

Rev. Nicolas Kazarian

ADDRESS

Combat Antisemitism Movement

Virtual Meeting

September 12, 2023, 12pm EST

Welcoming the Jewish New Year of 5784

Distinguished Guests,
Honored Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Friends,

What an honor! First allow me to thank the Combat Antisemitism Movement team for their invitation to participate in this special Global Rosh Hashanah Celebration. As we gather here today to celebrate the sacred and joyous occasion of Rosh Hashanah, allow me to convey to you the greetings and best wishes of His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America.

I would also like to take a moment to explore a fascinating similarity that transcends religious boundaries and unites us in the concept of divine time. This common thread weaves through both Jewish and Orthodox Christian traditions, manifesting itself in the liturgical calendar as the concept of "kairos."

The rhythm of the life of the Eastern Orthodox Church is expressed through the liturgical calendar. Most recently, we observed the Ecclesiastical New Year on September 1st. This day carries a sense of renewal and spiritual rejuvenation, akin to the anticipation that accompanies the secular New Year celebrations. It is a time for self-reflection, repentance, and the recommitment to one's faith journey.

In like manner, the Jewish New Year of Rosh Hashanah, which falls around a similar time in the month of September is also seen as a time of deep introspection. The two-day period of Rosh Hashanah ushers in the Ten Days of Repentance, a designated period in which our Jewish Brothers and Sisters reflect on their actions of the past year and seek forgiveness from both God and their fellow human beings. Rosh Hashanah, too, embodies the essence of renewal, forgiveness, and a fresh start.

Between these two observances also lies a shared emphasis on self-examination and renewal. For both traditions the liturgical new year encourages adherents to take stock of their actions, to make amends, and to strive for personal and spiritual growth. In this way, the beginning of the Orthodox Ecclesiastical New Year and Rosh Hashanah offer opportunities for people to align their lives more closely with their values.

Another compelling parallel is the importance of community and connection during these times. Both occasions invite individuals to gather with family, friends, and fellow believers to celebrate, pray, and share meaningful moments. These gatherings foster a sense of unity, reinforcing the idea that our spiritual and personal journeys are intertwined with the well-being of our communities.

Additionally, the themes of gratitude and thanksgiving run deep in both traditions. As we step into the new year, there is a recognition of the blessings we've received and a call to express gratitude for them. This gratitude fuels a sense of humility and encourages a mindful approach to life. In such humility I am reminded of Psalm 141, *"I call to You, O Lord; You are my hope, my only hope in this life. Hear my earnest prayer, for I am brought very low. Deliver me from those who persecute me, for they are stronger than I. Bring my soul out of prison that I may confess Your Name..."*

As many of you know, the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations have enjoyed more

than forty years of fruitful collaboration, understanding, and dialogue between Judaism and Orthodox Christianity. The history of this bilateral relationship built on a desire to learn from one another has shown on numerous occasions that these two traditions possess a wealth of commonalities

As we reflect on these elements that contain similar expressions of faith, we are reminded that there are universal human experiences that tie us together. These traditions inspire us to embrace opportunities for growth, to seek forgiveness and reconciliation, and to foster a sense of community that transcends religious and cultural boundaries.

I feel honored and privileged to be among you today. In closing, I would like to extend warm congratulations to you and your loved ones on the occasion of the Jewish New Year. May this Rosh Hashanah usher in a year filled with joy, peace, and prosperity for you and your community.

Shanah tova!