

RABBI'S MESSAGE

FEELING NEW IN THE NEW YEAR

When this year's Yom Kippur services ended, there seemed to be a feeling in the room that was different from years past. In fact, the whole afternoon seemed just a little different. The discussion group, led by Susan Pollard, about *Tikkun Olam* (repairing the world) that took place between the morning and afternoon service looked like it attracted more people than we've seen at these programs before...and it was an enthusiastic, participatory group. I have gotten used to the 3:30 afternoon service beginning with just a handful of dedicated worshippers; this year there seemed to be more people **and** they appeared more dedicated! The sanctuary continued to fill, as usual, for the *Yizkor* memorial service, and by the time Brian Eoff masterfully sounded the longest *shofar* blast I'd ever heard, the grand *T'kiah G'dolah*, it felt like standing room only. (Of course, we were all standing anyway, because the Ark was open.) We then gathered closer to the *bima* to bask in the light of the *havdallah* candle, singing together about the bringing the holiness of the day into the rest of the year. The break-fast, delicious as always, seemed to include an extra air of enthusiasm, with friendships being both renewed and begun. It all just felt a little more holy this year.

Then again, maybe I'm wrong.

Maybe it's always exactly like that, and I just noticed it a little differently this year.

Perhaps, this is one of the lessons of the High Holy Days: what we notice. Was there a prayer or musical presentation that felt a little different to you this year? Were there some silent moments, or meditative times that struck you in a special way? Did you learn something new, or see something interesting in one of the prayers or symbols of the holidays? Did any of the rabbi's messages hit home for you? Did you have an enriching conversation at the Rosh Hashana Oneg, brunch or Yom Kippur Break-fast?

When we conclude Yom Kippur with *havdallah*, after we've said prayers for wine, spices and the multi-wicked flame, the final prayer praises G-d "for separating the holy from the mundane." We allow the taste of the wine, the aroma of the spices and the glow of the candle to linger. We blend a holy moment into the future, praying this holiness will find its way into our next days, when we may not be quite as focused on our prayers, our traditions and our community.

Many have asked the question, "Why are so many major Jewish holidays bunched up at one time of year?" It's true: right after Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur come Sukkot and Simchat Torah. Perhaps it is to give us a jump start on embracing the excitement of being part of a Jewish community. The spirit of the High Holidays is not limited to the days we spend in the synagogue. It is meant to blend, like the glow of the *havdallah* candle, to help us remember the holiest parts of ourselves all year long. Whether we find the sacred in Shabbat worship, community service, Torah study, book groups, holiday celebrations, raising children or doing various other *mitzvot*, there is something in Judaism to touch everyone's heart.

You just have to notice it.

I was certainly touched by the spirit of the holidays this year. Not just because of the liturgy or Torah readings...because you were there to share it.

I look forward to noticing more and more sacred moments with you all year long.

L'shalom,

Rabbi Dan Gordon