



Two Pockets in the Time of Corona

In preparing for the High Holydays, I came across a Hasidic story that touched me. A man was making his way quickly through a local village. Along the way, he was stopped by a local who said, *“Excuse me sir, we are in need of a tenth for our minyon.”* The man said, *“I am sorry but I cannot stop. I have a very important meeting with the Baal Shem Tov!”*

When the man finally finished his journey, the Baal Shem refused to meet with him. The man could not understand why. Finally, the Baal Shem approached him and said, *“You were in such a hurry. Such a big hurry you missed it.”*

The man said, *“Missed what?”*

“Do you not understand” explained the Baal Shem *“that you were created precisely to be the tenth man in that very minyon?”*

In our hurried lives. In our lives of self-importance. In our lives that too often give nary a passing word to a stranger; even one in need of help or a simple mitzvah. In our lives filled with deep meaning, we are often clueless as to what that meaning is. Clueless, precisely because of our self-importance, our hurried sense of distraction and our lack of concern for helping others.

The High Holydays teaches us two vitally important lessons. The first is that our lives have meaning and purpose. We are here for a reason. Our life’s journey is to unveil this meaning and to discover it for ourselves. We can become confused or distracted, but we should not doubt the importance our life has to the Universe. The second lesson is that life is not about us. It is about our interconnections with others. If we are too self-absorbed, we become not only clueless as to our true purpose, we fail to become part of the process of our people to heal a world too often broken and in need of repair.

This day, this holiest of days, let us use this time to reflect on both these lessons. Tradition said it best: We were given two pockets. In one pocket is a piece of paper with the words written, *“For my sake the world was created.”* And in the other pocket, there is a piece of paper with the words written, *“I am but dust and ashes.”*

Depending upon the day, the hour, the moment, reach into your pocket and read these words. Which pocket you ask? All I can say is, choose wisely, there is a *minyonsomewhere* that needs you.

G’mar Chatimah Tova, may you be inscribed in the book of life for a happy and healthy new year.