

*This message was part of Rabbi Havivi's sermon on the second day of Rosh Hashana*

I had a wonderful teacher, Rabbi Al Lewis, alav hashalom, who passed away this year. He was the father of Rabbi Shalom Lewis, the Rabbi of Congregation Etz Chaim in Atlanta. In one of our classes at the Seminary, the senior Rabbi Lewis told this story:

*During his lunch break at work, Joe took a seat on a bench next to a fellow worker and began rummaging in his paper sack. He pulled out a sandwich, unwrapped it and muttered, "Yich! Peanut butter!" He opened the next sandwich, examined it and again muttered in disgust, "Ugh, peanut butter!"*

*Joe left both sandwiches uneaten. His buddy, who was greatly enjoying a cheese sandwich, sympathetically asked, "If you don't like peanut butter sandwiches, why don't you ask your wife to fix you some other kind?"*

*Joe frowned at him and said, "Wife? I packed these lunches myself!"*

Like Joe, many of us are constantly complaining about problems and conditions that we have packed into our own lives. And like Joe, many of us are just not willing to face up to the fact that we ourselves made the sandwich. If we are upset about our spouse, or if our children seem to be inconsiderate, or if we are angry with another person, we regard them as the cause of our problems. Right? The answer is sometimes "wrong!" It is true that there are some areas of *our* lives over which we have little or no control. But many of us have fallen into a routine, a habit, a way of living, that is *our* doing, not someone else's. Every day we, as it were, pack our own sandwiches and then complain that we don't like them.

This is this season of the year that reminds us that we can change the pattern.

We can, if we are so inclined, change the contents of our sandwich to something more tasty, more meaty, more healthy, more enjoyable. Or we can end the year complaining: "Yich! Another peanut butter sandwich!" and then start the new year over again with the same menu.

Rosh Hashanah/Yom Kippur/ This entire yomtov /beginning of the year season - gives us the opportunity to start afresh, to acquire new tastes, new ways of living, and it teaches us that, more often than we are willing to admit, we pack our own lunches in this world.

We have a beautiful world all around us – our health, our family, nature, challenges, new things to learn, new ways of framing and enjoying our relationships, so much life to be lived! Let's each pack in as much tasty lunch for ourselves as we can.

Wishing you and yours shanah tovah, and g'mar tov,

Eliezer Havivi