

RABBI'S MESSAGE

BREAKING NEWS: *Chai Holidays Don't End in October!*

I can hardly think of a time when the beginning of the Jewish New Year was more exciting. The spirit of the holidays, particularly Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, brought our community together beautifully. After the “Covid years,” it was great to have so many back in the sanctuary, singing along with Cantor Francyne and being practically “blown away” by the powerful blast of the final shofar blast from Brian Eoff. In the middle of the day, about two dozen worshippers congregated for an experiential discussion about compassionate communication. When we gathered closely for havdallah, and then some wonderful schmoozing with each other at the break-the-fast, I felt a true kinship. And joined by the Zoom community, it felt like a great beginning.

And it didn't end there. The next week, Huffman neighbors Suzanne and Hanan welcomed close to 30 of us to their home on the lake, where we cast away the problematic aspects of 5784 into the water and enjoyed a relaxed Shabbat dinner. Sukkot brought about 50 people to shake the *lulav* in the Sukkah and enjoy a casual pizza dinner together, and country boy Joe Buchanan brought his musical spirit to Simchat Torah, as we danced to celebrate the festivities of new beginnings. Whatever parts of the High Holidays you were able to share, I hope you found them an enriching way to move forward into 5785.

So, what's next? Do we just wait around until Hanukkah for more rejoicing and connecting? Not TBT! As November includes Thanksgiving, it is appropriate for us to devote this month to gratitude. We'll begin the month *kvelling* with our Religious School students leading services, and on Shabbat morning, November 9, we'll be treated to an intimate song session with the internationally beloved *Nefesh Mountain* Jewish bluegrass group. In between that time, some of our members will be sharing an interfaith potluck with other faith-based organizations who participated with TBT in the “Competing in Goodness” food drive that received so many contributions from our members (close to 300 food items donated by TBT alone!) And the excitement is growing for our **FIFTH ANNUAL NER TAMID** event (see pages 5-6 of the November newsletter). I can hardly wait to honor such a deserving presence as *Anita Bonanno*, who, despite her blindness, has helped further TBT's vision with her musical leadership.

And while these special programs are exciting, every moment at TBT has the potential for the unique connections that come with sharing song and prayer, or an adult discussion group or just some relaxed time at the end of the week to be with others. This is community. And this is what makes me grateful. That we have a community that feels like family.

Of course, as usual, I'm looking at the best parts of what we have to offer, and I realize that not everyone has been able to enjoy the whole of our people and activities as much as I have. Our busy lives make it hard to prioritize synagogue participation. But I can tell you this: the diverse community we have formed at Temple Beth Torah is enhanced by every person's participation. When you come, you have the chance to be enriched by others, but also to enrich somebody else. As Rabbi Hillel said, "If I am not for myself, who is for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? and if not now, when?" Our world is made better by your presence.

The High Holiday liturgy teaches that on Rosh Hashana the Book of Life is written and on Yom Kippur it is sealed. Some suggest that the days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur are the most important days of the year. And yet, it can also be said that the days between Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashana are just as important.

Let's make ALL these days special...together!

L'shalom,

Rabbi Dan Gordon