



President's Message
Ziva Raney, President, Judea Reform Congregation
Erev Rosh Hashanah 5779 / 2018

Shanah tovah! I'm Ziva Raney, President of Judea Reform Congregation.

We started the month of *Elul*, the days leading up to these high holy days, with a shofar blast...a call to action to prepare for these days of awe.

As we begin a new year, we have an opportunity to take stock, to look at the year behind us. To reflect on what went well and where there are opportunities to make changes.

Tonight, I would like to focus on two areas of our holidays – a time to reflect and a call to action.

Growing up, I had such a strong relationship with my synagogue... that might seem obvious as the daughter of the rabbi. But the truth is, the temple was more than the rabbi for me – after all, my father was my father.

The members of my temple were my extended family – some even tried to parent me...if I drove to fast out of the parking lot, for example.

But temple was always about the people. I was excited to be in the building because I knew I would see someone I knew and liked. I enjoyed being a leader in the youth group, creating memories and being part of social justice. Being part of the temple family was important to me. Did other people have that kind of connection?

In every congregation since then, finding that connection has been harder. It's not automatic; it takes effort. For me personally, to deepen my connections, I had to get involved. I had to raise my hand...I had to say yes. But it is different for each person. What is your call to action? How will you engage? What speaks to you? Will you participate in Torah study? Will you join the Caring Community Committee and sign the spiritual pledge? Will you play Mah Jongg or volunteer in the office? Maybe you have a new idea...Whatever it is, we want to hear it.

Engaging has been well worth it for me and our family...

Judea Reform is made up of incredible people who are special and unique in many ways. As I think about the ways we are different...I also think about how lucky we are to live in this time where all are welcome. I have been impressed and encouraged by Judea Reform's demonstration of what the Reform Movement calls Audacious Hospitality. We want everyone to feel at home in our congregation. JRC is committed to inclusion to embrace all those who wish to be part of Reform Judaism.

As a community, we are thoughtful and intellectual, we are compassionate and inclusive, we are committed to social justice and social support for our own. And most apparent recently, **we are resilient!**

Last spring, we faced a difficult situation where we unexpectedly, found ourselves without a rabbi. And together, we found our new way forward.

As difficult as the last few months have been, I am incredibly proud of how we responded. The activities of temple life – weekly services, life cycle events, social action and committee work – all continued without interruption. There are so many people to thank for that – our incredible cantor corps, our Religious Practices Committee, our staff, our educators and parents and some incredible volunteers. We came together and made sure we were taking care of each other, our students and families, and continuing the mission of Judea Reform.

We have come to know that our strength is in all of us ... collectively... as a community... a community of caring, thoughtful passionate people. We do not agree on everything, but we persevere & we are stronger together.

As president, I value our diversity and the inevitable tension that comes with it. The board and I are committed to build upon and protect the sacred partnerships of Judea Reform Congregation– between the board and the rabbi, with the professional staff, and with each of our valued members. At the heart of these sacred partnerships is TRUST - I believe that to build that trust there must be open communication and transparency. I believe it is important that we assume **positive** intent and engage in respectful dialogue in all of our interactions, especially in disagreements. At a time when public discourse is so divisive and gridlocked, we as a community must rise above it by treating each other with dignity, as we are all *Betzelem Elohim* – created in God’s image.

Our ability to engage with each other in this way, is particularly important during this time of transition.

When Rabbi Rick Jacobs, President of the Union for Reform Judaism, was here in May, he talked about the phrase “This too shall pass.” At the time, many of us heard that in the context of the stress of the situation we were facing. Rabbi Jacobs also pointed out that sometimes there are moments we want to hold onto but know that these moments will also pass. So, we need to treasure all of our moments.

In this moment, I am choosing to focus on gratitude in the new year. I am grateful for the support of my family, our Judea Reform family, our board of trustees, and those of you who have already reached out to our leadership to offer support or volunteer. There is so much to do, we need every one of you.

Tonight, we taste the sweetness of honey and we hear the sound of the shofar, a call to action, or awareness.

My wish for all of us is the sweetness of good health, joy, deeper engagement and sweeter relationships with our Judea Reform family. And may each of us respond to the call of the shofar in our own way.

Shanah Tovah U'metukah!