**Happy New Year 5769: Never Lose Sight of the Open Door**

**By Rabbi Alvin M. Sugarman**

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Rosh Hashana is always a time of reflection and renewal, a time when old patterns are abandoned, and new ideas considered. In Ezekiel, we are called on to "get  [ourselves] a new heart and a new spirit" -- ideally, we bring a measure of healing to our world, and evolve, as individuals and communities.

Such change can only happen, however, if we are open to the possibility -- if we can look past the failures of the past and envision a different future. Alexander Graham Bell once said that when one door closes, another opens -- but we are often so busy looking with regret upon the closed door, that we do not see those which have opened before us.

It can seem that the search for peace between Israel and her neighbors has been little more than a series of closed doors. How many times have we felt that we were surely on the road to a peaceful solution -- and how many times has the door to peace been slammed shut?

But we are Jews -- we must not dwell on the closed door; rather we should search for an opportunity to open a new one. As Maimonides said centuries ago, we are not required to complete the task of tikkun olam, repairing the world -- but neither are we free to retire from the task.

We are alive today to begin another New Year because we have always refused to give up. Though history would have written us off many times, here we are preparing once again to hear the stirring sound of the shofar. This year, as always, the almost mystical power of the shofar speaks to the deepest part of our souls, awakening us to the best that lies within us, and to the possibility of what could yet be: "He has told you what is good and what the Lord requires," as Micah says. "Only to do justice and to love goodness."

This year, we must allow the shofar to recall to us not only the new possibilities within ourselves, but in the Middle East, that land of closed doors.

January will see a new administration in Washington: a new beginning, a new president, a new possibility for peace. Whoever is elected, it's up to us, as American citizens who love both this country and Israel deeply, to do everything in our power to encourage him to make peace efforts a true diplomatic priority.

We must urge a rejection of the old policies of quiet acquiescence to the status quo, and call for an embrace of a vigorous pursuit of reconciliation -- a new heart, and a new spirit. We must remind our new President that true change only comes when it is pursued sincerely, and tell him that we will stand with him if he turns his back on the disappointments of the past and creates new opportunities for peace and security between Israel and the Palestinians.

We do not yet know who will be standing behind the open door of the Oval Office, nor do we yet know what Mid-East policies will come from behind that door. But we do know that as individuals and as members of the American Jewish community, we must do everything we can to influence the new Administration to advance a two-state solution that honors the common humanity and yearnings for peace of Israelis and Palestinians alike.

As our year turns, let us also dedicate ourselves to achieving a turn in the fortunes of the land we hold so close to our hearts, and this Rosh Hashanah, may we indeed "be remembered in the book of life, blessing, and peace."

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