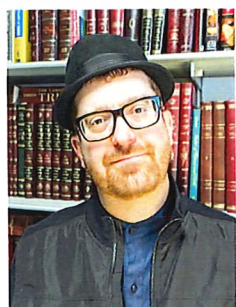


Unvarnished Time: Reconstructing Reality in Marcheshvan

Rav Aubrey Glazer



Have you ever woken up from anesthesia?

בן אדם מה לך נרדם, קום קרא בתחנונים...
"Sleeper, awake! Arise and pour out your supplications..."

If you have ever woken up in a recovery room after major surgery under general anesthesia, you know that constructed reality does not return instantly. There is a disorienting,

weightless gap. First comes a faint awareness of breathing, then the cold ambient air, the steady beep of monitors, and finally the gradual, grounding realization of your own limbs, your own name, and the physical world waiting for you. You do not simply wake up; you reconstruct reality piece by piece.

In *Being You: A New Science of Consciousness*, neuroscientist Anil Seth—whose research at the University of Sussex maps the biological basis of human perception—explores this precise threshold of selfhood. Unlike deep sleep, anesthesia is a total, temporary suspension of consciousness—a complete pause in the brain's continuous, predictive construction of reality. Seth posits that our daily conscious experience is a form of "controlled hallucination," where our mind constantly projects models of reality based on incoming sensory signals. When we emerge from that void, we must slowly rebuild our presence from the ground up.

This neuroscientific dynamic mirrors a deep spiritual question on our calendar: How do we reconstruct our spiritual reality after months of heightened sacred drama? From the introspective accounting of Elul—where the haunting words of *Ben Adam Ma Lecha Nirdam* first shook us from our spiritual slumber—through the awe of Rosh Hashanah, the stillness of Yom Kippur, and the exuberant open-air dwelling of Sukkot, our spiritual senses have been set on high alert. Tishrei is an explosion of deliberate predictions and vivid symbols. Together, we construct a hyper-vivid spiritual reality: the piercing blast of the tekiah, the fragrant scent of the etrog, and the collective vibration of hundreds of voices singing *Avinu Malkeinu*.

This marathon culminates in Shemini Atzeret, a holiday whose name implies a holding back—a holy pause where God asks us to linger one moment longer before the grand machinery of the festival season grinds to a halt. Shemini Atzeret acts as our spiritual recovery room. It is the gentle transition between the ecstatic sensory overload of Simchat Torah and the quiet

awakening that follows. The Midrash compares Shemini Atzeret to a host who asks dear friends to stay just one more day before departing. It is the moment we linger in the doorway, letting our pulse slow down, allowing the spiritual high to settle, and preparing to open our eyes to the ordinary world.

And then, almost overnight, the floor drops out. We step directly into Marcheshvan. Historically nicknamed *Mar* (bitter) Cheshvan because it contains no holidays, no fasts, no shofars, and no specialized rituals, it is the quietest corridor on the Jewish calendar. The sukkah is dismantled, white garments return to storage, and sanctuary lights dim to their standard settings. We are thrown back into plain, unvarnished time.

How do we prevent this return to the everyday from collapsing back into spiritual unconsciousness? This was the central quest of Rabbi Aharon "Reb Arele" Roth (1894–1947), the Jerusalem-based Hasidic mystic and founder of the *Shomer Emunim* community renowned for his fiery devotion to spiritual authenticity. In his seminal work *Shomer Emunim*, Reb Arele articulated a radical framework for *hisorerus*—the state of active spiritual awakening. He taught that true wakefulness is not a passive state you find yourself in, but a deliberate, vigorous effort to pull oneself out of the soul's natural slumber (*shenah*). For Reb Arele, the greatest danger to spiritual life was spiritual numbness—living on "autopilot," where one performs rituals while asleep at the wheel.

Reb Arele insisted that the ultimate test of any spiritual awakening occurs not during moments of ecstatic inspiration, but in how one carries that awareness into ordinary, unadorned moments. Just as waking post-surgery requires us to accept the physical reality of our bodies—complete with our surgical scars and human limitations—Marcheshvan demands that we accept the reality of our daily lives without the external scaffolding of the holidays.

The holiness of Tishrei was sustained by collective ceremony; the holiness of Marcheshvan must be sustained by individual, quiet integrity, daily kindness, and steady practice. It is the month where we ask: Now that the sanctuary music has quieted and the room has cleared, who am I when I wake up?

As we enter this long, unadorned month, let us not view its silence as a void or a bitterness. Treat it as a clear, necessary awakening. The shofar has cleared away our numbness; the calendar has done its work. Now, in the crisp everyday air of Marcheshvan, we open our eyes to the world as it truly is—and begin the quiet, essential work of simply being awake.

COMMUNITY



- Join Hillel Academy of Greater Dayton for an evening of laughter, community, and support featuring acclaimed comedian Joel Chasnoff. **Sunday, October 18** at 6:30 PM
- Jewish Book Council Bonus Event- Bruce Feller in Conversation with Rabbi Buchdahl via Zoom
- Cultural Arts and Book Series Opening Event, in partnership with Miami Valley Jewish Genealogy & History- Author Michael Kimmel – Playmakers the Jewish Entrepreneurs Who Created the Toy Industry in America. Jewishdayton.org/events