

CURRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

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BH

THIS ROSH HASHANAH, MAKE A SPIRITUAL/FASHION STATEMENT

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The High Holidays often turn into a fashion parade. Everyone is wearing their finest clothes and jewelry. And guess what? The Yerushalmi's okay with that. You just have to do it with the correct spiritual orientation. In this class, the little black dress needs to be the little white dress. Here's why:

Rabbi Hama the son of Rabbi Hanina and Rabbi Yoshaya said: "For what great nation is there, that God is so close to them, as the Lord our God is, whensoever we call upon Him (Deuteronomy 4:7)" Is there a nation like this nation! Customarily, a man who knows that he is on trial wears black,
and wraps himself in black,
and lets his beard grow,
for he doesn't know how his trial will turn out.

But Israel is not thus.
Rather they wear white
and wrap themselves in white
and shave their beards,
and eat,
drink
and rejoice.
For they know that the Holy One, blessed be He, does miracles for them. (Y. Rosh Hashanah 1:3)

Whew! No matter how sinful you've been this year, the Yerushalmi tells us, go into the new year with hope in your heart. Not only do you wear white and spruce yourself up, you even go all the way to rejoicing.

Discussion Questions:

1. The deep irony of the High Holidays is that the more sinful you've been, the more meaningful they are. How are these Holidays going to be? Are you feeling that you can wear white with confidence or maybe you should wear off-white? Gray? Black accents? The whole black from head to toe?
2. Which leads to the more profound question: are you feeling hopeful this Rosh Hashanah? What is standing in the way of you feeling joy? Is it wildfires, hurricanes, physical pain, personal depression? I understand that

depression (especially when your house just washed away) is chemical. But is there anything you can do to help yourself feel more hopeful, besides wearing white?

3. How do you feel about the idea that God has a special relationship with the Jewish people and will cut us some slack during the trial?

Looking forward to your answers! Shanah tovah!