

Message from the Rabbi

Each year on Rosh haShannah, we mark and celebrate the creation of the world and, with it, the creation of humanity. We might think of creation as something from the past, a closed event, but the Kedushat Levi (Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev, 1740-1809) makes the following comment on the first verse of Genesis:

The Blessed Creator made everything and is everything, and His emanation never ceases, for in each moment He emanates blessing upon His creatures...That is why [in the first blessing of the Shahaarit service recited each morning] we say, “who fashions light and creates darkness” (Isaiah 45:7). Not “He fashioned light and created darkness” but rather “fashions” in the present tense, for in every moment He fashions. In every moment He emanates life-force to every living being. All is from Him, may He be blessed. He is whole and encompasses all.

According to the Kedushat Levi, what we mark on Rosh haShannah is actually not a past event but an ongoing process: the continuing emergence of life and being in all their wondrous forms. God continues to bestow the created world with life-force and blessings, to fashion and refashion all in every moment.

This understanding of creation is a perfect match for *teshuvah*, our process of return, repentance, rebirth. The lesson of the High Holy Day season each year is that we can emerge into the coming year as new people, a new community, a new world, if only we are willing to take the risk of doing so. Rather than passive recipients of change brought from Heaven, we can intentionally step into the flow of creation and rebirth.

We are passing through a time of profound changes that affect all of us - this community, religion, this country, international systems, the planet. So many of these changes feel hopelessly beyond our control. This new year brings each of us the following promise: *We* can change. *We* can be reborn. We have the power to help turn the tremors that are shaking our world into blessings.

A healthy, sweet, and restorative new year to you all.

Shannah tovah!

Rabbi Zehavi

President's Message

As Jews this time of year look ahead to the promise and challenges of tomorrow, it still amazes me that our Jewish faith, ideas, and culture have stood the test of time considering the great amount of turmoil, cultural differences, and persecution Jews have encountered. With all that our people have faced, we continue to look ahead and forge a path that is uncertain but still exciting. I feel that we face a similar path with challenges and excitement in our community at Congregation Agudat Achim and I am very energized about the challenge.

The synagogue has a newly elected executive board and board of directors with some new faces. The board will undoubtedly face many tasks, both pleasant and perhaps difficult, but I am very confident we too shall keep forging ahead always with the synagogue's best intentions at heart. I would like to thank all those that have graciously offered to serve our community in whatever capacity they are able to. Words cannot describe my appreciation for your dedication to our shul. I urge more of our congregants to get involved. The board and I want your input. There are many different ways to serve and help our community besides serving on the board. Perhaps you could come to services more frequently and help form or be a part of a minyan? Perhaps you are able to make a pledge this year? Perhaps you are able to increase your pledge? Perhaps you are able to increase your High Holiday appeal? Perhaps you can make a donation to the shul for any purpose, or maybe to the Building Fund? Perhaps you can make a donation to the synagogue's Endowment Fund? Perhaps you will consider giving a legacy gift to the synagogue as part of your will? Perhaps you can volunteer time in another capacity? For example, perhaps you can join a committee this year? By doing any of these suggestions you would help strengthen our community now and in the future.

We are fortunate to have the spiritual leadership of Rabbi Zehavi, who with his wife Ashira and two children Nadiv and Boaz, will be entering the second year as part of our community. Rabbi Zehavi has brought many exciting ideas, concepts, learning, and definitely a burst of energy to our community. In addition, Ashira's musical and cantorial skills have enabled the synagogue to experience worship in a new light. If you have experienced any time at services, holidays, or classes with the Rabbi and Ashira, I hope you continue to do so. If you have not yet experienced any of the aforementioned, I would strongly urge you to do so and to benefit from them in whatever way that is personally gratifying.

As in any organization, Congregation Agudat Achim is only as great as the people who belong to it, but without people it's a just a building. Again, I hope you to try to get involved in whatever capacity you can. I am very excited for the New Year and look forward to seeing you all in the future. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 978-660-1465 or via email at zibel@icloud.com with any concerns, ideas, or suggestions.

My wife Heidi, children Ardon and Shayna, and I wish you all a Happy and Healthy New Year!

Shalom,

Scott Zibel

Principal's Message

Shalom Haverim,

As the Jewish New Year approaches, the Joseph C. Foster Religious School is gearing up for an exciting new school year. The Hebrew Poet Laureate of Modern Israel, Chaim Nahmun Bialik, suggested that just as peaks and valleys exist in space, they also exist in time. The Jewish holidays are peaks in time because they help clarify and strengthen for us our connection to our heritage. By the same token, Congregation Agudat Achim's commitment to the Jewish education of our children keeps these precious ties alive and inter-generational. We have different kinds of peaks and valleys in our school, and they afford all of our children a special opportunity to embrace the richness of our history and our culture. Using Bialik's metaphor, I like to think of the peaks as critical learning experiences, around subjects such as Hebrew reading skills, prayer mastery, Bible comprehension, holiday observances, appreciation for and love of Israel, Jewish history, and Jewish values and ethics. I like to think of the valleys as the in-between spaces where the children *feel* what they are learning, what being Jewish means, and what their faith can offer them. In the valleys, our students and their families can practice Judaism in a way that is meaningful for them, and experience the still, small voice.

There are many peaks and valleys in our religious school community, enabling us to connect and grow and experience together. We have students and parents who are kind and generous and eager to learn and share. We have a wonderful, caring school committee, led by our very capable chair Steve Weedon. We are truly blessed with teachers who bring everything they have to our students- their love, patience, knowledge, creativity, and individual experiences. I am so pleased and thrilled that Nessa Cohen, Jenny Rubin, Greg Jones, Naomi Weintraub, Keren Cohen, Rabbi Zehavi and Mandy Susman will be joining me in teaching our incredible children- creating a safe, exciting and passionate learning environment for all. We will also be honored with the presence of two young emissaries from Israel, Chen and Matan, whom we can't wait to meet. We are thrilled to welcome President Scott Zibel and Office Manager Sarah Jane Acheson, both of whom do so much behind the scenes to ensure our school's success. Also we are lucky to have Ed Judd keeping our classrooms in such good shape! And last but certainly not least, our school is so fortunate to have the support and encouragement of our fabulous, extended congregation.

On behalf of our entire school community I wish you all a new year of healthy, happy and joyous peaks and valleys, and a year of growth and sweetness.
Shana Tova U'Metuka!

B'Shalom,

Debbie