

ONE YEAR LATER...

by Rabbi Aron Tendler

As I go to print with this week's Rabbi's Notebook I can't help but feel the loss and anger of this past year's evil. A year ago our nation was attacked and as Jews and as Americans we still mourn.

Our pain is very real. Among the dead and hurt were many of our own. So many families have made Kiddush this past year accompanied by tears, sobs, and the sound of broken hearts. So many families will sit down this Shabbos at their beautifully adorned tables and between Kiddush, Hamotzei and the dipping into honey stare at empty chairs.

Since 9/11, so many sons and daughters sit down Friday night without a father or mother's blessing, and so many parents sit down and can no longer kiss or bless their child.

Shabbos and Yom Tov are times of great joy and contentment. This Shabbos and the coming Yom Tov will still take enormous courage and emunah (belief) for those families to feel the joy and share the contentment. Likewise, this Shabbos and the coming Yom Tov will still take courage and emunah for us to feel the joy and share the contentment. Technically, we may have finished the first year of Aveylus (mourning) but all of Am Yisroel and America are still in mourning!

As a nation we have much to be thankful for. G-d has specifically shown us great love and compassion in that so many were not there and so many were able to escape. We exalt in His greatness and comfort ourselves with the knowledge of His mercy. His miracles are with us every day, evening, morning, and afternoon. Yet, as we sing his praises and hug our loved ones the tears flow even more freely for those who died in sanctification of His Name.

The stories of the survivors are theirs to tell, not mine, but the miracles are ours to share. "The Watchman Of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps!" Thank you G-d for watching over our loved ones and returning them safe to the embrace of family and friends. Yet, the pain is no less, and the anger only grows.

Make no mistake. G-d has punished Am Yisroel. Before last year's Yom Hadin - Day of Judgment - G-d gave the Destroyer permission to reign freely. The pure and the innocent were taken from us and we live our lives differently ever since. Let not the sacrifice be for naught. Look at each other and cherish the gift of each other. You and I share the same time and place because G-d so wants it to be. It His will and we must serve Him with joy.

Look at your loved ones and cherish the gift of their being. Each one is the greatest miracle of all and

we must act toward them accordingly. Speak with love and sensitivity. Blame less and forgive more. Hug as often as you can and let each one know that you are graced because of them. This Shabbos and Yom Tov think, "But for the grace of G-dâ€¦" Before Kiddush, pause and embrace the moment. Think of all the good and all the Chesed (kindness) that G-d has shown us. Look at your wife and look at your husband and see the Bashert (chosen) that was G-d's gift to you, and you alone. Have you thanked each other for simply being there to share each other's lives? So simple, yet beyond the profound. To share another's life.

Wowâ€¦

What does G-d want from us? He wants us to get beyond ourselves and find Him. We do not define right and wrong, He does. Just look at a world that attempted to redefine right and wrong. Just look at a world that wants to embrace all things, even evil. The Torah says, "And you are to eradicate the evil from your midst." If we do not, evil will cease to look like evil. Soon enough, evil will dress itself in righteousness while sanctity and goodness are vilified as evil incarnate. "I have seen a world in self-contradiction. The evil are exalted while the righteous are maligned." No, we have only seen a world of our own creation. We have created a world that disclaimed all evil. To let evil live is to embrace him. Thank you Mr. President for your moral clarity and commitment.

For most of us we will never assume our rightful places on the battlefield. Others will stand in the front lines and fight for them and for us. Yet, we are not exempt from war. Inside each of us rages the battle of our lives. Will we give into ourselves, succumb to the enemy, and fail; or, will we go beyond ourselves in search of the divine image that is within each of us?

What does G-d want from us? "To stand together before Him." He wants us to learn together and to pray together. He wants us to raise our children together and to join in each other's joys and sorrows. He wants us to love His Torah and to do His Mitzvos. G-d wants us to trust His judgments and strengthen our Emunah - especially when He tests that belief in so terrible a way.

G-d wants us to sanctify His name. He wants us to show our appreciation for our country and to pray for its safety. He wants us to respect our President and encourage the goodness and strength that is America. G-d wants us to cry with the many with whom we are joined in sorrow and offer our love and devotion as examples of our belief.

G-d wants us to do Teshuvah (repentance). He wants us to look at ourselves and to change our ways. But mostly, He wants us to forgive each other. We may not get the chance to do it later. To share but one quote, "If you want G-d to laugh tell Him what you are doing tomorrow."

This past year has been a lifetime. Thank you G-d for Your love. Give us the strength to accept and live with Your judgment.

An easy fast and a happy and healthy New Year.

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