

Erev Rosh Hashanah 5772  
What Redbull and Starbucks taught me about Rosh Hashanah  
Rabbi Michael Fel

There was not, nor will there ever be, a Waterford Crystal sphere perched on the roof of Temple Emunah in anticipation of Rosh Hashanah

There was not, nor will there ever be,  
confetti raining down on Waltham Street  
or a fireworks show over the Old Reservoir  
in honor of the first of Tishrei

Our New Year is not brought in with the sounds of noisemakers, but with the simple clear blast of the Shofar.

We are to spend the next 48 hours performing a heshbon nefesh  
An accounting of the soul

We are to consider all of our actions from the previous year:

When were we too busy to lend a helping hand or listen impatiently?

When did we say no – when a simple yes wouldn't have cost us anything?

When did we not live up to our full potential.

After seeking forgiveness from the people we have harmed, we are to then look forward and ask ourselves –

How will I be different in the year to come?

And as I look at our to-do list for the next 48 hours -

I can't help but ask – Who has time for all of this?

Nearly everything I've been taught in the past 20 years of my life tells me.

Do more - Go Faster – No need for sleep

The need for speed had led to change what and how we eat.

Perhaps that is why we now have found a way to bottle energy.

At most grocery stores you can buy something called 5 hour energy bottle

Redbull has given us wings to outrun our own bodies.

We have now even found away to package an entire meal in a little granola bar – not because its easier or more convenient and allows us to spend more time with family –

but because it remedies the need to have to sit down and eat!

Don't stop –sigue sigue – Tamshichu - whatever you do, just keep going.

Now I can understand 2000 years ago – people taking this time...

They didn't have such tight schedules – carpool, Hebrew school, violin practice, soccer meets

But us – we don't have time.

And that's the truth – we don't have time.

But if we don't stop to see where we are going – if we don't stop and reflect along the way – then we will never get to where we want to go.

About 2 years ago, Starbucks noticed that it wasn't as successful as it had been in earlier years. It was losing ground to other cafes and restaurants.

So what did Chairman and Chief Executive Howard Schultz do?

He closed every store for a few hours.

As a company, each store closed at 5:30 pm and dedicated three hours for staff training and re-education. He said, "We are passionate about our coffee. And we will revisit our standards of quality that are the foundation for the trust that our customers have in our coffee and in all of us."

Get back to basics – clean up the store – review the procedures – make sure everything is on the up and up.

Now if a multibillion dollar corporation is willing to take a time out for self reflection – don't we deserve the same?

The awareness that we need to pause every now and then to see what works and what doesn't – what needs to change - is the gift of Rosh Hashanah

And we see it subconsciously in the way we communicate with each other over the next few days.

We will be greeting each other wish shanah tovah – a good new year.

But we see that shanah tovah means much more than just new year

Letters shin nun hey also mean leshanot – to change

When we greet each other –  
we are also wishing each other good changes in the year to come.

We realize that in order to have a good year – one has to make changes to adapt to the realities of the New Year in the best way possible

I hope that we are able to make the changes in order to be home for dinner more often

I hope that we are to finally study the things that we want to learn

I hope that we are able to make the changes that enable us to be the spouse, parent, child, teacher and rabbi that we want to be.

No doubt the next 48 hours are challenging. But we do not celebrate Rosh Hashana by sitting the forest alone or in silence. We come to shul, to sit together, to learn from each other, to be inspired by each other.

I wish us success in our difficult mission of self reflection and improvement.

And I wish us all a shanah tovah – in every sense of the word.