

Iom Kipur

The Masorti Movement in Latin America wishes our thoughts transform into words; our words into action, our actions into habits, our habits shape our character and our character control our destiny. May each of us can, at the end of these days, be reconciled with itself, humbly and committed to each other, with our religion and the "Tikkun Olam", abandoning the indifference that deviates us from the good deeds and waking up for life that dazzles in front of us.

May we are all inscribed in the Book of Life with good health and happiness.

Mario Grunebaum
President

I'll recreate a story that I read many years ago.

Some time ago I bumped into somebody whom I haven't seen for several years.

After the hugs, greetings and common questions about family, work, health, etc., he said: "The truth is that you look great, you haven't changed a bit!"

Evidently, he didn't look the same, because of what he said I realized that at least his sight was pretty bad.

In any case, I accepted the compliment for what it meant to suggest, I suppose, that I had the same belly as before, all my hair –almost all in the same color-, and so on. Let's say that I least I kept myself.

Nevertheless, in the context of this 10 sacred days that mediate between the New Hebrew Year (Rosh Hashanah) and Iom Kippur (the so called "Day of Forgiveness"), that phrase, instead of being a compliment, stays inscribed as a great failure.

Because if we're showing up before our Creator in function of an annual spiritual balance in which we believe we're being judged – and hope to be forgiven – the ideal would be that God would scrutinize and tell us "The truth is that you look great, you've changed a lot!"

The good Rabbi Bunem used to say: "I wouldn't like to switch places with our patriarch Abraham. What advantage would the Almighty have if Abraham was the blind Bunem and I was Abraham? Instead of waiting for that to happen, I think I must try to grow up a little bit to be a little more like Bunem; more than I am today."

There is a small but very illustrative detail in the Biblical text that sheds more light on this subject.

In the book of Exodus, Pharaoh asked Moses and Aaron when they first appeared before him, "Tnu lachem mophet", whose literal translation would be: "Show a portent for you." How strange! One would think that he would have asked them to show some wonder for him and the members of his court.

But Pharaoh was very clever. He knew very well that for someone to be respected, more than being able to surprise others, that person had to have the special wisdom of being able to wonder himself.

The sovereign of the mightiest empire of the moment had it very clear that the greatest power that individuals have is the power to surprise themselves. Pharaoh knew the Egyptian magicians and knew that they marveled and dominated others through their tricks.

But that who is able to do it with himself, that is another matter. Because he doesn't work with what has already been seen or with what has already been done. And because his tools are precisely those matters that have not yet being brought up to the light. That is where the most significant surprise lies, that is simply and plainly the power of being something that you have not yet been.

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The problem is, or better said, one of the problems that we have with the idea of discovering ourselves differently, is that in general we intend to modify the others, without realizing that we can barely do it ourselves.

That is why these days we should hang in the synagogues the small sign that you can see next to some ATMs: "Please check your change before leaving." Because it is worth your while and fasting to check what we do with our changes, and what we don't change for not having the energy to do it.

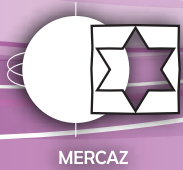
Rabbi Elimelech once asked his disciples: Do you know what is the distance between East and West? After many wrong answers and a little bit of silence he continued: "Only a turn of face."

Perhaps the worst transgression that we mortals usually make, isn't even close to the worst crime that practically all of us are guilty of, is to be able to turn around at any time, and not having the privilege of doing so.

Holy days. Days in which God invites us to take a walk.

Gmar Chatima Tovah !

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