

CONGREGATION AGUDATH JACOB

OCTOBER 2024 ELUL 5784/TISHREI 5785

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From the Desk of
Rabbi Ben-Zion Lanxner



My Dear friends:

This past week we read the double Torah portions of Nitzavim-Vayeilech, recalling our 40 years journey in the wilderness, just before entering the Promised Land, "**You are Standing today, all of you, before Hashem your G-d...**". This portion always comes close to Rosh Hashanah when we are all trying in our own way to do Teshuvah and come close to Hashem and our own soul root. Indeed, coming into the Land of Israel and coming into a New Year should be a joyous experience. Although the 10 days between **Rosh Hashanah** and **Yom Kippur** are called the **Days of Awe**, they should still be approached and experienced also with great joy - there is no contradiction between these perspectives. I bless us all to feel both the awe and the joy of a New Year and approach it with anticipation and a sense of rebirth and renewal.

During the month of Elul, we also blow a short series of Shofar blasts each day and of course on Rosh Hashanah blowing the Shofar is one of the main focal points of the holiday. There are many meanings to the various sounds of the Shofar but two that seem so timely are that of crying and warning.

Paradoxically, the same sounds also have very positive and joyous meanings. Considering the intense war situation occurring in Israel at this very moment, not only in its southern part in Gaza with Hamas, but now also in its northern part with Hezbollah in Lebanon, the sounds of crying and warning are very immediate and relevant. We are all praying on a daily basis for G-d's protection and salvation from this horrible experience that has lasted nearly a year. At the same time though we must hold on to our faith and belief that we did not return to the Holy Land after 2,000 years of exile to fail in the ultimate mission of the Jewish people to help bring redemption and peace to the whole world. Therefore, there is a place for both the sounds of crying out as well as sounds of joy and redemption. May the current situation be a temporary obstacle to Israel fulfilling its ultimate goal of a rectified world of peace and harmony.

As Elul is all about getting ready for **Rosh Hashanah** and **Yom Kippur**, this week brings you ways to prepare beyond Selichot.

I can sometimes understand that for some people, prayer is not the right fit for them in terms of self-reflection.

That is why poetry, readings, and giving Tzedakah can aid in preparation for the High Holidays. Learning to trust faith is an important aspect of this process as well.

Let me show you ways beyond the ritual and the liturgy that can help you spiritually into the process of introspection and getting ready for the **Yamim Noraim**, the Days of Awe.

Preparation at home

First, we also prepare for the coming of the High Holidays at home. Just as with **Shabbat**, there is an increase in the tempo of the household routine as everything is cleaned, polished, and made ready for the holidays.

Friends and relations begin to arrive, sometimes from great distances. Indeed, no matter how far a sibling, child, or cousin may have wandered during the course of the year, Rosh Hashanah is a time for all Jewish people to come home to their families, their people, and their G-d.

Many have adopted the custom of sending New Year's cards to family and friends wishing them well as the new year is about to begin. While it is tempting to dismiss this as an example of crass commercial opportunism on the part of the greeting card

industry, the truth is that this practice is well grounded in Jewish custom (see the Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayyim 582:9).

Originally, the concept was simply to wish others that they be inscribed in the Book of Life for the year to come, but sending out cards has become less theologically charged over the years and is now hardly more than an effort to reconnect with loved ones near and far. Even so, sending out Rosh Hashanah cards as a way to strengthen the bonds we share with our friends and family is a commendable endeavor.

Giving Tzedakah.

Another commendable and widespread custom is the practice of making charitable contributions in anticipation of the High Holidays (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayyim 581:4). Giving charity is a Mitzvah all year round, but there is something especially beautiful about making a special effort around the High Holidays to help others.

As we strive to be our best selves, the giving of charity emphasizes that self-inspection and thoughtful introspection must lead to outward improvement. A person wrapped up in oneself makes for a small package.

Participation in synagogue charity appeals, on the other hand, constitutes a tangible expression of one's determination to translate good intentions into the kind of good deeds that can transform and improve one's community and the world at large. An example comes to mind, as we just replaced our parquet floor in our Social Hall with a new floor (looking like dark wood) it was in large part through the generosity of our President, Jeff Levin and a few other congregants who really care and want to improve our Synagogue, one step at a time. The next improvement will be repainting the walls and ceilings, and replacing the carpets in our Foyer and Sanctuary...

Visiting the Dead

There is also the touching custom of visiting the graves of loved ones in anticipation of the New Year. Some do this the day before Rosh Hashanah (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayyim 581:4), but many go at any convenient time throughout this period from **Elul** through Yom Kippur.

Many synagogues hold communal memorial services (Kever Avot ve-Ima'ot) at their congregational cemetery, (like we will on Sunday, October 6, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.) during this time of the year. At these services, there is usually an opportunity for shared communal prayers as well as private time for individuals to visit their family members'

graves.

Visiting

the graves of one's parents and grandparents helps establish a sense of continuity between the sacred past and the unborn future and fosters a sense of oneself as the vital link between the two.

Tradition also imagines our late relations, and especially our parents, as intercessors capable of pleading our case and cause before G-d. It is therefore appropriate that we do not take them for granted, and this custom of visiting their graves reflects that hope.

Preparation in the Synagogue

This is the time when we replace all our Torah covers with "White" Torah covers. Those were beautifully hand-made by a dear past member who made Aliyah to Israel last year (Morasha Stuckey). Why the color White? White is the most popular color associated with Rosh Hashanah, and symbolizes many things, including:

- Purity: White represents purity, cleanliness, and innocence.
- New beginnings: White symbolizes a fresh start and the new possibilities ahead in the year to come.
- Mortality: The white robe, called a Kittel, worn by the Rabbi/Cantor/Gabbai and some more religious people on Rosh Hashanah is similar to a Jewish burial shroud and reminds us of our mortality.
- Angels: The white robe worn by some people on Rosh Hashanah emulates the ministering angels that surround us during this time.
- White symbolizes our desire to be close to G-d.
- Blank canvas: White represents a blank canvas and signifies the idea of the new possibilities ahead in the year to come.

As we gather in community these coming weeks to welcome The New Year 5785, whether in person or on Live Stream, may we continue to take part in the Holy Covenant we all made Standing All of us Today at Mount Sinai before Hashem our G-d, as One People with One Heart, **כאיש אחד בלב אחד**.

May we continue to choose life in Community.

May we focus on the blessing of life and bring an attitude of abundance to the challenges we face.

May we remind ourselves that Torah is not in the heavens nor across the sea, but close to our hearts for us to make real. (Lo Bashamayim Hi).

May we reaffirm the Covenant made with the Divine “this day” and every day, so that when we are gone, the goodness of our actions and our lives may carry on in this world, LeDor VaDor, from generation to generation.

Wishing you all from the depth of my heart and soul, a year of great Health, Happiness, Prosperity and Shalom/Peace in Israel and in the entire world!

Shanah Tovah uMetukah – Happy New Year

Rabbi Ben-Zion Laxner

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

One month into the new presidential term and things have been going pretty much as I expected. An enormous amount of work—I now have almost two full-time jobs!—but so much satisfaction and even *naches*. It’s been wonderful to see so many members of the *shul*, not just Board members, step up and contribute. By contribute I mean with time and labor as well as financially. If anything surprises me about this, it’s how much joy I’ve felt in witnessing how folks have felt an expanded sense of ownership of the *shul* and a desire to help it flourish.

More has gone on than I can list here—I’ll try to do better in my annual presidential address at *Kol Nidre*—but, for starters, we have a new floor in the social hall; there are new ceiling tiles there and in the small chapel; the *succah* is being refurbished; our chairs and tables are being fixed; the kitchen and office are being cleaned and spruced up top to bottom; the library is being improved; we’ve hosted a terrific *bat mitzvah* event and will be having a Rosh Hashanah luncheon; the Gift Shop cabinet has gotten a makeover and is full of great new stuff for the holidays; the Yehudi men’s group is going strong; we’re up and running on Friday nights in the chapel; and more. (Apologies if I left something out.) Most significantly, we haven’t had to dip into *shul*

funds because members have volunteered their efforts and contributed out-of-pocket to make these things come to pass. If you ever want to know what brings a smile to the face of the leader of a religious congregation, Jewish or Christian, as my Baylor colleagues tell me, it is this. Again, CAJ is *our shul*—it's *your shul*, and I'm saying that to each one of us—and I'm so happy to see folks taking a sense of ownership.

One more thing: I had a wonderful visit with my counterpart at the Temple, my friend Cindy Wood. We chatted over coffee, and I was so glad to find that we're on the same page with a lot of things. We both have similar challenges facing us as synagogue presidents, but, at the same time, we are open to finding ways to work together where it serves the greater good of our local Jewish community. (I was honored, for example, to represent our shared community as the speaker on Judaism at the recent annual Festival of Faiths event of the Greater Waco Interfaith Conference.)

Moreover, I pledged to support Cindy and the Temple in whatever way that I can. As someone who was raised Reform, I hope that our congregations can foster a greater sense of *chaverut* and shared purpose, and I, personally, wish for strong and vibrant places of worship for all of the Jews of Central Texas. Both us at CAJ, and our brothers and sisters at the Temple.

There is much more to accomplish, both as far as house-and-grounds upgrades as well as programming innovations. But with the month of High Holy Days services coming up, we can put some of this on pause for now. One thing that I am very gung-ho about is implementing a strong committee structure. Our bylaws list all of the various committees that, in principle, we have on the books. I say "in principle" because, as we have gotten a bit smaller, some of these can probably be combined in practice. But, no matter, I hope that we can find ways for every member of *shul* to find something that they wish to be involved with, in a leadership or supporting role, and I also hope that we can have multiple members involved in each of our various functions. One does not need to be a Board member to lead a committee, by the way. We can revisit this at the annual congregational meeting before the end of the year.

In the meantime, here's hoping that everyone has a sweet new year, and that 5785 will find each of us reflecting on our lives and our relationships, both "horizontal" and "vertical," as the rabbis and theologians say. Both with our fellow congregants, fellow Jews, and members of our local community and with Hashem.

L'shalom,
Jeff Levin

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- ❖ **The office will be closed 10/3, 10/4, 10/17, 10/18, 10/24 and 10/25 for the High Holidays.**
- ❖ **Office hours for Monday, 10/7 will be abbreviated. Please contact the office before coming by on that day.**
- ❖ **The office will be closed 10/21 due to Shannon being out of town.**

October Service Schedule

Friday, October 4

Kabbalat Shabbat 6:00 pm
Candle Lighting 6:51 pm

Saturday, October 5

Shacharit 10:00 am
Shabbat Ends 7:44 pm

Friday, October 11

Kabbalat Shabbat 6:00 pm
Candle Lighting 6:43 pm

Saturday, October 12

Shacharit 10:00 am
Shabbat Ends 7:46 pm

Friday, October 18

Kabbalat Shabbat 6:00 pm
Candle Lighting 6:35 pm

Saturday, October 19

Shacharit 10:00 am
Shabbat Ends 7:28 pm

Friday, October 25

Kabbalat Shabbat 6:00 pm
Candle Lighting 6:27 pm

Saturday, October 26

Shacharit 10:00 am
Shabbat Ends 7:21 pm



October 2

Loren Schwartz

October 9
David Rosen
Donald Lynn
October 14

Larry Silver
October 25
Hillary Weidhorn

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY



October 24
Brian & Jasmine
Dresser

High Holidays



Schedule of Services

2024

Rosh HaShanah: Oct. 2 – Oct. 4

Erev Rosh HaShanah: Wednesday, Oct. 2, 6:00 p.m. **IN-PERSON & LIVE STREAM**

Rosh HaShanah: Thursday, Oct. 3, 10:00 a.m. **IN-PERSON & Live Stream**

Luncheon to follow services

Tashlich: Thursday, **Oct. 3 at 4:45 p.m.** Brazos Park E. 3516 N. MLK, Jr. Blvd. Rosh HaShanah Day 2: Friday, Oct. 4 10:00 a.m. **IN-PERSON & Live Stream**

Kabbalat Shabbat: Friday, Oct. 4 6:00 p.m. **IN-PERSON & Live Stream**

Shabbat Shuvah: Saturday, Oct. 5, 10:00 a.m. **IN-PERSON & Live Stream**

Kever Avot: October 6

Sunday, October 6, 10:00 a.m. at CAJ Cemetery

Yom Kippur: October 11-12

Erev Y. K. **Kol Nidre**: Friday, October 11, 7:00 p.m. **IN-PERSON & Live Stream**

Yom Kippur: Saturday, October 12, 2023.

Shacharit, 10:00 a.m., Yizkor, 12:30 p.m., Mussaf, 1:30 p.m.

Mincha, & Neilah: 5:30 p.m. IN-PERSON & LIVE STREAM

and Break the Fast at 7:30 p.m. in our Social Hall

Sukkot: October 16-25

Erev Sukkot: Wednesday, October 16, 6:00 p.m. **IN-PERSON & LIVE STREAM**
with Kiddush in the Sukkah.

Sukkot Day 1: Thursday, October 17, 10:00 a.m. **IN-PERSON & Live Stream**
Followed by Kiddush & Luncheon in the Sukkah.

Shabbat Chol Hamo'ed: Friday, October 18, 6:00 p.m.

Shabbat Chol Hamo'ed: Saturday, October 19, 10:00 a.m.

Shemini Atzeret & Simchat Torah

Thursday, October 24, at 10:00 am **IN-PERSON & LIVE STREAM**

Followed by **YIZKOR** at 11:15 a.m.

Followed by Kiddush in the Sukkah.

THANK YOU for your donations in September!

Shabbat

Javis Howeth
Felicity Jortner
George S
Kathleen Keller

Susan Raphael
Jeff Levin
Steven Draher

Rabbi and
Susan Lanxner
Jori Samuel

In Memory Of

Marthe Heyman
Benjy Bauer

Gita Papernov
Semyon
Papernov

Dr Bernard
Hersh
Linda Kowal

Special Donation

Jeff Levin
Melanie Bauer

Maura and David Jortner

YAHREZEITS

The following names of dearly departed will be read aloud by the Rabbi preceding the Mourner's Kaddish on Shabbat morning. It is fitting and customary that the nearest of kin be present in the synagogue for the recitation of this special prayer in their memory. Attendance not only honors the departed but also enhances and guarantees that a Minyan is present to recite the Kaddish.

Kaddish will be read on October 4

Tishrei 2 Luis Meinstein*
Tishrei 4 P Markusfeld*
Lillie Seigel
Tishrei 5 Lionel Ellis
Grace Goldsmith
Sarah Kirschner*
Fannie Klein
Louis W Wizig*
Mrs Sadie Putterman Wizig
Tishrei 6 Sarah Brockman
Dora Woolf
Tishrei 7 William Bell*
Germaine Caron
David Chozick
Shirley Greenberg
Irving Herskovitz*
Tishrei 8 Dr Eli Berkman*
Sadie Hoppenstein*
Ida Silevitch*

Kaddish will be read on October 11

Tishrei 9 Mrs H (Anna) Hoffman
Mary Levy
Hyman Miller*
Jack Schaevitz*
Tishrei 10 Solomon Blank
Lillian Epstein
Irving Frankfort
Baile Raize Markman*
Moshe Fishel Markman*

Tishrei 11 Jules Bolch
J Markusfeld*
Tishrei 12 Freidman Goldberg
Albert Rupenstein
Perry Segal
Tishrei 13 Evelyn Julia Dalkowitz*
Emma Wizig Gallo
Sarah Rebecca Harris*
Mrs Harry Levine
Tishrei 14 Morris Chazanow*
Sarah Harris
Jacob Kessler
Jacob Kroll*
Tishrei 15 Sophie Adams
Estelle Falgout
Meyer Jerwick

Kaddish will be read on October 18

Tishrei 16 Ike Commer*
Mrs Sam Katz
Bertha Wood
Tishrei 17 Zalman Tannenbaum
Tishrei 18 Helen Fitterman*
Lorraine Hoppenstein*
Mrs Hannah Knop*
Boaz Levinson
Stella Somlo Milberger*
Sidney Samet*
Tishrei 21 Jacob Aronson
Sarah Beerman*
Estelle Goldfeder

Tishrei 22 Bess Levinson
Max Udashen*
Minna Adams
Julia Ellis
Harry Lapin
Scott Vaughan

Kaddish will be read on October 25

Tishrei 23 Frieda Atals
Abraham B Blank*
Billy Dwayne Brooks
J Harold Simon
Tishrei 24 Sarah Levy Bell*

Tishrei 25 Mark Harris*
Joe Rubel*
Bernice Shapiro
Rabbi Charles Blumenthal*
Bernard Hersh*
A Rubinsky*
Tishrei 26 Gary Gurkoff
Samuel Patlis
Tishrei 27 Eric Engleman
Baby Harelik
Gertrude Harris*
Tishrei 28 Rebecca Jacobson
Joseph M Schwartz*