

When asked the question, “What is the hardest thing for one to do?”, most respond with the answer “The hardest thing is to say you’re sorry”. This could be because of the famous songs regarding the most difficult words to say, or perhaps because anyone asked such a question by a Rabbi this time of year figures he or she is about to be sermonized regarding repentance.

Others, though, may respond with something more thought provoking. Perhaps the hardest thing to do is to accomplish the thing thought of as impossible. Maybe the hardest thing to do is to believe in spite of the state of the world and humanity as we’ve experienced it. The nature of the question itself begs a personal and different response from any and all asked.

Perhaps a timely response to the question is that the hardest thing for one to do is to *remember*. All jokes regarding advancing years and regressing faculties aside, sometimes remembering is the hardest thing for one to do on many levels.

Remembering means thinking back to hurtful and insensitive actions done and incidents that took place which the blessing of a short memory allows us to forget. Remembering means facing friends and loved ones we might have hurt and not allowing those feelings to be ignored and unattended to. Remembering means we have to face our weaknesses and mistakes and make amends.

Remembering also means recalling greatness when we might want to think of ourselves as mediocre. Remembering means that when we might question our own worth or abilities at times, or whether G-d cares for and even notices us, we recall our moments of success and those heroic, sensitive, caring deeds we have performed in our past. It means even in times when we don’t want to think of ourselves as great, we remember our history, our predecessors, and our magnificent 4000 year old heritage, and we are lifted by the pride of our past.

This is one meaning to the name the Torah ascribes to Rosh Hashanah, which we utilize in Ya’aleh V’Yavo, that of Yom HaZikaron – the day of remembrance. Rosh Hashanah is all about remembering who we are and from where we’ve come. The service is replete with remembrances of the acts of our forefathers, specifically with that of our father Abraham. Indeed, it is only through appreciating our illustrious past and the generations who preceded us, that we can turn and face the coming New Year.

In a similar way, Deena and I and our children are humbled to be given the opportunity of becoming part of Agudas Achim. I consider it an awesome responsibility to carry on the leadership of a shul that has such a long and rich history, and which has been led by great and wise Rabbanim throughout the decades up to our most recent, beloved Rabbi Yaffe. It is a tradition that I will continue in Agudas of always looking to and *remembering* our heritage, tradition and our history, in order to discern the path that will take us into the future.

In this way, perhaps, all of the answers to our original question are really one. For one must choose to remember in order to be able to apologize. One must choose to remember in order to achieve that which is thought of as impossible. But one must also remember and look through one's past and heritage in order to believe.

Rabbi Ari Weiss