



Temple Beth Israel - Shaare Zedek:

The Rabbi's Message

אלול *Elul* 5782-5783

Some Thoughts on the Eve of the New Year:

From the people who invite you to celebrate the new year for the trees *in the dead of winter*... We are now approaching the new year for people, and the birthday of the world, *Rosh Hashanah*. Yet, you might wonder, it is fall in the northern hemisphere. The world's growth is peaking, the day is shortening, the sun is changing, and life is preparing to rest—how can this be our “new” year? How can we nourish and restore our souls and try new things for a richer and more spiritual engagement of our lives when we watch the green of the world recede and as we feel the wind turn cool and then cold?

Nature puts itself to bed. It rests, it heals, and it grows, even if we cannot see it. The winds blow the leaves away and pile them, and the trees look strange and bare.

So, too, is our human nature. The social scientist Maurice Halbwachs described the threshold of memory as the waves at the shore of the sea. He described the tides pulling back the past as we stand on the shore and listen to the waves. It is always flowing away from us; we are always moving to the future. The way of nature and time is to ebb and flow with the tides. The old leaves are pulled away to make room for new to

grow. Our celebration of the birth of the world accepts and celebrates this reality. We as humans stand on the shore of a great sea of time and experience, between the past that we know and the future that is wholly unknowable to us.

This is where we begin again—on the shore between past and future. We live in the present that we, ourselves create, yet we need reminders to snap ourselves back to our present-time reality.

Our nature is to imagine the holy in this world as something both human-like and human-unlike. We as a tradition imagined angels—somewhat human and formed, somewhat divine and formless. Angels live a fixed existence, unlike us at the shore of the great sea of time, unlike us who must balance our gaze into the past and our daydreams about the future. Angels do not imagine the future as we do; they fixate in duty and practice. The Jewish thinker Walter Benjamin described the Jewish orientation to history as the “strange angel,” whose face is fixated on the past as event after event piles up in the well of time. The new year comes and we Jews, we humans, blast for each other the Shofar. The blast of the Shofar at the announcement of the new year on Rosh Hashanah wakes us up and says, you are *not* angels, you are human. Do not stare at the past. Live between the past and future. Live in the present. *Fix your attention to the here and now, even as nature sleeps.* This is why we are *commanded* to hear the great shofar blast at the turning of the year.

High Holy Day Services:

We will hold services for both Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur both together in our sanctuary and via Zoom or YouTube (we will update you as to which platform we will be using).

Erev Rosh Hashana: Sunday, September 25. Special learning session on the themes of the holiday at the sanctuary, 6:30 pm - 7:00 pm
Evening services will be from 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm

Rosh Hashana Day: Shacharit (morning) services from 10:00 am-12:30 pm
Tashlich 1:00 pm (we will meet at the YMCA parking lot, and walk one block to the foot bridge over the Ottawa River), and then you are invited to gather at Faurot Park after if you would like to picnic, BYO)
Minchah-Ma'ariv (afternoon/ evening) services from 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm
Oneg will follow in the social hall

Erev Yom Kippur: Kol Nidre (the Annulment of Vows) on Tuesday, October 4 from 7:30 pm-10:00 pm

Yom Kippur Day: Wednesday, October 5, Shacharit (morning) services will be from 10:00 am - 12:30 pm
Minchah, Yizkor, and Ne'ila (afternoon, memorial, and closing) services from 4:00 pm - 6:30 pm
Break-the-fast following services in the social hall

Congregational Education:

I am thrilled to preview a very exciting education program for this new Jewish year.

I myself and our president, Marin Luria Harbur, will be leading a couple of reading groups over the course of the year. The first will focus on the idea, following Rabbi David Cooper, of living and practicing our religion with intention, in the present, with the understanding that God Godself is a “verb,” a way of doing, being, and moving. For this series we will study *God is a Verb*. We will also be looking at a new way back into meaning in life by studying Judaism as a thing to which we return to that can embrace and support us, not as something that we edit or change to suit what is left after everything else in our lives. For this series we will study *Here All Along* by Sara Hurwitz.

Finally, in a return to our study of liturgy—which we do so that we can find deeper meaning and be more profoundly healed and transformed by our services and work together—we will explore the evening and morning services of Shabbat with Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman’s *My People’s Prayerbook*. This will be intensive, intentional, and deeply personal study, which we will do both during Torah study and at other sessions during the week.