



**Erev Rosh Hashanah Sermon – 5777  
I Have Plenty of Time**

**By Rabbi Pivo**

I went out, Lord.  
People were coming and going, walking and running.  
Everything was rushing: cars, truck, the street, the whole town.  
They were rushing after time, to catch up with time, to gain time.

Goodbye, excuse me, I haven't time.  
I'll come back, I can't wait, I haven't time.  
I must end this letter – I haven't time.  
I'd love to help you, but I haven't time.  
I can't accept, having no time.  
I can't think, I can't read, I'm swamped, I haven't time.  
I'd like to pray, but I haven't time.

You understand Lord, they simply haven't the time.  
The child is playing, he hasn't time right now...Later on...  
The schoolgirl has her homework to do, she hasn't time...Later on...  
The college student has his courses, and so much work...Later on...  
The young woman is at her sports, she hasn't time...Later on...  
The young couple have their house; they have to fix it up.  
They haven't the time...Later on...  
They are dying, they have no...  
Too late!...They have no more time!

And so all people run after time, Lord  
They pass through life running – hurried, hustled, overburdened, frantic, and they never get there.  
They still haven't time. In spite of all their efforts they're still short of time, of a great deal of time. Lord, you must have made a mistake in your calculations. There is a big mistake somewhere. The hours are too short, the days are too short, our lives are too short.

You who are beyond time, Lord, you smile to see us fighting it.  
And you know what you are doing,  
You make no mistakes in your distribution of time to human beings.  
You give each one time to do what you want him to.  
But we must not deface time, waste time, kill time,  
For time is a gift that you give us,  
But a perishable gift, a gift that does not keep.

Lord, I have time, I have plenty of time, all the time you gave me, the years of my life, the days of my years, the hours of my days, they are all mine, mine to fill, quietly, calmly, but to fill completely, up to the brim.

**Adapted from Michael Quoist**



Judaism is a religion of time aiming at the sanctification of time. Unlike the space-minded [person] to whom time is unvaried, iterative, homogeneous, to whom all hours are alike, quality-less, empty shells, the Bible senses the diversified character of time. There are no two hours alike. Every hour is unique and the only one given at the moment, exclusive and endlessly precious.

Judaism teaches us to be attached to holiness in time, to be attached to sacred events, to learn how to consecrate sanctuaries that emerge from the magnificent stream of a year. The Sabbaths are our great cathedrals; and our Holy of Holies is a shrine that neither the Romans nor the Germans were able to burn; a shrine that even apostasy cannot easily obliterate: the Day of Atonement. According to the ancient rabbis, it is not the observance of the Day of Atonement, but the Day itself, the “essence of the Day,” which, with [our] repentance, atones for [our] sins...

**Adapted from Abraham Joshua Heschel, The Sabbath**



I am becoming acutely aware of time. Sending our first child to college, celebrating our 20<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, hitting 50: The years, the experiences, the memories have begun to pile up for me. It is a stage of life for taking stock, of surveying the past that has brought me to this time, and which leads away from it. Heschel teaches us about time; he also teaches us that questions are more important than answers, and that the most crucial question is: What am I here for? It is easy enough to immerse ourselves in school, in jobs, in tasks. Not only easy, welcome, as we usually prefer the certainty of busyness to the quiet that may allow us, or force us, to ask ourselves our purpose.

I had a hard summer. The volunteer work I had been doing in two different rabbinic associations had begun to exhaust me. And there were health issues, including a few days in the hospital. As you can hear, my voice is not what it was, but we are working through that, I feel great and everything will be fine. I want to publicly thank the very many people at Beth Judea who have given me medical advice over the past several months; your concern and care are truly blessings; and although none of that advice came from actual physicians in our community, I still take it to heart in spirit if not in detailed application. But the mental and physical challenges of these months have changed me. Time and how I use it are now my primary concern. As the years go on my opportunities to achieve, to build, to teach, to spend time with and show love to my family, inevitably dwindle. And so, just as I have made a conscious decision to think two or three times before bringing new objects into my life, I am now also thinking carefully about the best use of time.

It is the same for all of us. Over these ten days we devote ourselves to renewal. At the beginning of this New Year, we use this time we commit ourselves to the task of healing, learning, growing and to the good use of our time. We will still go to school, and work, and attend to our family and social obligations. But we should do so with an exquisite appreciation for time. Every moment is the only one of its kind that there will ever be, so we must live with an appreciation of each moment. When we meet someone, for the first time or the thousandth, let's really look them in the eye and be happy to see them. Let's greet each day with the knowledge that it is a unique gift that we unwrap hour by hour. When we shop, drive, write, phone or even wait, let's do so with intention, and intensity, savoring the doing through focused attention, a kind of Jewish zen.

For Jews, time itself has texture, substance, and meaning. Shabbat and holidays are distinctly different from regular weekdays. They differ not only because of what we do during those days, but in and of themselves. By cultivating our appreciation of time, we can experience more through time. That is particularly important as we look ahead to Yom Kippur, Heschel's temporal Holy of Holies. On the day when we plead for God's patience, understanding and forgiveness, rather than simply get through that time, we should focus intently on each of its moments, allowing the mahzor's words, the melodies we sing, and the silences between them to transport us into ourselves.

On Rosh Hashanah the meaning of our lives is written, and on Yom Kippur it is sealed. What will be written, and what sealed, is entirely up to us. We pray this night that we be given the courage to truly reveal ourselves to ourselves, to heal the wounds and join the breaks in our souls, to say 'I'm sorry' and to reply 'I forgive you.' Let this be a year of acute awareness of time and the opportunities it gives us to reflect, to observe, to transcend.

Shana tovah u'metukah, a sweet new year to one and all.