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## RED & BLACK ... And A Kosher Elephant?

Where did the summer go? I can't believe we're already back to school. So much for my idea of using the summer to finally get myself organized!

I appreciate that we are not working with schools during the summer, but getting organized while the girls are home all day seems counter-intuitive. I would think you would have more demands on your time – not less.

That seems to be my problem year-round. I'm literally running out of hours in the day. And now I feel like I'm surrounded by chaos, so I'm getting very overwhelmed.

Sounds like you are already there. But, define "chaos." Piles of paper? General clutter? Unfinished projects? Or an overly optimistic "to do" list?

All of the above, except my list is things that have to happen. Including everything related to the start of a new school year. And now that Natasha is in high school, it not only changes the schedule, but puts more emphasis on the fact she really needs to work on her study habits.

She is aware that high school is a new start. Give her some time and see what happens.

She's had all of middle school, not to mention the entire summer, to think about it.

Using that logic, how many people do you think took time in August to reflect on the past year in preparation for Rosh Hashanah? Sometimes you need an event – a holiday – a crisis – to make you stop and think.

Only you would come up with that analogy. But hopefully you're right about Natasha. Meanwhile, Rosh Hashanah came out so early this year, which means that before I know it, Halloween will be here. Then Chanukah arrives even before Thanksgiving. I don't want to think about the "work" that brings with it. I know everything will get done, but I also know I'll be exhausted.

Yes, it is important to plan ahead. Have you included "be overwhelmed" and "be exhausted" on your holiday "to do" list?

**DISCLAIMER:** We are real people. We are not claiming to be experts in any given field, but rather are becoming experts of our own lives.

Cute. But fairly accurate actually. And with pumpkins already on display in front of the grocery stores, even though it's still in the upper 90s, can you blame me?

We live in Houston. It could be in the 90s on Thanksgiving.

You're missing my point. This is the start of the "silly season." From now until the New Year, time will fly by.

That is almost four months – a third of a year – that you are "writing off" because of holidays? Since we are still in the midst of the High Holy Days, maybe it would be the perfect time for you to stop and think about the real meaning of the holidays.

Interesting concept – spend the Jewish New Year thinking about Halloween, Thanksgiving and beyond. And in case you can't tell, I'm being sarcastic.

The Jewish New Year is about reflecting back over the last year, making amends and doing things "better" in the future. I would venture to guess that most people reflect on the "big picture," however, the reality is that it should impact everything we do.

But reflection isn't going to help me with my feelings of being overwhelmed, because it isn't going to magically give me more hours in the day.

Really? I suspect that if you take some time to reflect on what is most important about the holidays, you will find that you do not have to do everything you have always done.

I keep thinking about how you taught me to "eat an elephant" and tackle big projects "one bite at a time." But I'm so overwhelmed and the elephants are a stampede.

You have it backwards. First, you identify the elephant, and then you determine the pieces. For example, I know you love to decorate the house for Halloween and Thanksgiving, but do you really have to decorate every room in addition to the inflatables on the front lawn? How much time does that take?

Including the time it takes to pull out all the boxes from the garage, decorate and then repack? It's manageable, but first I have to straighten up the house, which is a big reason why I'm stressing out. I can barely walk a straight line in my house without stumbling over boxes or hitting a wall of stuff I've just thrown into piles, waiting to be sorted. A project that was postponed when the girls decided to switch bedrooms last month.

Well, new rooms mean new attitudes. One of those "events" that makes you re-focus. Hopefully, it also means that you and the girls cleaned out stuff that might never have happened otherwise.

Only you would find the silver living in a house full of mess and clutter. But I would have preferred the timing not interfere with the holidays, as I couldn't even celebrate the first night of Rosh Hashanah in the dining room. Instead, brisket dinner was served on the kitchen table.

I thought you told me it was a great dinner, with the kids enjoying themselves and plenty of laughter along with the prayers and discussion of what the holiday means.

Yes, but I still have to deal with the chaos of this house. And I don't know how I'm going to find the time, especially with Red & Black continuing to go in new directions.

Stop and reflect. Prioritize and at least nibble on some of the less important elephants.

Oh, I have always focused on just the most important things, which means everything else never seems to get done.

I understand, but there are studies that prove that you need to take breaks to rejuvenate your brain. When you are working on Red & Black, take occasional short breaks to work on another project.

I do, but that's when I usually do laundry or figure out the next week's after-school schedule.



Tina "Red" Pennington and Mandy "Black" Williams are sisters and co-authors of "What I Learned About Life When My Husband Got Fired!" The informative, entertaining book discusses values, priorities, relationships, financial literacy and much more.

### UPCOMING APPEARANCES

Sept. 27 –Texas Department of Criminal Justice (Chaplaincy Dept.)

Oct. 3 –FPA Houston Financial Planning Symposium

For an up-to-date listing of all upcoming public appearances, as well as details on these, please go to "Future Appearances" at [www.redandblackbooks.com](http://www.redandblackbooks.com).

This is when you need to think about what is the best time of day to do things. I would do those tasks at night when you're less alert, and you can do things that are "brainless."

It's funny. We talk to audiences about values and priorities and how they impact time management, but somehow I've forgotten to apply all of that to my own life. And to my own "elephants."

That is why the Jewish New Year is so important. Everyone forgets things. But the holidays are a perfect opportunity to reflect and re-focus.

Maybe next year I should make a Rosh Hashanah elephant for dinner as a reminder.

I do not think elephants are kosher, so I think you should stick to brisket and challah.