



Torah for Turbulent Times

"Opening Up to the Ebb & Flow"

“Life has its own ebb and flow. Rhythm of breaths, high and low. Muted songs and raucous sounds, heavens above or on the ground. Countless waves of hope and fear beat against the heart, far and near. Rays of the sun, clouds of doubt, serene and loud, calm and bout.” (excerpt by Yasmin Khan) This Friday we welcome the Hebrew month of Elul, the last month of the Jewish year before Rosh Hashanah. In terms of spiritual time it’s the ebb of the past year that makes way for the flow of the beginning of a new year.

With its own rituals and practices it gently nudges and prepares us for what’s to come. Most prominent is the daily sounding of the shofar to awaken our consciousness. We read Psalm 27, which alludes to Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkot. In Hebrew “Elul” - spelled *alef, lamed, vav, lamed* - is also said to be an acrostic for the phrase - “*Ani l’dodi, v’dodi li*” am my Beloved’s and my Beloved is Mine.” (Song of Songs 6:3) The ancient Rabbis taught that this refers to G-d and the Jewish people, as we begin to draw closer together and take initial steps to repair and reconcile relationships to the best of our ability. It’s also an opportunity to draw nearer in our own loving relationships. This year more than any we feel the loss of not being together in person and the desire to restore our physical and collective closeness as a community. Additionally, during this month we are invited to begin a process of self-reflection called *heshbon hanefesh*. That is, the “soul-work or accounting” of our words, actions, and habits from the past year. “Where did we miss the mark? What can we do better? How can we grow?”

There’s just so much from the past year that’s out of our control. So much that we’d be happy to let go of. So much that we wish would drift out with the tide into the deep abyss of the sea of time. If we’re able to begin to do the spiritual work of letting go, or of at least taking a closer look within, then in the coming month we may find that we’re even more open to the ebb and flow of life.

Rabbi Mark

*Join me [starting tomorrow](#) night 8/20, 8/27 and 9/3 @ 7:00 pm to hear the Shofar, learn together and prepare for the New Year.