



Torah for Turbulent Times

"The New Year is Here!"

Rosh Hashanah begins Friday evening. Fall is here. Students are settling into school. Apples are ripe for the picking. A chill is in the air. In the sea of uncertainty we've been wading through this past year, it's refreshing to feel some of our familiar autumn rhythms.

No doubt, I will miss seeing all of you in person for the holidays. For this year we'll just have to make do with Zoom. I know that we'll all miss seeing, greeting, hugging, noshing, welcoming and shaking hands with each other. As my Mom noted when we spoke last evening, "That's the hardest part, not being together." On the other hand she reminded me, "If we're all at home, I guess we can even log into Rosh Hashanah services in our robe and slippers." However each household decides to celebrate this year, and whatever we wear, the point is - celebrate!

While in other years the community worshipped in two separate adult services, this year we will all be united in one for all of the holidays. Along with music, song, prayer, and sermon, services will also feature several personal reflections from congregants and students. In addition, for those who would like to, we'll be gathering outside for several socially-distanced and masked shofar soundings on Sunday afternoon. However we observe Rosh Hashanah in our own homes, a celebratory meal is also in order. As I've been asking the community lately, "What's on your menu this year?"

This is also a "*Shehekianu* moment," a new moment, and an unusual and unique time. We say this blessing for each holiday, but I think it takes on more resonance and meaning this year. Blessed are You, Holy One, for sustaining us this year!

She-He-Che-Ya-Nu

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁחַיֵּינוּ וְקִיְמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמֶן
הַזֶּה.

Ba-ruch a-ta A-do-Nai e-lo-hei-nu me-lech ha-o-lam, she-he-che-ya-nu ve-ki-ye-ma-nu ve-hi-gi-a-nu laz-man ha-zeh.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who has kept us alive, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this moment.

As we all soon greet the New Year together, I share this greeting with you, written by Barbara Kavadias (*ritualwell.org*).

“The words take on an extra resonance this year. Normally, I see you in the halls, at the doors, in the rotunda, in the pews, at the store. My heart leaps, happy to feel your presence, to see your smiling face. And like the coming light elicits birdsong as the dawn brings on wakefulness and prayer, *Shanah Tovah* comes forth from my heart and lips. It embraces you, ties us together in a timeless dance, an eternal circle of lived memory of celebration. This year I see you from a distance, masked. I see you on Zoom. Our connection is muted. Disembodied. But the circle, the dance, the season draws me in. I have to dig in, to listen but it is there. *Shanah Tovah* bursts forth from my heart, my pen, my computer pixels. I wish you a good year, a year of good health, a year of hope, a year of connection, however we find it. Whatever form it takes may it be enough to keep our souls singing, our hearts happy, to rid the world of evil and hate and lies. May it be enough to tide us over until I can hug you again. To sit next to you, to sing with you, to pray with you, our voices joined together in celebration and love. *Shanah Tovah!*”

Best wishes from my family to yours for a good, healthy, and sweet New Year!

Rabbi Mark