Yom Kippur Occupies Wall Street

Posted At : October 10, 2011 2:37 PM | Posted By : Seth Chalmer

Related Categories: democracy, socioeconomic status, politics, discourse, poverty, social justice, holidays, social issues, prayer, culture, economy, employment, justice, religion, dialogue, political behavior

As the Forward **reports**, hundreds of Jews (and others, one presumes) gathered in the midst of the ongoing financial district protests on Friday and Saturday for Yom Kippur prayers:

> The high point came during one part of the sermon, as Getzel's voice rose louder and louder:
>
> "Yom Kippur is the day that we are forgiven for worshipping the golden calf! What is the golden calf? It is the essence of idol worship! It is the fallacy that gold is God!"
>
> ...There are plans to build a sukkah at New York's Occupy Wall Street and to continue holding Shabbat services until the protest is over.

That Jews should become involved in this (largely) economic protest is unsurprising. As **Steven Windmueller** has **written**, the economic upheaval of recent years has "devastating implications" for the Jewish community. Much economic coverage in Jewish media sources have focused on the effects of this crisis on Jewish philanthropists and communal organizations, but Windmueller also notes that "A new class of 'near-poor and new poor' Jews is one of the outcomes of this economic crisis." Jews, too, can be have-nots.

Speaking personally, it rubs me the wrong way that an occasion for repentance should be mixed up in an occasion of rebuking/protesting the actions of others. Of course all of us should criticize society when we feel societal structures are unjust, but shouldn't Yom Kippur be a day when it is important to turn around the scrutiny on oneself, focusing on one's own actions, beliefs, and responsibilities rather than on others? A sermon such as the one quoted above, attacking the greed/idolatry of others (a perfectly appropriate topic for another day) seems to miss the mark, in my opinion, on that day. Yom Kippur should be a day to ask urgently: what am *I* doing wrong?

Click here for more BJPA resources on the economy.