

RABBI'S MESSAGE

When Time Doesn't Fly

So often, when May turns to June, we find ourselves completing one cycle and beginning another. The school year is ending, Rosh Hashana is around the corner, and we sometimes say, "Where has the time gone? The year has flown by so fast!"

This year, I'm not hearing that phrase so much. This year seems to have dragged on, with the continuous questions about, "When will life get back to normal?" or "Will life *ever* get back to normal?"

One phrase I *have* heard quite a bit is the term "a new normal." Yes, week after week, we've experienced things we never dreamed we would have to do. Experiencing life on a computer screen was completely new to most of us. We zoomed through worship services, classes, school, job interviews, psychotherapy, funerals, weddings, birthday parties, bar/bat mitzvahs, family reunions and more. For most of us, this new normal was quite an adjustment.

I'll speak for myself. At first, I had a really hard time adjusting. While I still look forward to sharing worship and social time in person, face-to-face, I did get used to Zooming. I was encouraged that some community members who did not attend regular Shabbat services became regulars on Zoom. We also had some out-of-town participation, some former members tuning in, family members in other cities and people from outside our geography, all getting to experience Temple Beth Torah. By continuing our services, religious school, and adult learning opportunities, we stayed connected. Some people chose not to participate in the computerized programming, while others embraced it. We expect that when we finally are able to have in-person services, we will still provide a live stream so that those who are more comfortable participating at home will have that option. But it *has* felt like a *very* long wait, and for most of it, we have been in the dark about when that wait would end.

I couldn't help imagining the journey that our ancestors experienced when they left Egypt for the Promised Land. It was certainly a mysterious time schedule. They had to adjust to a new lifestyle, nomadically travelling in a desert wilderness. Not only did they have to learn how to live, eat and travel, but their relationships with each other and G-D took on whole new meanings. While receiving the Ten Commandments and learning the obligations of *mitzvot*, the Israelite people also had to understand how to live as a new nation after having their lives dictated by slave masters for so long. The forty years between slavery and the Promised Land was certainly a "new normal," that probably felt very abnormal to so many.

With every twist and turn life gives us, perhaps we can find blessings in embracing new challenges. We would not have chosen to have a worldwide pandemic that forces us into becoming a virtual synagogue. But we can take what we've learned to enhance our present and future community. As Rabbi Alvin Fine eloquently expresses in his poem, *Life is a Journey*: "not looking backwards or ahead, we see that victory lies not at some high point along the way, but in having made the journey, step by step, a sacred pilgrimage..."

Our journey together is sacred. Let's embrace all the challenges as we prepare for a New Year.

L'shalom,

Rabbi Dan Gordon