

Shabbat Shalom and G'mar Hatima Tova

(the traditional Yom Kippur Greeting, May You Be Sealed for a Good Year)
from Rabbi Michael Gold

Candle Lighting Time

Fri. Evening 7:04 pm

Sun. Evening Erev Yom Kippur 7:01 pm

Services

Sat. Sept. 19 9:30 am Shabbat Shuva

Yom Kippur Schedule

Sun. Sept. 20 6:45 pm Kol Nidre

Mon. Sept 21 9 am Yom Kippur Morning, Yizkor approx. 10:30 am

4 pm Community Yizkor Service

5:45 Mincha, Neilah, shofar blowing and break fast
approximately 8 pm.

At Kol Nidre I will be speaking about the book of Jonah. Can a whole community change? Yom Kippur day I will speak about the deep Jewish problem raised by artificial intelligence. After the holidays, all my sermons will be on my website rabbigold.com.

Why do we read this wonderful book [of Jonah] on Yom Kippur? Of course, it is the story of a reluctant prophet who fled rather than perform God's will. But perhaps most important, it is the story of an entire city that changes its ways. It is a city filled with evil people who become good people overnight. It is a story at the heart of Yom Kippur. People can change. Not simply individual people, but an entire community can change.

Can an entire community change? Let me give some examples. I will start with the Catholic Church. For generations, the Church hated Jews. But then a transformation began to take place. Then in 1986, Pope John Paul II visited the Great Synagogue in Rome together with Rabbi Elio Toaff. The Pope condemned antisemitism and rejected any claim that the Jews were responsible for Jesus's death. It was a major change, a new era in the relationship between Catholics and Jews.

I experienced the old Catholic way of seeing Jews directly. In 1984 I moved to Pittsburgh, PA to become the rabbi of a wonderful synagogue. The local houses of worship held a joint worship service of gratitude the evening before Thanksgiving. That year the service was held in the local Catholic Church, run by an old school priest. As the new clergy in town, I was invited to

give the homily, the sermon that evening. When the old priest learned that a rabbi was speaking, he rescinded the offer. No rabbi would speak in his church. The priest spoke instead. I received more apologies from more Christian clergy that night and was invited to speak one year later. That priest retired. Today that Church would have no problem inviting a rabbi to speak. The Catholic Church, and much of Christianity, has changed its ways.

You might say, that is fine for Christians. What about Muslims? Can Islam ever change? Let me remind you of a bit of history. The darkest day in Jewish history since the Holocaust was October 7, 2023, a day of murder, rape, and kidnapping. The evil was done by Hamas, but Hamas was controlled by Iran. Why did Iran pick that time to attack Israel? If you recall, Israel had signed the Abraham Accords with a number of Muslim nations, recognizing the right of Israel to exist. Israel was about to sign an accord with Saudi Arabia, perhaps the wealthiest and most powerful Muslim nation. Iran is the bitter enemy of both Israel and Saudi Arabia, and perhaps we can say, the enemy of my enemy is my friend. But the attack by Hamas put a stop to the Abraham Accord between Israel and Saudi Arabia. It caused a horrific delay in a reconciliation between a Jewish and a Muslim nation. But I am sure the Abraham Accords will probably go ahead.

Can there be any reconciliation between Jews and Muslims. I am not speaking of the Muslims who attack synagogues yelling *Allahu Akhbar*, "God is Great." I am talking about the average Muslim who practices his or her religion and wants to live at peace with Jewish neighbors. During Ramadan, Muslims fast by day and gather for an *Iftar* or evening meal at night. A few years ago, I was invited by a group of Muslims to join them for the meal and speak at the gathering. It was a beautiful evening of peace between two religions. I have been invited by both Christian and Muslims to speak. I have also spoken to other groups, including Buddhists and Mormons. That would have been unthinkable a few generations ago. But people, and whole communities can change for the better.