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# A Business Plan For Life

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In almost every job that I have ever had, I was asked at the beginning of the year to present a business plan on what I hoped to accomplish. My supervisor often reviewed it with me and then evaluated my progress quarterly. It was a useful tool to determine and clarify what my goals and objectives were and if I was achieving them. When we greet each other on Rosh Hashanah with the famous phrase, “may you be written into the book of life,” I always think about that business plan and I feel compelled to write and present my life-plan. I figure that if I have to justify my salary to my boss, maybe I need to justify my life to the Boss of the Bosses. Each year as I celebrate the creation of the world with my family and friends, I take the opportunity to start anew, to re-create and re-build my world. I reflect on my relationship with my wife and my children, and dream about how I can enrich those relationships making them more meaningful and fulfilled. I think about how I can participate and help in the community, and contribute to *Klal Yisrael*. I work out my Torah learning goals, financial strategies, some vacation ideas, and of course how I am going to take care of my health. I write these goals down and I take them with me to shul during the holidays, and take it out from time to time during the year when I am praying. I find that it keeps me on track and lets me know if I am living up to the great blessing of my life and the people in it.

We are currently in the month of Elul, the last month of the year. This leads us to Rosh Hashanah, through Yom Kippur and culminates with Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret which is a process that prepares us for the upcoming year.

The Rabbis metaphorically compare the High Holiday period to visiting the palace of a king. On Rosh Hashanah we enter into the King’s palace, we blow the shofar, which is befitting of royalty and we awaken ourselves to the importance of the place we stand. On Yom Kippur, we are invited into the inner chambers of the King and are escorted to the King’s throne room. And in the afternoon as the Ark is opened for the Neilah service (Closing Gates) we have our private audience with the Creator of the Universe.

The Ba'al Shem Tov added to the parable, suggesting that Elul (the month preceding Rosh Hashanah), is compared to the King leaving his palace to visit us in the field. What exactly is this teaching us about the time period of Elul?

When you visit the king’s palace, the guards and the beautiful décor awe you. There is formality and structure to the palace itself and the guards and ceremonial procedures that accompany the king. However in the month of Elul, the King comes out into the field and anyone, regardless of whatever predicament they may be in, can approach the King directly, without having to justify themselves to guards or ministers, without feeling inhibited by the ceremonial procedures or the awe of the castle.

When we get to Rosh Hashanah, we are asked for our life-business plans. The books are opened. We present to the King why he should consider giving us life this year. Everything is formal from the prepared feasts to the calling out of the shofar blasts. We can work on the plan a little during the week, but there are formal procedures and of course, the Yom Kippur deadline, when the book is sealed. Elul is the time to dream your dreams. To come to an empty white board and fill it with your hopes, passions and aspirations. In business terms, it’s an informal brainstorming session.

Whenever a great project is envisioned, a host of preparations must be made before the goal can be achieved. The first step is to create a mission statement, express important values and create goals that can help you reach your ultimate potential. During the month of Elul we blow the shofar at shul every morning. This should awaken us to the incredible opportunity that we have. Elul is the time to dream your dreams, to formulate for yourself a life mission statement, to consider your family values and contemplate your unique purpose. Are you achieving meaning and fulfillment in your life? If you take time to work this out prior to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, perhaps you will recognize that you have the ultimate partner in making the business of life profitable.