

Rabbi Larry Moldo wrote a column for the Wyoming Tribune Eagle about the meaning of Rosh Hashana. It was printed on Saturday, September 27, 2014. Here it is.

Rosh HaShanah (Start of the Year) began this year on Wednesday night, September 24. It is considered within current Jewish tradition as a time to take stock of where we are as individuals, and to see if we can break some of our behavior patterns that could lead to predictable ends and improve our relationships with other people and God so that the world can be a better place.

Today is Shabbat Shuvah in the Jewish calendar. This Sabbath of return/repentance was traditionally 50% of the normal Shabbatot upon which it was expected that the Rabbi would speak. In addition to the sermon I delivered last night and the Torah lesson I am giving this morning, I find that the following thoughts are appropriate to share. (Full disclosure: portions of the following appeared in a slightly different format in a Facebook post of mine quite some time ago.)

Rosh HaShanah brings with it thoughts of Teshuvah (repentance). Teshuvah is traditionally a four step process: 1) Admit that something you did was inappropriate. 2) Apologize to the person who was harmed by your inappropriate action. 3) Fix the damage caused by the inappropriate action. 4) Never repeat the inappropriate act. With that definition in mind, I have a few further "I" statements on the topic, which help clarify the spiritual intensity of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur (day of atonement).

- I am the only one for whom I can do Teshuvah.
- I can only seek forgiveness for those things which I personally have done, and I can only seek it from those people whom I have wronged.
- I should not infantilize others by deciding for them what wrongs have been inflicted upon them.
- I should also not infantilize them by taking actions based on what I think a person's suffering should be in that situation. The pain I imagine I would feel in that circumstance may not be the pain they are feeling.
- I may not forgive a person if I have not been the one to suffer from their actions.
- I should always remember that my first glance is going to be filtered through the lens of my personal history, so it will often be wrong. [All dogs appear to be Cujo in my sight at first - and some of them are actually dangerous.] Therefore it is only after the second glance or beyond that I should make any kind of fact based judgment about a person or situation that involves anything more than basic Arithmetic.
- I am responsible for the choices that I make. Sometimes I am even responsible for the effects of those choices.

I am aware that abstract words, such as those above, may be used by both sides of most disagreements as proving their particular points. When my words are used to make positive changes within an individual, then they are used as intended by the author. When my words are used to try and make other people change, then they are being misused.

[Check www.mtsinaicheyenne.org/rabbi.asp in a few weeks for other High Holiday related thoughts.]