

New Year Wishes for 5780

Rabbi Jacob Pressman z"l and Rabbi Daniel Pressman

When Laura and I were in rabbinical school—and I put us both in that because, boy, anyone who is a spouse of a rabbinical student deserves an honorary degree. Surely, at the very least, rabbinical spouses should be forgiven all of their sins—for the sacrifices they make on behalf of the Jewish people. So let me also publicly thank Laura for all the ways she continues to do that so that our community can be stronger. I couldn't walk this path without you. Thank you, Laura.

This is not to say there weren't rewards for being married to a rabbinical student. We had an amazing community of friends. There were dozens of kosher restaurants. And as we enter our rainy season here, the sun wasn't bad either.

Another reward was living in Pico Robertson. This is arguably the pre-eminent Jewish neighborhood in Los Angeles. There were easily a dozen shuls in walking distance, and we attended all. But on Erev Rosh

Hashanah, we went to the largest of them, Beth Am right on La Cienega Boulevard.

On Erev Rosh Hashanah, the rabbi emeritus at the time, Jacob Pressman, would speak. Rabbi Pressman was a bit like Rabbi Stampfer, a builder of institutions, and the eponymous day school he started still provides a solid education for Los Angeles students.

In place of a sermon, he offered a series of blessings, that were one part wisdom, one part humor, and one part sarcastic takedown of our Jewish enemies. I don't think I have ever laughed as much in shul as I did when he spoke.

In an email exchange with his son, Rabbi Danny Pressman earlier in the month, Danny let me know that in his dad's memory, he had composed a series of blessings, interweaving his own with his fathers. He offered these as inspiration, and I have adapted them to offer you my own blessings mixed in with his. Thank you Danny, and may the name of Rabbi Jacob Pressman continue to be a blessing.

- As we begin a new year, with its promise of renewal, my heart opens and I wish so many things for you.
- May your holiday table be free of political rancor, family grudges, and gossip. Let it overflow with words of gratitude, hope, love and forgiveness so you can more easily count your many blessings.
- May the Orthodox Union take over kashrut supervision of the Internet, so that all spam will be eliminated.
- May the two countries we love, America and Israel, choose leaders who will place country over party, pragmatism over ideology, and dialogue over division... And let there be a trade war imbalance between the two countries, so that Israel exports its amazing food to us...is a good boureka in Portland to much to ask for, God?
- If you're young, may old folks tell you you're quite grown up for your age. If you're old, may young folks tell you that you don't look your age...and may God forgive both for lying.

- If you are blessed with children may they call you even when they don't need money; and if you have living parents, may they call you if they want to give you some while they're alive.
- May you never forget the favors others have done for you, and may you never remember the favors you have done for them.
- May President Trump, like Bilam the prophet, find himself unable to curse or lie this year. It will confuse him...and force the Democrats to find new hobbies...and in the sudden quiet, we will all be able to think again and be grateful for the blessings of this country.
- May you forgive your enemies. Nothing annoys them more.
- May someone invent an app for robo-calls, so that each time someone calls you, it determines who the caller is, and sets up a return call, wishing the person a Shanah Tovah U'metukah. A good sweet

year... Every day of the year... At 3 am, their local time. For all eternity.

- May you take to heart Judaism's teaching that every human is created in God's image and thus worthy of respect and care, and may that awareness add kindness and love to your daily lives.
- May your medical test results be negative, your mental outlook be positive, and your car never be parked in neutral on a hill.
- May you learn to keep yourself healthy by eating what you don't want, drinking what you don't like, and doing what you would rather not.
- May you not have to deal with unpleasant people, unkind people, or nitwits. And when you must, may you remember they are proof that God has a sense of humor...It makes them so much easier to bear.
- May you know that despite the relentless 24-hour cycle of disaster, rage, violence and cynicism, that there is far more goodness, beauty and decency in

the world than our media report, because God made our world and declared that it was good. So may you find joy in life to outweigh all the bad news and may your eyes be open to the sheer blessing of being alive and drawing one more breath.

- May you know the delight of being loved, and the fulfillment of loving others. May you give more than you take, laugh more than you cry, and listen more than you talk.
- May you know that there are angels, God's messengers and agents of kindness and care here on earth, and every day *you* can be one of them.
- And may you feel in the deepest way that God loves you, and that God wishes for you and all God's children a *Shanah Tovah U'M'Tukah*, a good and sweet, healthy and happy new year. All year, and not only at 3 am.
- And so do I. Amen