

**Rosh Hashana 5774, Second Day "Unesaneh Tokef"  
Rabbi Ze'ev Smason, NHBZ, 6-sep-2013**

With the arrival of the Yomim Noraim (the High Holidays, or Days of Awe) we reflect upon the coming year. We press the reset button: How will we become better people, better Jews, and more worthy of life and the blessings we ask for on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. But Rosh Hashana is also an opportunity to reflect upon how we lived the past year.

One of the highlights of the Yomim Noraim (the High Holidays, or Days of Awe) is the moving prayer of Unesaneh Tokef, found in the Musaf repetition. Many prayer books contain a brief account of the story behind this stirring passage. Unesaneh Tokef, which means "Let Us Relate the Power of the Day", is the story of the great Rabbi Amnon who was slowly dismembered at the orders of a bishop rather than convert and deny his Judaism.

Yesterday, our focus was a personal perspective and retrospective; our personal challenges and struggles of the past year, and how to face the future. This morning, I'd like to review 5773 through the broader eyes and words of Unasaneh Tokef. A careful study of Unesaneh Tokef will enable us to reflect upon what the previous year looked like for the world, Israel, the Jewish people and ourselves.

Let's see some of what happened last year, phrase by phrase, with Unesaneh Tokef as our guide.

***On Rosh Hashana they are inscribed. And on the fast day of Yom Kippur they are sealed.***

***How many will pass away:*** Over 55 million people died last year. 105 people die each minute. Almost two people die each second. At least 18 dear ones who were very close to us here at our synagogue, Nusach Hari Bnai Zion, are not with us this Rosh Hashana.

***And How many shall be born:*** July 22, a baby boy was born to the Prince and Duchess of Cambridge. On January 24, Max Brenner was born to Jeremy and Lauren of St. Louis.

***Who shall live:*** On the eve of Rosh Hashana 5774, Israel's Jewish population stood at 6,066,000.

***Who will die:*** Israeli author Yoram Kaniuk died of cancer in June at the age of 83. Rabbi Herschel Shacter, Chaplain at Buchenwald, died in March at the age of 95.

***Who shall live out his allotted time:*** In June, Jiroemon Kimura of Japan, the world's oldest man died at the age of 116.

***And who shall depart before his time:*** In December 2012, 28 people, including 20 children, were shot to death at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

In July in Dolev, Israel, a toddler died after being left for 5 hours in a hot car.

***Who shall perish by water:*** In October 36 people were killed in a ferry collision in Hong Kong

In November, Typhoon Bopha killed over 1000 in the Philippines

In August, Aaron Shalom Tepfer, age 10, died in a boating accident in New York.

***And who by fire:*** In October 2012 12 people were killed and 40 injured in a hospital fire in Taiwan.

In June, police opened fire and killed an Israeli man at the Western Wall, mistaking him for an Arab.

***Who by the sword:*** In May, British soldier Lee Rigby, 25, was stabbed in Southeast London

In July, a Brazilian soccer referee stabbed a player to death

In April, A 32 year old Israeli man was murdered in a stabbing attack at the Tapuach Junction in Samaria.

**And who by a wild beast:** In June a 57 year-old man died by snake bite while on vacation with his family at the Sea of Galilee. The snake, a viper, is the only poisonous type that makes its habitat in the area.

**Who by hunger:** Chronic hunger affects more than 925 million people in the world. More than 4.5 million children died this past year from hunger-related causes.

The Harvey Kornblum Jewish Food Pantry (St. Louis) currently serves 1,200 families each month, reaching 5,000 people who would otherwise go hungry.

**And who by thirst:** In June, the car of Qatari couple driving in the remote Saudi Arabian desert broke down, leaving them stranded. They both died of thirst. The woman was found dead in the car; her husband's body was found 6 miles away, presumably looking for help or water.

**Who by earthquake:** In April, a 6.6 magnitude earthquake struck Sichuan, China, killing 193 people. Approximately 1000 people died by earthquake in the previous year. (In 2010, over 300,000 died by earthquake)

**And who by pestilence and plague:** In May, rock singer Zach Sobiech, 18, died of cancer.

In November, Yellow Fever killed 32 people and sickened 50 more in Darfur, Sudan.

Compared to Europe and the U.S., Israel has the highest mortality rate for diabetes, kidney disease, and sepsis, the body's inflammatory response to infection

**Who by strangulation:** In August, two Canadian boys, 4 and 6, were killed in their sleep by a python during a sleep over above a pet shop.

**And who by lapidation/ stoning:** In April, 160 were killed in a building collapse in Bangladesh.

In July, enraged Brazilian soccer fans stormed the field and stoned to death the referee who had just previously stabbed a player to death. After stoning the 20 year old referee, he was then beheaded by a relative of the dead player.

**Who shall be at rest:** Even though he had retired in 2011, Tony La Russa managed the National League All Stars in the 2012 MLB All-Star Game for the final time in his managerial career.

Chris Carpenter of the St. Louis Cardinals, didn't pitch in 2013, and is probably retired.

Jack Nicholson retired from acting at the age of 76, due to suffering from memory loss.

My dear friend Harold Hoffman just retired -- but he probably won't rest for long.

**And who shall wander:** Dadaab, Kenya, is the world's largest refugee camp, with more than 400,000 people.

In November 2012, Widespread flooding displaced 2.1 million Nigerian.

Due to warring in Syria, over 4.5 million Syrians are displaced, with 2 million having left the country as refugees.

In Israel, homelessness is on the rise. And roughly 189,000 households in Israel — about 8.5 percent — live in substandard housing, according to the “Homeless Index

**Who shall be tranquil:** One of my children started college this year, and is living in the dorms. I expect things to be considerably more tranquil around my home this year!

**And who will be harassed:** Since last Rosh Hashana, Palestinians have fired over 2000 rockets and mortar shells into Israel. Last November, three were killed by a rocket in Kiryat Melachi, including Yosef Fartuk, 18.

**Who shall enjoy well being:** With the exception of a hot week in August, summer in St. Louis has been remarkably cool and pleasant -- especially compared to last year. In 2012 St. Louis sweltered through 21 days of triple-digit temperatures, hitting 108 twice.

**And who shall suffer tribulation:** In August, a terrible outbreak of violence gripped Egypt.

Over 100,000 are dead in the current Syrian civil war

An August 21 gas attack in Syria left over 1400 dead, including more than 400 children.

**Who will be poor:** In December 2012, UBS -- a Swiss global financial services company -- agreed to pay \$1.5 billion for its role in a price-fixing scandal.

A June report shows that 20 percent of Jewish households in the New York metropolitan area are poor, a figure only marginally lower than the rate in the general population. In NY, more than 560,000 Jewish people living in 200,000 poor or near-poor Jewish households.

**And who shall be rich:** Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg's net worth is \$19.8 billion (though he only takes a salary of \$1 per year)

The 2013 salary of Albert Pujols was \$16 million.

Actor Robert Downey Jr. earned \$75 million from June '12 to June '13.

Anti-Defamation League National Director Abe Foxman 2012 salary was \$688,280,

**Who shall be humbled:** Last October, the Pope's butler was imprisoned 18 months for leaking confidential documents.

Calling himself 'deeply-flawed', disgraced-cyclist Lance Armstrong admitted to using performance-enhancing drugs, and in January was stripped of his 7 Tour D'France titles.

Baseball player Ryan Braun, known as 'The Hebrew Hammer', was suspended for 2013 season for the use of performance enhancing drugs.

**Who shall be exalted:** New chief rabbis of Israel were appointed: R' David Lau and R' Yitzchak Yosef.

On Rosh HaShanah. We want to show the Creator that we are worthy of receiving life. You could say that there are two approaches. The first is to look at what we have done over the past year and see where we could make some improvements.

But there is another way to look at Rosh HaShannah. They say that Rosh HaShannah is a time to dream. Instead of showing G-d your resume, let him see your plans. What are your dreams for the next year? What are you going to try to accomplish to make this world a better place?

It is clear from Unesaneh Tokef that the Almighty means business. But the three-part approach to removing the evil decree is **Tshuva** (Return, or repentance), **Tefila** (Prayer) and **Tzedaka** (Charity).

May we all be granted not just life in the year 5744, but a chance to lead a better life.

*with thanks from a 'Random' friend*