

Dear Rabbi Fried,

Maybe you can help me sort through my post-holiday emotions and confusion. On one hand, I feel exhilarated after such an uplifting high-holiday season, topped off by the joy of Sukkot and Simchat Torah. On the other hand, I feel relieved that it's all over, all the services, holiday meals, preparation, guests and eating were a strain. On the third hand, I feel sort of like a ship with the air out of its sails, like, just dropped back into the normal routine of the year, with no uplifting holiday or inspiration to keep me going. How do you hold on to what just happened?

Melissa K.

Dear Melissa,

You succeeded, in a few brief lines, to describe very accurately how so many people feel after the high holidays. Firstly, rest assured you're in good company and certainly far from a loner in your feelings. The meals, amount of time spent in synagogue, and emotional investment – staying on a “spiritual high” for such a long period of time put a strain on even the most observant of Jews. It's normal, so, (as un-Jewish as it may sound) : *no guilt!*

This period we passed through is certainly meant to be a source of inspiration for the coming year. Our Jewish hopes are to leave this season on a higher spiritual station than we were on the year before, in order to enter next year's season in a way to take us yet higher. This is our climb up the ladder of Kedusha, of spiritual growth, rung-by-rung, year-by-year, throughout our lifetimes.

The main generator of our spiritual energy is the high-holiday period. With all our emotional and spiritual energy that we can garner at this time, we propel ourselves to new, elevated levels and see the world from a different vantage point, realizing our potential selves. The challenge now, as you feel, is to remain connected to the generator in some way, and to build smaller “booster generators” to keep the electricity flowing throughout our wires for the rest of the year, until we get re-energized the following year.

At this time, take a pen and paper, and list the prayers, experiences and ideas that gave you the most inspiration these past weeks. Then, focus on one or two of them, and consider how you might incorporate those same experiences into your prayers or observances throughout the year. Specifically label those things in your mind as “buttons” to push, that will get your mind back into the space of the high holidays. I once heard a leading sage in Israel speak of doing this with the Shabbat prayers, which are a special time for reflection and peace, to “return” to the high holidays, once a week, every week. Sometimes it can be done through an on-going act of kindness to a family member or one in need.

The most powerful generator of all is the study of Torah. Use a new class, book, or study partner as a way to build yourself up from the inside, that you yourself should become a source of inspiration for others like the high holidays were an inspiration for you.

The Torah says the “Eyes of G-d are upon the Land from the beginning of ‘the year’ until the end of ‘year’.” The commentaries note the discrepancy between ‘the year’ and ‘year’. Some explain, at the beginning of a new year, we say “this will be **the** year”, different, better, elevated, improved relationships with my spouse, family, with G-d. But, alas, by the end of the year it's just “year”, no longer “the year”. Now's the chance to take the steps to ensure that at the **end** of this year, we'll say that **was** “the year”!