

A High Holiday Story

BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE

Once a King was lost in the forest. He asked several villagers how to find his way home, but none knew. Nor did they recognize the King. One bedraggled but wise villager stepped forward, filled with reverence and respect for he recognized the King. He directed him home and also walked with the King to keep him safe.

As they arrived at the palace, the King, seeing a special quality in his guide, appointed the villager a special advisor. Over the years the man rose to be a Prime Minister. But various temptations arose in his duties. In time he plotted to advance his own interests and betrayed the King. The King discovered the betrayal and ordered his execution.

The day of the execution they granted the condemned a single wish. His wish was to appear before the King in the peasant garb in which he first met him. Seeing him in that garb, the King remembered the man's essential goodness and pardoned him.

This parable from Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev is about the New Year. The shofar is the garment and Israel the villager. We have strayed but during the High Holidays appear before God as we did at Sinai, reminding ourselves and God of the original covenant and our promise. We are pardoned and have the precious chance to begin anew.