



My Dear Friends,

As we approach Yom Kippur, the Day of Judgement, I am thinking a lot about the enormous power and potential of this day.

Our rabbis teach that during these days there are two books open before God, the *sefer ha-chaim* and the *sefer ha-meisim*. Usually this is interpreted as the Book of Life and the Book of Death, to which God places our names and seals our fates in the coming year.

A second approach offered by our revered teacher of blessed memory, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, is that our life choices not only dictate our own life story but also the stories of those who came before us. We are a continuation of our parents, grandparents, and previous generations. And our actions are seen as a continuation of their story. As such, we are not just authoring our own life story with our life decisions but also the story of those who come before us. In this sense, the books that are open before God on these days are not the Book of Life and the Book of Death but the Book of the Living and the Book of the Dead.



This is the reasoning behind the customs to recite Yizkor and give *tzedakah* on Yom Kippur. For our pledge to give charity inspired by the memory of our loved ones not only uplifts our own stories but transforms their stories as well. This is the enormous opportunity and blessing of Yom Kippur, as our decisions today have the

power to uplift everyone in our lives—those who are with us and those who are no longer with us.

As I write this letter, I think of all of the warmth and positive feelings I have received from this community of readers over this past year. We have been through so much together, and my sincerest wishes for you and your loved ones, for the Jewish people, the State of Israel, and all of humanity is that God bless each of you with a year filled with meaning, purpose, health, joy, and love.

Shanah Tovah my friends,

Ari

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