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## Jewish Cultural School & Society

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### Rosh Hashanah Reflections, 2005

*Claire Greenbaum*

**R**osh Hashana is the holiday that comes once a year, the beginning of a new start. When I was younger, all Rosh Hashana meant to me was a time when my family would have a giant party. We would then go to a river and throw in rocks while recounting something bad we had done the previous year. Frankly, back then all that mattered was finding pretty rocks to toss. And every year my brother and I would mention how mean we were to each other and how we wouldn't be like this next year. Of course, next year we were mentioning how mean we were to each other again. I understood then that this holiday was the start of the Jewish New Year, but I had little comprehension about the other aspects.

On the American New Year, friends and family get together and celebrate the fact that another year has passed, but Rosh Hashana is a more sober event. Rosh Hashana begins our Days of Awe. All Jews, secular and observant are expected to spend our time looking inside ourselves. Jews are expected to identify whom we have hurt in the past year, and ask him or her for forgiveness. Rosh Hashana is a time to turn over a new leaf, and try to live a happy, peaceful life. During Rosh Hashana we also recommit ourselves to Tikkun Olam.

Tikkun Olam literally means to heal the world. Unfortunately, our world is in

need of a lot of healing. Just recently, as we all know, Hurricane Katrina hit the gulf coast with devastating effects. New Orleans was destroyed as well as many gulf towns. The hurricane did more than property damage. Eight hundred people died because of the hurricane. On the news, we saw how helpless we can be before the forces of nature. But we also saw more. We saw people, mostly poor who still stranded in their homes a week after Katrina hit. Federal, state, and local governments overlooked these people. They were left in their homes full of rancid water for days with little help reaching them. Family members were separated from each other with no means of contact, wondering if the others were still alive, or if they were now another body to be added to the death count. The sick, the elderly and those without cars were unable to evacuate and were forced to wait for help that sometimes just did not come.

For the first time in years, we saw a lot of poor people on T.V. The federal government did not just overlook these poor people after Katrina; the government has abandoned them for years. These are the people who have been left behind.

So how do we heal the world? As secular Jews, we do not heal the world through prayer; we heal the world through



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action. First we must help those who have lost homes by donating time, money and clothes to the Red Cross or other organizations. But more needs to be done. Even if we rebuild the homes of the refugees, many will still be in the same position of poverty as they were before Katrina. We need politicians who will work to aid the poor (even if our taxes go up). The government must do more for education,

health care, and the providing of job opportunities for people in poverty. FDR did this and so can our current government.

Katrina wounded the world. This year when we look inside ourselves, we should not just pay attention to how to heal ourselves, but we must look outside ourselves. We must look at the wounds of the world and work to heal it as well.

*Claire Greenbaum is a graduate of the JCSS and a skilled shofar player.*