

From the Rabbi's Desk  
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(With appreciation to Rabbi Fabian Werbin, Daniela Kogan, and Joan Hausman)  
Hillcrest Jewish Center

**Finding the Blue Dot in Your Life's Journey**

**D'var Torah for the Second Morning of Rosh Hashanah**

**5780**



Everybody who uses Waze or Google Maps is familiar with the blue dot, indicating your current position. Looking for directions not knowing where you are on the map, is equivalent to ordering a car service without giving them the address where they have to pick you up.

Navigation apps work on the premise that all the time you know where you are. Lose your blue dot on the map and you are lost. Find the blue dot and you are back in business.

Apropos of blue dots and getting lost, I would like to share with you a true story that didn't happen to me, but to my good friend, Rabbi Fabian Werbin, from Congregation Beth El in Bethesda, MD.

A member of his congregation came to services one Shabbat morning. He put his phone on silent mode so it wouldn't ring on Shabbat, and placed it, together with his car and home keys, in his tallit bag. After services, while he was schmoozing with some friends, someone else, by mistake, took his tallit bag and left.

My friend's congregant felt desperate. He called his phone but to no avail. After all, he was the one who put it in silent mode. He lived alone. He could not go home in his car, and even if he went home, he could not get in. To make things

worse, my friend Rabbi Werbin doesn't have great locksmiths in his shul like we do here at Hillcrest.

Now, while he doesn't have locksmiths in his shul, my friend has a good head on his shoulders, and had an idea. Although it was Shabbat, seeing the misery of his congregant, he allowed him to access his own computer in the shul and instructed him to go to the Apple website, to log into his Apple account and then use the application "Find my Phone."

And there it was!!! A blue dot on a map. From above they could see the exact location of the house where the phone was, and they were able to find the name of the person who took it. Rabbi Werbin's congregant rushed to that address, got his phone, his keys and most important, his tallit back.

Happy ending to the story.

Truth be told, my friend's congregant, in his despair, didn't realize that he was one more link in the chain of biblical characters who "lost" and "found."

As Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin explains:

*"Adam and Eve lose their way back to Eden. Noah loses a world and finds a new one. Abraham almost loses Isaac and then finds him again. Jacob's sons deliberately lose their brother Joseph, only to find him again. When the daughter of Pharaoh finds Moses, he is a lost infant (and here is something that I never considered: Moses is the name that she gives him, which means that his original name has been lost). And while we're on the subject of lost names – the name of Cain's wife, and Noah's wife, and Abraham's mother, and Pharaoh's daughter – they must have had names, but all their names have been lost ... Job lost his children... Somewhere in history, we lost the Ten Tribes. In the year 70, we lost our independence as a nation; in 1948, we found it again. Our national anthem, Hatikvah, is about the hope for the Land that we have never lost – od lo avdah tikvateinu. Somewhere in history, we lost the pronunciation of the Four Letter Name of God Yud Hay Vav Hey. Lost and found and lost again is the story of our people.*

*We lose our loved ones to death. We lose relationships -sometimes willfully and vindictively, sometimes accidentally, with people on the path of life, through no one's fault. We lose jobs. We lose opportunities. Sometimes, we lose entire careers, and businesses, and our investments. People sometimes*

*lose their houses, which means their homes, which means their stories and their memories. Our children grow up and we lose our roles as parents of young children. We age and we lose our youth, and there is the body image that we lose and the health that we lose and the dreams that we lose.*"<sup>1</sup>

What are the potential things I can lose and how do I find them again? Who can help me in my search and whom can I help in his or her search?

Is there perhaps any benefit in letting lost things stay lost?

Many times we also lose our way in the journey of life.

I like to think of the High Holy Days as an opportunity to ponder the most important questions in life, among them, "where are we heading?"

In the past, I spoke many times about life as a journey. Rabbis, I discovered after more than 25 years in the rabbinate, have a limited number of topics they like to circle around, and this is certainly one of mine.

Where are you going, Manes? What are your values, your goals, your own life's vision statement?

The new insight I would like to offer to you today, is that pretty much like with the navigation apps, you must know first where you are in order to know where you are heading. The blue dot shows you where you are on the map. First you enter your current location, your blue dot, and only then can you begin your journey.

My friend's congregant knew he needed his keys but without the blue dot, he couldn't get them.

This coming Yom Kippur, between Mussaf and Mincha, I will be teaching like I do every year. I hope you will join me as I analyze seven short stories and weave them into a bigger one.

Please allow me to give you a preview and share a short version of the first of these stories:

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<sup>1</sup> Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin: Redeeming Lost Objects. See: [https://www.massrabbis.org/sites/default/files/uploaded\\_documents/22redeeming\\_lost\\_objects22.pdf](https://www.massrabbis.org/sites/default/files/uploaded_documents/22redeeming_lost_objects22.pdf)

*"Rabbi Shneur Zalman, the rabbi of Northern White Russia, was put in jail in Saint Petersburg. He was awaiting trial when the chief of the gendarmes entered his cell. The majestic and quiet face of the rabbi, who was so deep in meditation that he did not at first notice his visitor, suggested to the chief, a thoughtful person, what manner of man he had before him.*

*He began to converse with his prisoner and brought up a number of questions which had occurred to him in reading the Scriptures. Finally, he asked: How are we to understand that God, the all-knowing, said to Adam: "Where are you?"*

*Do you believe: answered the rabbi, that the Scriptures are eternal and that every era, every generation and every man is included in them?*

*I believe this: said the other.*

*Well then, said the rabbi, in every era, God calls to every Adam, not only to the first Adam, but to each of us" Where are you in your world? "<sup>2</sup>*

Why am I sharing this story? Because I need to know where I am in life, so that I can move forward from there.

At this time in the Jewish calendar year, I ask myself: Where are you, Manes? Where is your life's blue dot? Take stock of your life and only then begin your journey.

What are the High Holy Days if not a wonderful opportunity to ponder where we are, and where we must direct our steps in order to live more meaningful lives?

And so we pray:

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<sup>2</sup> Buber, Martin: Tales of the Hasidim. The Early Masters. Schocken Books. New York. 1947. Page 268. Buber, Martin: The Way of Man According to the Teachings of Hasidism. Vincent Stuart LTD. London. 1963

Master of the Universe: help us find the blue dot of our lives. Help us understand that we must know first where we are in order to know where we are heading. Looking at ourselves in the mirror might be a daunting proposition, but there is no other way. Enable us to access our location, to take stock, honestly, without lying to ourselves, without changing or embellishing our story. Help us see that there is only one place from where we can start our journey, and that is where we are now. Help us find our place.

May this coming year be one of meaningful journeys, of no or few "losts," and lots of "finds."

May all of us and our loved ones be blessed with a good, sweet, healthy, joyous and meaningful year. Amen.