



*“Words from the Heart  
Enter the Heart”*

ROSH HASHANAH 5777 • 2016

By Rabbi Simon Jacobson

---

October 3, 2016  
Rosh Hashanah - Day 1

**The Message for 5777**



# Meaningful Sermons *“Words from the Heart 5777”*

By Rabbi Simon Jacobson

*“Enter the Heart”*

Rosh Hashanah Day 1 >

**The Message for 5777**

October 3, 2016

2016

ROSH HASHANAH 2016

The Message for 5777

## ABSTRACT

In a year of racism, growing cultural divides, murder in the name of “G-d,” what does Judaism and Torah have to say?

How does the *shofar* answer the call of world peace? Today is the day of creation – what tools did the Creator put in our hands to give us the power to unify the world?

It all has to do with a man named Jehoseph?

Who was Jehoseph? Jehoseph was a man who was freed from prison on Rosh Hashanah. Jehoseph is better known by a shorter version of his name: Joseph.

To understand the movements of the world today, the clashes of civilizations, cultures, religions, languages, let us follow Joseph’s story.

Sold into slavery and thrown into prison, he was freed on Rosh Hashanah and elevated to the most powerful position in Egypt after Pharaoh. Subsequently, the Angel Gabriel added a letter to his name and taught him seventy languages. And that’s how he became the world’s preeminent economist, investor, civil and urban planner, ultimately fulfiller of dreams and divine visions.

What can we learn from Joseph’s liberation on Rosh Hashanah? Can the steps he took to transform Egypt back then liberate us today on this Rosh Hashanah and transform Egypt, the Middle East, and all the world into a world of seventy tongues that all convey the one Holy Message originally expressed in the Holy Tongue?

The secret lies in the expansive blast of the *shofar* – listen closely and you will hear.

**THE MESSAGE FOR 5777  
SPOKEN IN THE HOLY TONGUE**

**1. Happy and Sweet New Year: 5777!**

Happy and Sweet New Year 5777!

5777 has a nice ring to it, doesn't it?

And as we ring it in, of necessity we look back over the year that was.

Many miraculous things have happened in the year 5776, in this community and worldwide. From marriages, to the births of children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren, life is perpetuating and the Jewish people are alive! May it always be and may the blessings always increase.

However, honesty and morality compel us to acknowledge the sad events that occurred over 5776 as well – not because we desire to wallow in misery, especially not on a festive holiday, but because we are committed and obliged – especially on this day, the birthday of the human race and the day when the entire world stands in judgment – to do everything in our power to rid the world of any devastation and build a better world.

**2. A Look Back at 5776 (Optional)**

The following is a reflection on some, not all, of the negative things that have happened in 5776.

[Note: Feel free to enumerate as many or as few of these events as you see fit. We listed them to allow you the option. You can just as easily say that I don't want to specify them all. Suffice it to say, that there were far too many terrorist attacks and killings both in Israel and abroad].

### In Israel:

June 30 – Michael Mark, father of ten, was cut down by bullets while driving near the holy city of Hebron. And a 13-year old Israeli girl Hallel Yaffa Ariel was stabbed to death in her bed in Kiryat Arba.

June 8 – Michael Feige, Ido Ben Ari, Mila Mishayev and Ilana Navaa were slaughtered in a Tel Aviv Café by Arabs dressed as religious Jews.

January 17 – Dafna Meir, a mother of six, was stabbed to death in her own kitchen.

November 19 – Aharon Yesiab, Reuven Aviram, Ezra Schwartz and Ya'acov Don were killed in the Holy Land in two separate attacks.

November 13 – Rabbi Yaakov Litman and his son Netanel were shot dead near Otniel.

October 1 – Eitam Henkin and his wife Naama were murdered together as they drove with their four young children.

Sadly, there are many more...

### Europe and the Middle East

March 22 – Three coordinated bombings in Brussels, Belgium killed at least 32 and injured at least 250. ISIS claimed responsibility.

June 23 – The United Kingdom voted in a referendum to leave the European Union, driven by the fear of Islamic extremism, refugees from the Middle East flooding their country and the resulting chaos across Europe.

October 10 – A suicide bomb killed at least 100 people at a peace rally in Ankara, Turkey, and injured more than 400 others.

October 31 – Kogalymavia Flight 9268, an Airbus A321 airliner en route to Saint Petersburg from Sharm el-Sheikh, crashed near Al-Hasana in Sinai, killing all 217 passengers and 7 crew members on board.

December 2 – 14 people were killed and 22 were seriously injured in a terrorist attack at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino, California, which consisted of a mass shooting and an attempted bombing. The perpetrators, a married couple, pledged allegiance to ISIS.

June 12 – Omar Mateen, a 29-year-old security guard, killed 49 people and wounded 53 others in a terrorist attack inside a nightclub in Orlando, Florida. In a 9-1-1 call shortly after the shooting began, Mateen swore allegiance to the leader of ISIS.

Suffice it to say that we have had far too many terror attacks and killings. The world clearly is under siege. Just take the latest scare in the bombing two weeks ago in New York City and New Jersey.

In addition to the various race crimes, killing of police officers, black youth, the discussion of building walls, debates on immigration, growing political divides, we have to face the reality of some people growing more distant, more partisan, more hate-filled, more frightened of one another.

What does 5777 hold in store for us? What can we do to make this world a better place? What can we do to help eliminate the threat of terrorism, to ensure that innocent people aren't killed in the name of "G-d"?

### 3. Kiddush of Rosh Hashanah

In just a few moments we will blow the *shofar*, heralding the New Year. The antithesis to this crazy world, as well as the prescription to fix it, lies within the expansive mystery of the *shofar*.

Following *Musaf* and the conclusion of the prayer service, we will all go home to make *Kiddush* and sanctify the day with a cup of wine, followed by a festive Yom Tov holiday feast.

The Rosh Hashanah *Kiddush* begins with two sentences from Psalm 81:

*Sound the shofar on the new moon, on the appointed time for the day of our festival. For it is a decree for Israel, a [day of] judgment of the G-d of Jacob.<sup>1</sup>*

---

<sup>3</sup> Psalms 81:4-5.

These two verses are relatively straightforward, describing the blowing of the *shofar* on the new moon of Rosh Hashanah as G-d's decree to the Jewish people. But to truly understand the profundity of these words, the meaning of sounding the *shofar* on the new moon, we have to explore the lesser-known continuation of the same Psalm:

*As a testimony for Jehoseph, which He [G-d] ordained when he went to the land of Egypt and heard there an unknown language.<sup>2</sup>*

Immediately, questions arise:

1. Who is Jehoseph?
2. What does it mean that He, G-d, ordained testimony for Jehoseph when he went to the land of Egypt? What was the story of Jehoseph and Egypt and the unknown language he heard there?
3. How does all of this explain the blowing of the *shofar* on Rosh Hashanah, and, more pragmatically, how does it inform this year of 5777 so that the terrors and horrors we have witnessed and experienced in the past are forever eradicated?

#### 4. Joseph, Jehoseph and Rosh Hashanah

Everybody knows that Rosh Hashanah is the celebration of the creation of the world – more accurately, of all humanity. In addition to creation, the Talmud<sup>3</sup> enumerates additional significant watershed moments that occurred on that day. One of those was Joseph leaving Egyptian prison. The Talmud's scriptural proof comes from the verses we just quoted: *Sound the shofar on the new moon...as a testimony for Jehoseph...*

One mystery solved: Jehoseph is Joseph.

The connection between the blowing of the *shofar* and Jehoseph is in that on the day of Rosh Hashanah, the day of the blowing of the *shofar*, Joseph was freed from prison. But we are still left with the other questions, including how Joseph became Jehoseph and his connection to an unknown language.

---

<sup>2</sup> Psalms 81:6.

<sup>3</sup> Rosh Hashanah 11a.

## 5. The Backstory of Joseph's Liberation

To borrow euphemistic phraseology that belies the harshness of a blood-curdling dungeon, why was Joseph imprisoned in an Egyptian "correctional facility" in the first place?

If we remember our engaging Hebrew school lessons, we may recollect some of the details. Because Joseph had rebuffed the advances of the wife of Potiphar, she accused him of attempted rape and had him thrown in jail. But then, after interpreting Pharaoh's dreams, Joseph was released and elevated to the highest position in Pharaoh's court.

The Talmud<sup>4</sup> elaborates on some of the details that the Torah doesn't mention:

*And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, and besides you, no one may lift his hand or his foot in the entire land of Egypt."<sup>5</sup> With this decree, the Pharaoh essentially gave Joseph, the ex-convict, full reign over Egypt. Naturally, the Pharaoh's high council of advisors, the wizards, sorcerers, and necromancers of Egypt, questioned the wisdom of this decision. The Pharaoh responded that he saw royalty in Joseph. But the high council countered: If Joseph is indeed royalty, he should be fluent in the seventy tongues of the world, as it was required for all royalty and leaders since Egypt then ruled all the peoples of the known world. Immediately, the Angel Gabriel descended and commenced teaching Joseph all seventy tongues. Joseph however could not learn them. Gabriel then proceeded to add one letter from G-d's name – the letter *hei* – to Joseph's name and he learned, as it states, *As a testimony for Jehoseph, which He [G-d] ordained when he went to the land of Egypt and heard there an unknown language.**

The next day, Joseph was able to converse in all the languages that the Pharaoh wished to converse in...<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Sotah 36b.

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 41:44.

<sup>6</sup> The Talmud continues to relate that later, when the Pharaoh insisted that Jacob be interred in Egypt, Joseph responded that he had sworn to his father that he would bury him in Israel. The Pharaoh implored Joseph to find a way to annul his oath. To which Joseph countered that he would then have to annul the oath he made to the Pharaoh as well. At this, the Pharaoh acquiesced.



What is going on here? What is the connection between the letter *hei* of Jehoseph to learning all seventy tongues? And what does all of this have to do with Rosh Hashanah?

## 6. Some History

On this day 5,777 years ago, the world was created. Every year hence, the world has been recreated and, on Rosh Hashanah, the general creative energy of the year has been re-allocated.

For the first ten generations of creation, the world was in gradual decay. Corruption was paramount, as was conflict between fellow human beings, devolving into a self-implosion universe. The self-destruction culminated in the Great Flood.

Up until the Flood, and for a short time right after as well, all the peoples of the world spoke one language, one tongue – Hebrew.<sup>7</sup> Shortly thereafter, however, the episode of the Tower of Babel occurred and the world was fragmented into seventy distinct tongues. As a result, people were suddenly unable to communicate and confusion ensued.<sup>8</sup>

Ever since, the world we know has been divided – divided by language, divided by region, divided by race, divided by culture, divided by color, divided by nationality, divided by tribe, religion, creed, gender, faith, belief, disbelief, and any other divider you wish to throw into the mix.

Throughout history, this division played itself out in murderous and bloody fashion: groups slaughtered one another because they had different beliefs, different languages, different cultures.

Much has changed over the years. We live in far more humanitarian world today than ever before. Yet there still remains the ongoing threat of global terrorism, and we still have work cut out for us to reclaim unity and world peace.

---

<sup>7</sup> Rashi to Genesis 11:1.

<sup>8</sup> Genesis 11. See MLC Sermon Noach 2013/5774 for a comprehensive discussion on this topic.



Certainly, the purpose of creation – whether 5,777 years ago in the year 0, and today, in the year 5777 – was not division, but unity. Alas, that unity has been since corrupted and fragmented. Today, when we look at another human being, even one that speaks the same language, even one that lives on the same block, even one that shares the same religion, even one that lives in the same house and shares the same family, we often see differences. Sometimes these differences cause terrible hurt and pain, rifts and brokenness. How this happened and continues to happen is for a different discussion. Today, we are concerned with how it can be repaired.

## 7. Joseph and Language

The repair began with Joseph.<sup>9</sup>

When he was young, he and his brothers, the original Children of Israel, spoke Hebrew. They all lived in the Land of Israel (then known as the Land of Canaan), conversing between themselves in the Holy Tongue. They were one family, one culture, one religion.

Joseph was the only Jew who was sent to live in a foreign land, surrounded by foreign tongues, pagan “deities” and alien customs. There, although a slave, he distinguished himself and was appointed overseer of his master’s household. However, when he refused the advances of his master’s wife, she had Joseph thrown into Egyptian prison. There he interpreted other prisoners’ dreams and came to the attention of the Pharaoh.

When the Pharaoh dreamed his famous dream which no one could interpret to his satisfaction, he summoned Joseph on the advice of his wine steward and former prisoner. This led to Joseph interpreting the dream, predicting a famine in Egypt, and being elevated to viceroy charged with preparing for it.

---

<sup>9</sup> Regarding the following, see K’mareh Hakeshet 5631 (Hemshech v’Hechrem), vol. I pp. 344-350. Yahal Ohr, p. 285ff. Ohr Hatorah, Bereishit, 17a. Vayechi 393a; et al.

After he was freed and elevated to royal status, the Angel Gabriel taught Joseph all seventy languages of the world. A little while later, when famine hit Israel (then Canaan), Joseph's brothers and father Jacob descended into Egypt to settle. And there the Jewish nation, the Nation of Israel, was formerly born.

When did all of this begin? On Rosh Hashanah!

## 8. The Inner Meaning

The inner meaning of these events is explained magnificently by our holy sages.

Joseph did not end up in Egypt by mistake. Nothing happens by mistake, certainly not something of such great import and significance. Joseph, as every Jew to follow, was on a mission – to reunite the fragmented world, to remind all of humanity that though we all speak different languages, there is one Holy Message that unites us all.

His brothers in Israel were blanketed in the comforting cocoon of the Jewish community, removed from the rest of the world, building their families and serving their Creator. But Joseph knew that when a world is imperfect, when seventy tongues clash with one another, sooner or later a famine will hit the Holy Land and even the unified and protected communities will be threatened by outside forces slowly seeping in.

Joseph thus began preparing to fuse the seventy tongues of the world. But he could not actually implement his vision until Rosh Hashanah, when he was freed from the confines of prison and elevated to a leadership role.

The wizards, academics, necromancers, and united nation ambassadors, were mightily threatened by Joseph and his dream. Thus, when Pharaoh himself stated that he sees the royalty in Joseph, they said “Yeah, but he doesn't speak the language of the world, he is a Jew, he is a Hebrew, he is not true royalty.”

That is when the Angel Gabriel helped Joseph learn all seventy tongues to articulate the Holy Message of the Holy Tongue to the world.

## 9. One More Detail

There is however one perplexity, one detail, we have not yet addressed. And in this detail lies the connection to Rosh Hashanah, the *shofar*, freedom, and the ability for Joseph and us today to accomplish our mission of infusing all of creation, all seventy tongues, with the one Holy Message of the Creator.

This ability was secreted within Joseph while he was in prison. It was less that Joseph's body that was imprisoned, and more that his soul's mission was confined and not yet released, unable to fulfill its purpose.

Then, finally Joseph and his infinite ability were released and freed to accomplish his purpose. But to make that happen, the Angel Gabriel had to take a letter from G-d's name, the letter *hei*, and embed it into Joseph, so that he became Jehoseph. And then, as Jehoseph, he was able to learn all seventy tongues and proceed with his mission.

This is the meaning of the verses from the Book of Psalms which we have quoted:

*Sound the shofar on the new moon, on the appointed time for the day of our festival. For it is a decree for Israel, a [day of] judgment of the G-d of Jacob. As a testimony for Jehoseph, which He [G-d] ordained when he went to the land of Egypt and heard there an unknown language.*

## 10. The Expansiveness of the Shofar (Optional)

We are so imprisoned and bogged down by life that we think that we have become limited, unable to relate the Holy Message of the Holy Tongue to the world. This is because we either speak only the Holy Tongue or don't know it. Some among us are so cocooned that the seventy tongues of the world are foreign to us and we cannot relate to them. And others among us are so entrenched in the mentality and materiality of the seventy tongues that we cannot understand or remember the Holy Tongue.

Comes the *shofar* to the rescue.

The *shofar* reminds us that the Creator of the Universe created everything, every tongue, every nuance, every galaxy, every granule, everything!

This is symbolized by the letter *hei*, which in itself is an expansion of the letter *yud*. And this is tangibly represented and implemented by a physical mitzvah of blowing the *shofar*.

One end of the *shofar* looks like a tiny *yud*. When you blow that tiny end, the result is a piercing blast, coming out of the wide end which represents the letter *hei* or expansion. This expansion of the *hei* gives us the power to fulfill our mission in this world of infusing all creation, all tongues, with the divinity of the Holy Tongue.

And this happens every single year on Rosh Hashanah.

When we will blow the *shofar* in just a few moments – as Jews the world over will be doing, as Jews have been doing for thousands of years – the power and ability of transforming all seventy languages of the world is freed and released from its prison within this physical world.

The blowing of the *shofar*, which in its most basic form represents the call of freedom, embodies this release from prison, heralding a new and free world.

## 11. Tangible Results (Practical Advice)

This new year is all about tangible results. What can we take away from all this to inform our everyday lives? And what practical steps can we implement to affect real change in our lives? And affect change in the world?

It is quite simple: Every single person in this room, man, women, child, speaks (at least) one of the world's seventy languages. Most of us speak English, some perhaps modern Hebrew, some maybe Yiddish, a little Spanish, French, maybe Russian, Arabic, Farsi... Each of us also speaks a specific figurative language, our professional language – some of us are fluent in the language of medicine, of real estate, of business, of law,

accounting, art, music, literature, education. This is our mission -- to take the Holy Tongue we have been imbued with, and whether we know it or not, to perpetuate it, translate it, articulate it and its message into every one of the languages that we know.

How? Here are two practical examples:

1. Say you are fluent in the tongue of English. Over this next year, the year of 5777, take it upon yourself to give or host a class in the English language but whose content and message will be from the Holy Tongue, sourced in a holy book, based upon Torah principles. This, quite literally, is taking the Holy Tongue and articulating it in one of the seventy tongues.
2. Say you are fluent in the language of business. Over this next year, the year of 5777, challenge yourself to take one part of your business and infuse it with the Holy Tongue. For example: every quarter, as you and your board review the business financials, the budgets and projections, compel yourself and your coworkers to also review the *personal* financials and projections – how have we been acting to one another, have we been kind, have we set aside money for charity, perhaps an interest-free-loan fund to help employees with a sudden cash flow issue. Think as creatively for soulful growth as you do for business growth and over 5777 you will bridge the Holy Tongue with the seventy tongues under the one unifying banner of the Creator.

## 12. Conclusion

This also teaches us a powerful message what we can do about the state of world affairs, and the global threat of terrorism.

You may be wondering what can one individual do to affect the larger world? Rosh Hashanah contains the answer.

Today is the birthday of the human race, and in effect the birthday of the world. As we say in the Rosh Hashanah prayers: *zeh hayom techilas maasecho*. This day is the beginning of Your work.

It may come as a surprise to some, but Rosh Hashanah is not just a holiday for Jews. On this day the destiny of the entire world is determined.

Jews always knew that though we may be a small percentage of the world's population, we have the power to affect and change the universe. And history has shown us that we did indeed change the world.

Moreover, every individual has the power to tip the scales and bring redemption to the world. As Maimonides writes,<sup>10</sup> "a person should always look at himself as equally balanced between merit and sin and the world as equally balanced between merit and sin... If he performs one mitzvah, he tips his balance and that of the entire world to the side of merit and brings deliverance and salvation to himself and others. This is implied by 'A righteous man is the foundation of the world.'<sup>11</sup> i.e., he who acted righteously, tipped the balance of the entire world to merit and saved it.

Science today makes this easy to understand. Think of it as the "butterfly effect:" A butterfly flaps its wings in Kansas City and that can create a typhoon in Singapore.

When we act like Joseph and take our language and turn it into Divine language (just as Joseph did when he was freed from prison on Rosh Hashanah), when we sound the shofar, when we act in a more refined way – that one act has the power to change the entire world!

It is then that the world and the coming year will look like this:

- There will be many languages but they will all speak the same message. As the prophet says: I will transform the peoples to a purer language that they all will call upon the name of God and serve Him with one purpose.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Mishne Torah, Laws of Teshuva 3:8.

<sup>11</sup> Proverbs 10:25.

<sup>12</sup> Tzephaniah 3:9. See Rambam Mishne Torah Laws of Kings 11:4.

- There will be different nations, races, colors and cultures, but each will serve the Creator in their own inimitable way.
- There will be neither famine nor war, envy or competition for good will flow in abundance and all the delights will be freely available as dust. The occupation of the entire world will be solely to know G-d.<sup>13</sup>

May we merit to the final redemption, with the coming of Moshiach!

Happy Holiday, Good Yom Tov, Shana Tova, a Happy and Sweet New Year!

© Copyright 2016 The Meaningful Life Center. By downloading this PDF file from Meaningful Sermons, you agree to respect the copyright of this written material. You understand that your right to this material is limited to using it to deliver sermons, classes or other oral presentations to your community. You agree not to publish this material or any part thereof, nor to email, fax, copy, scan, mail, etc. or otherwise share this material with others, nor to verbally share these ideas with others.

---

<sup>13</sup> Mishne Torah Laws of Kings 12:5.