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Forgiveness

The High Holidays

The Jewish month of Tishrei, which falls during the months of September and October on the Gregorian calendar, is the busiest time of the year for Jewish holidays. There are a total of 13 days of special religious significance, 7 of them holidays on which work is not permitted.

These holidays include the High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, Sukkoth, Shemini Atzeret, and Simchat Torah.

The High Holidays begin with the Jewish New Year called Rosh Hashanah. It is also the day on which G-d inscribes the fate of each person in the Book of Life or the Book of Death for the following year.

Rosh Hashanah also marks the beginning of a ten-day period on the Jewish calendar called the Days of Awe that focus on repentance or teshuvah. This is a time for serious introspection, a time to consider the sins of the previous year and repent before Yom Kippur.

A Fundamental Belief

The concept of forgiveness is the major underlying theme of the High Holidays. We are taught that we must ask for forgiveness both from G-d and from our fellow man. It is such a fundamental belief in Judaism that we spend 10 full days of every year seeking and granting it. While it's not always easy to acknowledge and take responsibility for one's transgressions, harder still for most is being able to forgive someone for theirs. We all know how to ask for forgiveness, but we often have trouble granting it.

So, why is it so important to be able to forgive? And how do we do it?

There is a mitzvah, a commandment, in the Torah explicitly forbidding us to seek revenge or to bear grudges (Leviticus 19:18). The Torah orders us to "not hate your brother in your heart" (ibid. 19:17) and Judaism teaches us that anger is akin to idol-worship.

Learning to forgive is a life tool that helps us regain control of a situation. In most cases, you cannot control what happens to you, but you can control how you react and handle the situation. You are no longer the victim.

NOW LIVE IT...

Before they can move on, a child needs to acknowledge and understand how a certain situation made them feel.

Once the feeling is identified, have the child express it before offering forgiveness. "Danny, I am angry that you took my toy without asking. Next time, please ask permission first. I forgive you".

Remember that forgiving is not forgetting! You are not condoning the other person's behaviour when you forgive them, you are letting go of the negative feelings so you can move on.

Be the example! Kids learn by example, and forgiveness is a skill that needs to be taught. Show your child how to forgive others by doing it yourself. Teach them that it takes courage, not weakness, to decide to forgive someone.

DID YOU KNOW?

The story of Joseph and his brothers is the bible's most famous example of a person's ability to forgive. Joseph, the youngest and most favoured of Jacob's 12 sons was left for dead and then sold into slavery by his jealous older brothers. Despite their behaviour, Joseph forgave his brothers for the evil they had inflicted upon him.

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Activity

DIY Honey Bee Cards for Rosh Hashanah



What you need:

1. Paper cut into rectangles
2. A piece of bubblewrap slightly smaller than the card
3. Non-toxic water-based paint in two shades of yellow (just add white to one dish to make it lighter)
4. A black marker
5. A paint brush
6. Your thumbs
7. Baby wipes or paper towels for clean-up



First you'll need to paint one side of your bubble wrap with the lighter shade of yellow.

Then flip the bubble wrap over and stamp it onto the center of your card. Press it down evenly, making sure that even the corners make contact with your paper. Pull it up and set your card aside to dry.



After you've made several honey-comb base cards then dip your thumb into the darker yellow paint and stamp at least two thumbprints on each card like so. These will be your bees.

After you've made as many cards as you want to, set them aside to dry.



When your cards are dry, use your black pen and add black stripes, wings and even a smile if you like to the thumb prints to make them look like little bees crawling on some delicious honey comb. Add a Rosh Hashanah greeting and you're good to go!

