

From the Rabbi

Sunlight shines into my home office, sometimes too brightly, but most of the time, just enough to uplift my heart. You will see me squinting on Zoom at just the time of the afternoon when the sun is directly in my eyes.

I refuse to put window dressing on the three-sectioned window in front of my desk. During these challenging times, we surely need that light.

One of the challenges of this time is how much we need spiritual nourishment, yet how some of us find the online experience difficult. I take enormous pleasure in seeing your faces on our Zoom services, classes and programs. Yet I am also missing those of you who feel uncomfortable in the virtual community experience.

Sunshine is a reminder to hold onto hope. It beckons us to patience. It reminds us of the warmth of the love we share with friends, community, and family. It invites us to take a deep breath and realign ourselves. We may be stuck at home, but beyond our vision is a new beginning; a brighter day awaits.

5780 was the year our world was turned upside-down. Too many of us have suffered loss or illness and we cannot gather in person to console one another. Too many of us have suffered economic losses or worry for what might come next. Isolation can make that feel like a dark cloud around us—what is our way out of this?

I endure the bright sunlight in my eyes for a brief time each day because I wish to see into the coming year. The clouds cannot prevail; faith and love and community will carry us through.

While I hold faith and love close, I know these are only words if not for our actions. The New Year, Rosh Hashanah, will soon help us to turn the calendar pages in our hearts and minds. Rosh Hashanah beckons us to *return again*. How will we return to our best selves in the coming year?

Every year we have the opportunity to begin anew. Yet this year is different. Most of us have not previously experienced such a pressing need for a new beginning. We might wish this stressful time would just go away. But we know it won't. God gave us the power to care for each other, to fight hatred and prejudice, to address climate change, and to find ways out of this pandemic crisis. It is up to us to use our God-given capacities for these new beginnings.

We will overcome fear and isolation—the Jewish people know resilience from enduring rough times over centuries. We know we can endure, and begin again, together. May we be here for each other in every way possible, and may sunshine prevail.

From the Rabbi, cont'd.

High Holiday Services Reinvented for a Pandemic!

Oh, how we wish we could gather in our sacred space to see each other, hug and wish each other *L'Shanah Tovah!* But this year, we must keep each other safe. And so our sacred space will be broadcast, and our hugs will have to be virtual.

Cantor Steve and I, with help from our team, are pulling out all the stops to offer engaging High Holiday services online, with many creative new additions to help us to be connected, uplifted and inspired.

Cantor Steve has been working with the singing community and the use of new hardware and software to create a virtual chorus to bring greater beauty to some of our major High Holiday melodies.

We have worked to divide all of our services into clear segments which will be professionally recorded in advance. We will be able to upload all the segments so you can access them individually, if you'd like. We will also be working with a terrific tech professional—our wonderful Dan Rome—who will help us to stream the recorded segments live from the sanctuary. Cantor Steve and I will be in the sanctuary on the Holy Days to offer live comments in between the recorded segments of the main elements of the services.

You will be able to turn on Zoom and remain present with us for the whole time, or tap into the segments as you wish.

We have learned a lot in these last months about how people best relate to Zoom services, and have shortened our services for this year to hold the flow and inspiration of the essential prayers.

We are working with wonderful volunteers who are recruiting others to record the English readings (mostly poetry) and also the Torah/Haftarah readings. These will be seamlessly woven into the service recordings by our amazing videographer, Teo Zagar.

You will be able to enjoy Dan Rome's exquisite shofar sounding on the second day of Rosh Hashanah and the end of Yom Kippur. We will also have recordings of many of our members and children sounding the shofar at the end of Yom Kippur. It will be awesome!!

Two teams of our teens are working to produce two very special slide shows of member photos to be viewed at particular times in our services—"Photos from the Bima" will stream at our Torah services, and "Yizkor Photos" will show our beloved family members (and names) for whom we say Kaddish during Yizkor. This will be shown at the Yizkor service on Yom Kippur.

We are working with two teams of talented OZ artistic folks to help us prepare sharings for the month of Elul preceding Rosh Hashanah and for the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. We have fabulous talent in our community—wait 'til you see what they offer us! This will augment the messages that Cantor Steve, Rabbi Edleson and I are preparing to send out during Elul, and the special four-part workshops we are planning together.

And, on the second day of Rosh Hashanah we are collaborating with my friend and dear colleague [Rabbi Debra Newman Kamin](#) of Am Yisrael Conservative Congregation in the Chicago area for a very special add-on service. Yoel Sykes, one of the talented singer-songwriter-liturgists from the wonderful [Nava Tehila](#) prayer group in Jerusalem, will be offering a one-hour contemplative and musical service, following our morning service on Rosh Hashanah Day 2. Without Zoom we never could have imagined collaborating in such a way. I can't wait!

Along the way, we are looking for every possible opportunity for open Zoom schmooze time. We wish we could be together, and we crave being in the synagogue, but we will do our best to re-create the communal experience even while we are in our own homes.

These are the highlights—we have even more planned, including *Selichot* with Temple Sinai, *Tashlich*, and more. A team led by Naomi is working on children's services and programs. Stay tuned for our uplifting, healing, and inspiring High Holy Days.

~ *Rabbi Amy*