength. Give me patience. Give me hope. Be with me. Lead me back to joy, back to love, back to life, back to you. Amen.⁵

TISHREI - 1 *Rosh HaShanah*

[On Rosh Hashanah]... we are face to face with a solemn joy. A strange and special mood that is at once profound and exalted, deep and high, takes over. As the service begins, the sense of expectancy grows. Suddenly there is a triumphant shout of *Hamelech!* "O King!" *Avinu Malkenu*, "Our [Father], Our King" becomes a vigorous prayer.

~ Rabbi Arthur O. Waskow, *Seasons Of Our Joy*

TISHREI - 2

The sense of sorrow, fear, and awe become mixed with joy. Even as we face our transgressions, we can feel joy; joy in knowing there is a Judge who cares about transgressions, a Justice to which we are responsible in the first place. What would our world be like if there were no justice in it? And what would our world be like if there were only strict justice in it, no forbearance, mercy, or compassion?

~ ibid

² Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg, *Yom Kippur's Surprising Lessons About Joy*

³ Rabbi Alan Lew, *This Is Real And You Are Completely Unprepared: The Days of Awe As A Journey of Transformation*

⁴ *kavod* - glory, heaviness, honor

⁵ Naomi Levy, *Talking to G-d*

TISHREI - 3

People imagine a place of Godliness as a place for seriousness, a solemn place, a place that fills you with trepidation. The fact is, where there is G-d, there is joy.

~ The Lubavitcher Rebbe

TISHREI - 4

Moments come when the heart dances in the light. So much more than the experience of fun or even happiness, joy erupts when the inner sphere scintillates in its completeness. An experience touches us to the septs of our souls, and in that moment we are graced with a vision - if only fleetingly - of the flawless wholeness and perfection of it all. Then the heart fills and flows over, even amid the brokenness of this world.

~ Alan Morinis, *Every Day, Holy Day*

TISHREI - 5

When we speak of joy here, we are not speaking of fun. Joy is a deep release of the soul, and it includes death and pain. Joy is any feeling fully felt, any experience we give our whole being to. We are conditioned to choose pleasure and to reject pain, but the truth is, any moment of our life fully inhabited, any feeling fully felt, any immersion in the full depth of life, can be the source of deep joy.

~ Alan Lew, *This Is Real and You Are Completely Unprepared: The Days of Awe as a Journey*

TISHREI - 6

Happiness is about a lifetime but joy lives in the moment. Happiness tends to be a cool emotion, but joy makes you want to dance and sing. It's hard to feel happy in the midst of uncertainty. But you can still feel joy. King David in the Psalms spoke of danger, fear, dejection, sometimes even despair, but his songs usually end in the major key

~ Rabbi Sacks, *The Deep Power Of Joy*

TISHREI - 7

Tears best express the sorrow of the person who realizes he has sinned as well as the joy he feels when he accomplishes teshuvah... The agony of sin and the joy of atonement are two sides of the same coin... Atonement gives rise to "rivers of water" because it reverses sadness and turns it into joy.

~ Pinchas Stopler, *Living Beyond Time*

TISHREI - 8

Rabbeinu Yonah teaches in Sha'arei Teshuvah (4:8) that the joy of the ba'al teshuvah⁶ cannot be separated from teshuvah itself. Joy is not simply an added dimension; it is an integral part of teshuvah.

~ ibid

TISHREI - 9

Earthly pleasures and satisfaction bring many good feelings, but joy comes from a higher source. Because joy is a spiritual quality, it can arise independent of the worldly circumstances that happen to be present in someone's life at any given moment. And so the songbird of joy is ready to sing within a person who is rich or poor, healthy or ailing, captive or free, as long as it is fed a diet of spiritual seeds.

~ Alan Morinis, *Every Day, Holy Day*

⁶ ba'al teshuvah - one who returns to faith in G-d

TISHREI- 10 *Yom Kippur*

On the eve of the holy day [Yom Kippur], just before the plaintive notes of Kol Nidre, the cantor chants these words from the psalms: “Light is sown for the righteous, radiance and joy for the pure of heart” [Ps.97;11]. Thus, at the outset of this difficult and demanding day, we are assured that the purpose of our efforts is not misery and self-abasement but a sense of joyous renewal, light and inner peace. And a beautiful piyyut (religious poem) sung at the conclusion of Yom Kippur is called “Lech B’simcha -- Go Forth in Gladness”

~ Rabbi Janet Marder, *Dancing For Joy On Yom Kippur*

TISHREI - 11

Always remember: joy is not merely incidental to your spiritual quest. It is vital.

~ Rebbe Nachman of Breslov

TISHREI - 12

Heaven and earth, man and woman, soul and body - all are opposites. They aren't always opposites; there are times they influence each other positively, and there are times they reach total unity. In all connections of opposites there is joy, and it is the place and essence of joy. Anywhere joy is found there is connection or unity.

~ Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe

TISHREI - 13

We visualize life as but a means for joy and pleasure - as merely the medium through which to experience those fulfillment. We talk about things “worth living for,” yet in our superficial view of life, we fail to appreciate the most profound joy of all: life itself.

~ Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz

TISHREI - 14

People believe that only fools are optimists. But the opposite is true.

Precisely because we understand how desperate the situation really is, how helpless we are, and how impossible the challenge, that itself tells us how great a G-d we have - a G-d who can lift us high beyond the natural order and transform the most ominous darkness into brilliant good.

The greater a realist you are, the greater your joy.

~ Tzvi Freeman, *Wisdom To Heal The Earth*

TISHREI - 15 *Sukkot Day 1*

This special joy we feel at Sukkot is a...special joy...precisely the joy of being stripped naked, the joy of being flush with life, the joy of having nothing between our skin and the wind and the starlight, nothing between us and the world...we sit flush with the world, in a “house” that calls attention to the fact that it gives us no shelter.

~ Alan Lew, *This Is Real and You Are Completely Unprepared: The Days of Awe as a Journey*

TISHREI - 16 *Sukkot Day 2*

Sitting in the sukkah is a chance to make the conscious choice of inhabiting joy.

~ Rabbi Rachel Barenblat, *Joy*

TISHREI - 17 *Sukkot Day 3*

Sukkot decodes for us the secret of joy. Joy doesn't come from great houses of brick or stone; it doesn't come from what we shut out but from what we let in. Joy comes from a roof open to heaven, a door open to guests, and a heart open to thanksgiving.

~ Rabbi Sacks

TISHREI- 18 *Sukkot Day 4*

The joy of Sukkot reflects maturity.

~ Rabbi Irving Greenberg, *The Jewish Way: Living The Holidays*

TISHREI - 19 *Sukkot Day 5*

The Succoth festival restores the soul's wholesome sense of joy in life, and, in fact, completes the process of repentance and atonement.

~ Rav Kook

TISHREI - 20 *Sukkot Day 6*

There is no better way to embrace our place in the larger universe than leaving our secure dwellings and going outside into whatever the weather is (as long as it's safe!) and embracing it as a reality beyond our control. This letting go of our capacity to control everything and moving into the world with confidence is definitely a potential source of great joy.

~ Rabbi Rachel Sabath Beit-Halachmi, PH.D, *The Climax of Sukkot*

TISHREI - 21 *Sukkot Day 7*

The joy of Sukkot isn't the joy that comes when our walls successfully manage to keep out the suffering of the world. The joy of Sukkot is the joy in knowing that, even when our walls fall down, we can still be in the presence of something transcendent and holy. In the words of the Ohev Yisrael, the Chassidic master and great-great-grandfather of Abraham Joshua Heschel:

Even though the Seed of Israel, while in Egyptian exile, suffered enormous subjugation - subjugation of the body with hard labor, with mortar and bricks, backbreaking work that shattered the body - despite this, when they were redeemed and went out from there, the essence of their joy did not come from the fact that they had left their difficult subjugation for freedom. Rather, the essence of their joy came from the fact that while they were in Egyptian exile, the holy Shekhinah [the presence of G-d] was with them. (Ohev Yisrael, Parashat Masei, p. 224)

~ Alex Braver, *Grief In A Time Of Joy*

TISHREI - 22 *Shemini Atzeret*⁷

Shemini Atzeret is the year's happiest day, a pinnacle of joy when we dwell an extra day in the sukkah to just hang out with God.

Just as white light combines the rainbow of colors, so Shemini Atzeret is a blank screen onto which we can project all the joy of all other festival days combined. A blank screen - an empty day for just being - is just the reboot that Shemini Atzeret offers.

⁷ Simchat Torah is generally celebrated on the same day as Shemini Atzeret (the eighth day) in Israel and among Reform Jewish groups. Outside of Israel many Jewish communities celebrate them as two separate days.

We can go even further. Rabbi Elliot Ginsburg teaches that by combining all the joys of the other Jewish festivals, Shemini Atzeret is the Jewish year's joy capacitor, fueling the Jewish calendar's spiritual circuit of time.

~ David Markus, *On Shemini Atzeret, Just Hand Out*

TISHREI - 23 *Simhat Torah*

We need to make the entire year a wild and joyous year of Simchat Torah. We need to dance our way to the liberation of our souls. With joy.

~ Tzvi Freeman on Simchat Torah

TISHREI - 24

Joy is not possible without an expression of gratitude and thanksgiving.

~ Kerry M. Olitzky, *Life's Daily Blessings*

TISHREI - 25

Why is it that those who hardly think of themselves are always happy, while those most self-concerned can never truly celebrate anything?

Because the more space you occupy, the less room you leave for joy.

~ *Sefer Hamaamarim* 5679, page 91, cited and elucidated in *Maamar Chayei Sarah*, 5741

TISHREI - 26

Common sense is strengthened by joy.

~ Rabbi Nachman of Breslov

TISHREI - 27

Joy lies at the very heart of worship.

~ Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, *A Passion For Truth*

TISHREI - 28

Joy is wisdom, preparation for prophecy.

~ Reb Bunam

TISHREI - 29

Tomorrow is a day potentially filled with joy - because in it is contained all the future has to offer us.

~ Kerry M. Olitzky, *Life's Daily Blessings*

TISHREI - 30

Joy is an overflowing, an explosion. Something enters a person's life for which he could never be prepared, and his tidy, defined self erupts in unbounded song, dance, and joy.

Approach the Divine with a calculated mind and there is no window for joy. Embrace the infinite, and let joy surprise you.

~ Tzvi Freeman