

## Zichronot

When Rabbi Graf asked me to introduce this section of the service, Zichronot or memories, remembrance became for me the most dominant theme for Rosh Hashanah. After all the Torah itself calls Rosh Hashanah the Day of Remembrance, Yom Hazikoron.

It would be easy to say “remember the pleasant memories and forget the painful ones”, not only does that sound un-Jewish but we know this is simplistic, unnatural and impossible. As a people the precious yet painful memories of the Jewish story encourages us to believe in the future. As individuals we realize that a selective memory is not really a smart course. On a day when “every creature stands in judgment and is recorded for life or death” the full range of our annual peccadilloes lie in front of the Almighty. Hiding memories will not work well so we beg for mercy and ask for forgiveness;

### My personal memories

I grew up in Bolivia South America, a Catholic country, before the Papal Encyclical absolving Jews from killing their God. There were about 50 Jewish families in a city (Cochabamba) of 150,000 people and there were three other Jewish boys around my age. My family was the only observant family among the 50. Jewish life was very insular and life outside the Jewish cocoon was hazardous yet exciting. Example: eating non-kosher Saltenas (they were delicious) in the rear of a restaurant so as not to be seen by someone who might tell my parents.

I was a small sized kid who was coached by his mother to run away from fights so being Jewish meant running a lot. Life was tough enough on an average day and Saturdays. And the High Holyday season was a tough challenge. How do you explain to even well meaning Catholic teachers (and to ill meaning Catholic boys) why you will miss school to celebrate Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Sukhot, Shmini Azeret, Hoshana Raba, and Simchat Torah? As you might imagine I lied a lot.

My Days of Awe were preceded by many days of fear.

These memories are not painful anymore. Yet I feel they have influenced what I love and what gives me comfort. I love the Jewish nation Israel, I love its military might so that others may not have to run. I find great comfort in being in a Jewish crowd; I love events and activities that bring large groups of Jews together. I love living in a country and an area where we can have public Jewish events in streets, theaters, and Synagogues and not have to run. I love it when our leaders including presidents wish us a L'Shana Tova.

L'shana Tovah