

# Rosh Hashanah Texts and Discussion

A Parable: Reb Yisrael Salanater and the Shoemaker (19th century; head of the Eastern European *mussar* movement, which was designed to further ethical and spiritual discipline.)

Late one night, Rabbi Yisrael Salanter walked past the home of an old shoemaker, and noticed that even though it was very late, the man was still working by the light of a dying candle. "Why are you still working?" he asked. "It is very late and soon that candle will burn out." The shoemaker replied, "As long as the candle is still burning, there is time to make repairs."

Questions for younger children:

1. What is the shoemaker doing while the candle is burning? What happens when the light goes out?
2. We don't use candles anymore, but we do have day and night. What are some things we do during the day? What are some things we do at night?
3. The story teaches us that as long as our lights are on, we have time to do work. On Rosh Hashanah, that work is trying to be nicer or kinder or more helpful in the coming year. What are some ways you can be better in this new year?

Questions for older children:

1. What is the message this story is trying to teach us?
2. How does this message relate to Rosh Hashanah?
3. What is something you would like to "repair" in the upcoming year?

A Parable: Rabbi Chaim of Tzanz (18th/19th century; famous Hasidic rabbi)

A person had been wandering in the forest for several days, unable to find a way out. Finally, in the distance, he saw someone walking towards him. With a heart full of joy, he thought to himself, "Now I will surely find a way out of this forest." When the two neared one another, the first asked the second, "Will you please tell me the way out?"

The other replied: "I also do not know the way out, for I too have been lost here for many days, but come, let us search for the way out together."

Questions for younger children:

1. Have you ever been lost? What does it feel like to be lost?
2. Is it easy or hard to ask others for help? Why?
3. Describe a time that you have asked someone for help?
4. Which do you like more: working with a friend or working by yourself? Why?
5. Do you think you can get more done working alone or with someone else? Why?

Questions for older children:

1. What is the message this story is trying to teach us?
2. What does this teach us about community?
3. What does this teach us about ourselves?
4. What path have you tried that you would never try again?