

THE HOPE YOU DON'T FEEL (YET)

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It's almost Rosh Hashanah, and you've been feeling worn down. The headlines are relentless: violence, climate disaster, political turmoil. The cause you've poured yourself into this year has stalled. Even in your personal life, you've been stuck in patterns you swore you'd change last year.

Then a friend reaches out. They're organizing a Rosh Hodesh circle focused on hope and ask if you'll help lead. "You're an amazing educator," they say. "I've seen you facilitate before, and I'd love for you to lead this session."

You say yes. You know how to create space for others. But as the gathering approaches, doubt creeps in. You don't feel hopeful. You're not even sure what you believe about hope right now. And the group is expecting inspiration.

Still, you're leading. The question isn't whether to show up. It's how.

How do you guide others toward hope when you're still trying to find it yourself?



JEWISH COMPASS

Rosh Hashanah asks us to imagine the year ahead with hope. But what if you're not feeling hopeful? Two Jewish thinkers offer different ways to hold hope even when life feels heavy:

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, a leading 20th-century Modern Orthodox rabbi and Jewish philosopher, teaches in his essay *Kol Dodi Dofek* that when we suffer, we shouldn't deny it or explain it away. Instead of asking why this is happening to me, he says we should ask, what we should do now. For him, hope is something you build through action, by choosing to respond, and move forward, even in the dark.

Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, a modern Jewish historian who explored memory, exile, and identity, wrote in *Toward a History of Jewish Hope* that Jewish hope has endured even when it was fragile. Sometimes it was mixed with despair. Sometimes it was just a thread. But the act of reaching for hope, however shaky, became part of Jewish survival.

These two voices both insist that you don't need to feel hopeful to hold onto hope.

For Soloveitchik, hope comes from doing.

For Yerushalmi, hope comes from belonging to a people who have never stopped reaching for it.

This Rosh Hashanah, what would it mean to hold both views of hope, to be honest about how heavy things feel, and still take even a single step toward hope?