



October 1, 2017

Dear friends of Hillcrest Jewish Center,

In August all of North America was treated to an eclipse of the sun. Anyone within the path of totality was able to see one of nature's most awe-inspiring sights - a total solar eclipse.

While I couldn't travel 12 hours south to watch the total eclipse, I was determined to get 72 % of such an awesome experience in my backyard, here in New York.

The problem was that everybody had warned me that I needed special glasses and already a week before the eclipse those special glasses were impossible to get. Then I remembered that there is something more important than nature inspiring sights, and that is good friends. So, Silvia, Ilan, Abby, Rabbi Uri, Leila, and Noah, crashed into the Baker's family eclipse party and they graciously shared their glasses.

When the eclipse was over, Gary suggested that the "day after" was probably the best day to buy special glasses to be ready for the 2024 eclipse (Gary had his glasses ready since 2010).

While I didn't buy the glasses yet, Gary's suggestion reminded me that the "day after" is usually the best day to buy whatever you will need for "that day" during the following year. Thus, we know to buy Purim costumes the day after Halloween, Hanukah cards and candles once the holiday is over, and umbrellas on a sunny day.

A few weeks ago, a congregant remarked that the High Holy Days come at a very inconvenient time. The congregant proceeded to explain that the High Holy Days are days of introspection, study, preparation, and soul searching – all worthy activities that demand time and dedication. Now, the very nature of the High Holy Days and the preceding preparations –preparing the meals, inviting guests, writing sermons, preparing classes, etc. – in addition to the fact that the Tishrei holidays coincide with the beginning of the school and shul year, make it almost impossible to focus on the above worthy endeavors of introspection, study, preparation, and soul searching.

The High Holy Days might be a most propitious time for spiritual growth, but what happens if, for whatever reason, we miss the boat, so to speak.

True, the Jewish calendar establishes particular moments for particular activities or states of mind, but actually these moments should be taken more as road marks, opportunities, and not as "too bad, too late" moments.

Let me suggest that we do have the blessing of the "the day after" and "the day after the day after." Unlike with the eclipse, we don't have to wait seven years; we can

always work on what really matters. As a matter of fact, the quiet days after Simchat Torah, after the sermons were written and delivered, after the sukkah was disassembled, after the guests left and the home was tidied up, might be the best moment for introspection, study and soul searching.

Remember that at Hillcrest Jewish Center you have an ongoing invitation to explore opportunities for Torah study, meaningful spiritual connections, and for engagement in acts of lovingkindness. And if you ask the question: Rabbi, when is the best time for all the above, the answer always will be – when you are ready!

With blessings,

Rabbi Manes Kogan