



TEMPLE BETH SHALOM

Connection • Caring • Meaning • Making Memories Together. . . All in Your Shul by the Sea!

Dear Friends,

Do you feel a year older and wiser, or just a lot older? If you answered that you aren't sure, then you are definitely not alone. The pandemic has been a soul-grinding experience for so many. It's easy to slip into wallowing in our losses . . . however minor or major, we feel them like a third-degree sunburn. For relief, we get distracted by the shiny difficulty right before our eyes, forgetting how essential it is for us to see beyond the moment.

Yet, we have become understandably consumed with how to survive (and, perhaps, even thrive) that we often miss the timeless wisdom our heritage has and continues to gift us, turning the fleeting into the constants in our lives. And so, here we find ourselves: We are both victim and perpetrator, both participant and spectator, both *Tzaddik* and *Rasha* (do-gooder and ne'er-do-well). We have come this far and, sadly, have continued to find our path lacking. Despite our persistent fatigue, let us continue on the journey, but this time in a new direction.

If we have taken the month of Elul leading up to the *Yamim Nora'im* (the Days of Awe) seriously, we have been preparing our souls as well as one can for this moment of recalibration for at least the last three weeks. And, now, we have the opportunity to gather together to uplift each other even though we cannot offer a hand. That fact cannot feel the warmth of each other handshakes or hugs will not stop us from touching each other's souls.

Instead, like last year, we will rush into the breach. We will stand together to celebrate the New Year with all of its hopes and promises while remaining aware that we are being measured for clothing fitted to our fate. Let us not sit in the ashes of our disappointment. After all, we are blessed to have this opportunity to bring ourselves spiritually close despite being physically apart.

In the end, we cannot escape ourselves: None of us is a perfect person (layperson or Rabbi alike). We ask for forgiveness for small transgressions and great ones. And, as always, if we are blessed with the opportunity to be invited to stand by each other, together, as we search for the way forward, the way illuminated by the light of that which is greater than any of us alone. For, in the end, all that matters is that "we" is great than "I."

Neither celebration on Rosh Hashanah nor *Teshuvah* (repentance) on Yom Kippur are spectator sports. Each one requires more focus than observation, but both always call for more participation than isolation. This year's High Holidays services will be much like our spiritual experience last year, which was, we had hoped, a kind of novelty. And, as such, our participation — on our own or together online — will make all the difference. How so? When each of us sees our neighbor singing, even if we cannot hear each other, we are able to share in a common experience.

So, when we are together during services, please raise your voice as we raise our spirits; these experiences are inseparable. Nothing is more powerful on the High Holy Days than living a shared human experience, especially one of a spiritual nature.

To wit, please see the attached sheets for some important information about our services this year and how to participate in making your and your neighbor's prayer experience more spiritually uplifting and meaningful. I have also included some materials to enhance our experience and, for those of you who will be receiving the Zoom informational email for High Holidays services close to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, I will include a link to a PDF of our High Holiday Supplement. These resources are best viewed before services and after services to elevate our prayer experience.

It is my hope that despite any technological or other bumps in the road, each of us will find something meaningful from our shared prayer experience to inspire us toward a world made more whole. As was the case last year, no matter what we find on the other side of this year's High Holidays, let us remember to love our neighbor as we love ourselves (or, even better). And, most certainly, may we all go from strength to strength.

L'Shanah Tovah Tikateivu v'Tichateimu — May we be written and sealed for a good year.

Rabbi Fox and Sarah, Matan and Doron

P.S. For your reference, the following have been included in this mailing:

- This letter from Rabbi Fox
- High Holidays Service Schedule
- Guide to High Holidays Services via Zoom at Temple Beth Shalom
- The *Tashlikh* service booklet to be used for your contemplative *Tashlikh* alone or with your family on the **first** day of Rosh Hashanah
- A guided meditation to aid you in making your *Tashlikh* service meaningful
- Since we will be abbreviating the reading of each day's *Haftarah*, commentaries and study guides have been included to add to your spiritual experience. These include:
 - Rosh Hashanah First Day *Haftarah*
 - Rosh Hashanah Second Day *Haftarah*
 - Yom Kippur *Mincha* — Book of Jonah study guide