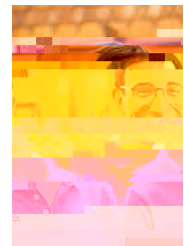


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**Shabbat Parashat Ki Tavo / Selihot
September 1, 2018 - 21 Elul 5778
REPRINT**



**By: Rabbi Ephraim Pelcovits
Director, L.A./Southern California Region
New Israel Fund**

Eureka and Teshuva

Torah Reading: Deuteronomy 26:1 - 29:8

Haftarah Reading: Isaiah 60:1-22

It finally really hit me last Tuesday night that the High Holy Days are coming, while I was sitting outside at LA's gorgeous Hollywood Bowl for a concert. A cool breeze blew through the hills, I momentarily shivered, and in that instant I knew it was autumn: time for honey cake; and shofarot; and also time for repentance. Why did this realization about the impending Days of Awe come to me then, I wondered, instead of in front of a sacred book, or at our beautiful minyan, while reciting the Hebrew month's extra Psalm preparing us for the High Holy Days?

I then recalled a favorite article, published nearly ten years ago in the New Yorker magazine, by Jonah Lehrer, titled "The Eureka Hunt." In that piece, Lehrer asked, "Why do big ideas come to us when they do and why at such strange moments?" In a journey that wends its way through history, military technology and neuroscience, Lehrer eventually concludes that our minds – despite popular belief about the need for exacting focus and careful attention – actually require relaxation, space and distraction to think outside the box and arrive at big ideas. Perhaps a cool Hollywood breeze while listening to the LA Phil isn't as strange a path to the Season of Repentance as I might have originally thought!

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