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Rosh Hashana

By Elise L. Moore, C.S.B.

From sunset today through Sunday marks the celebration of Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year 5761. This high holiday, or religious festival, is recognized and celebrated in a variety of ways. It is noted by some Jews as the "Day of Judgment." Individuals pray for God's forgiveness, for a good year, and for long life.

This holiday is full of religious and spiritual meaning. One of the themes of Rosh Hashana is that God is our King and creator.

What a beautiful tradition to celebrate a New Year by acknowledging God as the creator, the originator of all! It's like renewing the recognition of our relationship with God and dependence on Him. God does care for each one individually. God guides and cherishes, leaving no one outside His omnipotent love.

For some people, the concept of God as King could be foreboding. Kings haven't always been benevolent. But the Almighty is not a vengeful tyrant. He is a creator of good. In fact, as the Bible says, "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). God made His creation to be good and to do good. God's judgment is, perhaps, not so much to exclude us as to exclude evil. Humankind is helped by recognizing what is unlike God and ceasing to follow it.

There is choice involved. People of many faith traditions are familiar with the concept of choosing good over evil, spirituality instead of materialism. God provides all good. It's our responsibility to be humble enough to accept it. As Deuteronomy says, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days" (30:19, 20).

God is the source of life. By choosing God, we are choosing eternal life. We are choosing the spiritual over the material. Some people would describe it as choosing the real over the unreal. One Jewish author explains: "If we choose reality, God grants us a year of life. If we choose to be asleep, God grants us a year of death - i.e. numbness to the meaning of life and truth" ("Creating your world anew" by Marshall Roth, published on [http:// aish.com](http://aish.com)).

It's worth being awake to the love of God and His power. Living a life awake to good brings success and satisfaction. We don't need to wait for a future world or time to feel God's presence. Humanity can live in obedience to God's commands now. This brings blessing - "A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day" (Deut. 11:27).

During my first year out of college, I took a job in a small community several hours from family and friends. Since I had to work on January 2, I spent the first day of my new year by myself. But this wasn't a sad time. Actually, I remember it as one of the best New Year's Days.

I'd heard a TV commentator mention that what a person chooses to do on January 1 shows what is most important to him or her for the coming year. So when I woke up that morning, I turned to God and prayed. I prayed to find out how I could express my love and gratitude for all that God had done and was doing for me. And it came to me to write a song. So I wrote a hymn of praise for guitar. I don't recall anything else that happened that day, but I cherish the inspiration and closeness to God that I felt. I chose God first - before anything else. That choice opened my thought and life to the harmony and joy that God always has for me.

As Jews around the globe unite this evening in celebration of Rosh Hashana, perhaps others can unite with them in acknowledging God as supreme over all. We can choose to love God, who is good, and bring a blessing to our world.

As vapor melts before the sun,
so evil would vanish before
the reality of good. . . .

How important, then, to

choose good as the reality!

Mary Baker Eddy