

# High Holy Days



## Rosh Hashanah | Evening Services The Torah in Your Shofar



**Rabbi Daniel A. Schwartz**

When you look at Rosh Hashanah rationally. I mean really look at Rosh Hashanah, it's weird. Let's start with its name. It's never called Rosh Hashanah in the Torah. And today's the first day of the seventh month...So why do we call it a New Year?

Our world, its millions of years old, yet tonight we celebrate 5,784 years since its creation. How did we ever get to that?

Round challahs with raisins – who puts raisins in challahs? And do they have to be round? Is it a law?

And throwing breadcrumbs into a river for fish to carry away our sins? Does it really work? Why are fish

so innocent? Why can't we just throw breadcrumbs to the ducks and birds for them carry away?

And then there's the shofar. Why do we sound a ram's horn to a people whose only exposure to rams, if we were lucky, was at a petting zoo or a farm? Each of these concepts. Each of these rituals is there for a reason. And it's our job, yours and mine, to find some meaning in them; To take these mysteries and to understand their significance.

It's our test every year as rabbis, to see if we can reveal something from these traditions that will help bring meaning or beauty to our lives. Every year, we get to choose that one ritual or tradition that resonates with us. This year, for me, it's the shofar. As a kid, I always looked forward to hearing it, to seeing how long that final note would be.

For many of us, it's a great memory trigger. That piercing sound, it breaks our concentration.

Some say it's a tune, but it's not supposed to be. It's why

we don't play a trumpet or a French horn. The sound is supposed to be off putting and out of tune. We're told we blow it to remind us of the story we'll read tomorrow of the binding of Isaac, that the shofar reminds us of the ram that Abraham sacrificed instead of his son.

**Each of these rituals is there for a reason. And it's our job, yours and mine, to find some meaning in them; To take these mysteries and to understand their significance.**

Sa'adia Ga'on, a thousand years ago, gave 10 reasons for the sounding of the shofar. But in reading one of them to Rabbis Schwartz and Moskowitz, they said, that's boring, give your own.

So to me, the shofar is our alarm clock. It's that raw, piercing sound that stirs us.

I love how we do it here at Temple. Not just one, but 4 shofarot. It's like a traffic jam. You can't not hear it.

It wakes us up to our reality, so that we ask ourselves, "Who am I?" and "Is this who I want to be when I grow up?" The shofar's cry is a call to reflect, to think about who we want to be and how we get there.

But hearing the shofar blast doesn't guarantee success. It's only a start. It's like praying to God to win the lottery, but never buying a ticket. Sometimes we hear the shofar and know we've got to do something. But often we hit the snooze button and we take a pass.

And so tonight, I want to suggest a way that is guaranteed to wake you up, guaranteed to change your life. But first, a story. It was my Jerusalem year in Rabbinical school and along with a group of friends, I decided to spend the week in Turkey.



Some of you know I like to travel in a way that would cause anxiety for many here tonight.

I like being flexible. I don't make all my hotel reservations in advance. Some find it stressful. I think it's fun. It adds to the adventure. I get suggestions and pointers from locals. I find places off the beaten touristy path.

So I convinced my friends to only book one night at a time and see where our interests would take us. It worked well and we were having a great trip. For our final night, we decided we'd find a place on the beach within the next day's drive to the airport. We chose a small town on the Marmara Sea.

**Because when I do, I act in a much different way. I can feel it in myself – I'm more patient, reflective and caring. Instead of being critical, I can put myself in someone else's shoes and be more positive. Instead of being annoyed, or worse, ambivalent, I can find the magnificence in moments of monotony.**

Night fell long before we were close to our destination which meant we were on these deserted windy, rural roads late at night searching for the ideal place, for any place. It was getting late. And there was nowhere to stay. So we kept driving. And driving. And wondering where we were on our flimsy paper map. And driving.

Until, finally, we spotted water. There was nothing in sight. No town, no hotel. We thought we were in the middle of nowhere. We took out our sleeping bags and found a spot to sleep on the beach.

The next morning, it was like waking up in the Garden of Eden. The water was a beautiful blue. It was clean. And it was calm. And the beach had this fine, white sand that just melted through our fingers. It was well-groomed, with no trash on it. And then we looked around and we realized – we just spent the night on the property of a 5-star resort. It was gorgeous.

And that was one of the moments in my life I experienced something I thought was similar to our Biblical ancestor Jacob, a moment that still guides me in my theology and in how I try to see our world and act.

In his journey from Be'er Sheva to Haran, somewhere along his travels, Jacob found himself in an unknown, seemingly deserted place. And so he set up camp and went to sleep. That night,

**It could be a moment, a place, or a situation. Or its after something moving, something powerful, something fantastic. And only afterwards do we think about God's presence and how incredible that experience was.**

he dreamed that there were angels there and when he awoke, he recognized the beauty and said:

**אָכֵן יֵשׁ יְהוָה בְּמָקוֹם הַזֶּה וְאֲנֹכִי  
לֹא יָדַעְתִּי**

**"Surely God is in this place, and I did not know it!"**

Shaken, he adds:

**מִהֲנוֹרָא הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה**

**"How awesome is this place!"**

How often do we experience that? It could be a moment, a place, or a situation. Or its after something moving, something powerful, something fantastic. And only afterwards do we think about God's presence and how incredible that experience was.

And then we want to make it happen again. Or at least the memory of it. We want

to recreate that moment. And that's why those verses became a script for me. I want to wake up, not just in the morning, but from walking through life as if it were a dream. I want to recognize the beauty. I want to keep seeing those marvels.

Because when I do, I act in a much different way. I can feel it in myself – I'm more patient, reflective and caring. Instead of being critical, I can put myself in someone else's shoes and be more positive. Instead of being annoyed, or worse, ambivalent, I can find the magnificence in moments of monotony.

But often, I need that reminder, to break from the routine of life and to act with kavanah, to act with an intention that lets me use my imagination, that lets me see the awe, that gives me that "ah-ha" moment.

Because that's what kavanah is. And that's what the shofar does. As we blow it on Rosh Hashanah, it calls out to remind us that we can't rely on spontaneity. It cries out – act with intention. It teaches us, just as Jacob's lines work for me, that we all need a script or a motto that we can say that puts us in the mood of what we're really about.

Maybe it the question Ben Zoma asks and answers, **"Who is rich? The one who is happy with their portion."** Or a line from King Solomon that **"a good name is better than the most precious of oils."** Maybe your line is social justice, from Pirkei



Avot, **“It is not upon you to finish the work, but neither can you not start it.”**

For me, those lessons and metaphors often come from faith. For you, maybe it comes

Gretzky, **“You miss 100% of the shots you don’t take.”**

Choose your quote. Whatever inspirational line that’s going to help you remember how you want to live. You want

routine and reminds you to act with kavanah, to act with intention.

That’s your homework. Put it on a piece of paper. But our Judaism can’t just be

you brush your teeth before you go to bed.

And when you read it, you’ll hear that shofar blast. Let it pierce your mind. It will inspire you.

**But often, I need that reminder, to break from the routine of life and to act with kavanah, to act with an intention that lets me use my imagination, that lets me see the awe, that gives me that “ah-ha” moment.**

from somewhere else. Maybe you’re a “Swiftie” – **“Life isn’t how to survive the storm, it’s about how to dance in the rain.”**

Or from the playwright Oscar Wilde, **“Be yourself, everyone else is already taken.”**

Or for those sports fans among us, from Wayne

more ideas, I’ll help you find some. We’ve got classes throughout the year filled with great nuggets. Or, if you can’t find your nugget, I’m happy to meet with you.

But I want you to find it. And for that quote to be your daily shofar blast. I want it to be the bumper sticker that inspires you. That breaks you from your fixed

a bumper sticker that we happen upon by chance. It has to be intentional. This motto, this verse, this Torah has to be not what you are, but what you want to be and keep being. That’s why you don’t put it on the back of the car where you’ll never see it. Instead, put it on your bathroom mirror, so that you see it when you wake up or as

It will remind you of your mission. And it will help you stay closer to that course which are setting for yourself tonight.

This year, may the blast of the shofar continue to reverberate. May your year be filled with kavanah, with intention. May you wake up to moments of awe and beauty. And may it be a sweet year for you!

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# Rosh Hashanah | Morning Services

## The Antidote to Spite



**Rabbi Michael L. Moskowitz**

In a decade of weird, this is a whole new level. Heat is rising in all the wrong places. Floods are flooding. Fires are flaming. Air from Canada is asphyxiating us. And, just to add a little spice, Covid is on the uptick, again. I'm waiting for the frogs and locusts to appear. Mother Nature is being, well... a Mother. Probably getting even with us for poisoning the planet. If you don't believe that, just pick up any newspaper. Recently in the New York Times, I read about quite possibly the weirdest of all – that killer whales are now attacking yachts. Really? And it's not just one killer whale. It's not just a pod of whales either. Worse, it's a minyan – ten at a time, it seems. And they are all following a leader, some psychotic leader, one whale traumatized by an encounter with a fishing net. This isn't just Moby Dick going after poor Ahab. They're not just picking on the one percenters. They're picking on the one percent of the one percenters.

The ones who own yachts. I know what you're thinking – it's in their nature. Killer whales, right? But scientists say this is completely out of the ordinary. It appears to be an acutely heightened level of spite.

Somehow these Orcas picked up the negative energy from us and it seems to be everywhere. They called it the "Summer of Spite." (Aug 17, 2023 Vanity Fair). It even impacted the release of our summer's blockbusters, which as a result gave us... Barbenheimer. Who would think that they would premier the two biggest movies this year simultaneously.

**Everyone and everything wants to get "even." We hear it every single day. How could you not when there's the populism poisoning our politics – and fueled by ratings. I never imagined a psychotic whale with a chip on its shoulder would be the meme of our world today. But it is. Did I say weird?**

Coincidence? Many have speculated that Warner Bros executives scheduled Barbie's release on the same day as Oppenheimer for no other reason than to get back at Universal Pictures for swiping away their director Christopher Nolan.

Then there's been the new realities of how billionaires like to do battle. Imagine saying cage match in the same breath as Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg. Weird. Wait a minute. Well... maybe not for them.

Everyone and everything wants to get "even." We hear it every single day. How could you not when there's the populism poisoning our politics – and fueled by ratings. I never imagined a psychotic whale with a chip on its shoulder would be the meme of our world today. But it is. Did I say weird?

Knowing this reality, many of you have questioned, wondered almost tongue in cheek, what a rabbi might teach on this new year. With all these challenges, with problems and real concerns, what could be said? How could this be solved? Tell us, rabbi, some have demanded, how do we fix this one?

You can't fix this one. As individuals, as a community, you can't fix this. But it doesn't mean you can't try. It doesn't mean we're not going to do something. Because

as any sailor knows, you cannot change the wind, but you can adjust the sails. We can't change the physical and emotional climate. What we can do is change how we react to it.

**I'm not suggesting in some naive way that it's so simple, that we should merely be kind. But I do believe it is where we have to start. It is the algorithm that directs us to move past that which seems outright mean.**

And that is exactly what Rosh Hashanah is here telling us to do. Read the Book of Life this year, this season of spite of ours and change your reaction. You change yourself.

Our holy day comes around reminding us where we have come from; reminding us who we are; reminding us that we are better than what we are seeing in our world. That's the Book of Life. It's asking us how have you reacted to events that are happening now. Our Torah tells us, don't





forget that, **“we’re a kingdom of priests. A holy people.”** And getting even or letting spite direct us, doesn’t fit into that equation. We can’t act like children who get angry and throw temper tantrums.

True, we’re not going to always agree. We all have opinions, and often that means, differing opinions. That too is a part of Jewish

start out there. First you fix the pot hole in front of your home, then you go to your community and then the world. Actually, he said you go inside your home first and start with yourself.

This holy day tells us that you start with yourself by knowing what got you here. Rosh Hashanah celebrates our story of creation – and

because we’ve been given these gifts. It’s the essence of God because we live in God’s image. And this is the day we remember that. This is the day we honor it.

We see realities in our world that pain us – we see evil and hate and that which is superficial. But the real gifts placed right here in every one of us, remind us we have

we are. That is what we do. We can’t miss the message because we’re correcting the spelling.

We have been created in the image of God. Again, it’s goodness, love and depth. And our responsibility is to bring that more into our lives, and each other’s lives, and yes our world. This even becomes what we can do as a congregation.

**We see realities in our world that pain us – we see evil and hate and that which is superficial. But the real gifts placed right here in every one of us, remind us we have within ourselves goodness, love and depth. We have the ability to show we care with loving kindness, with gemilut chasidim.**

tradition. Two Jews. Four Opinions, at least. There’s that Yiddish expression saying, the only thing two Jews can agree upon is what a third should donate to charity. But ultimately, in our disagreements, it doesn’t matter if we are right or if we are wrong. What matters is that we’re kind. It’s about being understanding more than being understood.

I’m not suggesting in some naive way that it’s so simple, that we should merely be kind. But I do believe it is where we have to start. It is the algorithm that directs us to move past that which seems outright mean.

Nearly 200 years ago, Rabbi Israel Salanter, the creator of the ethical and spiritual musar movement, taught that if you want to fix the problems you see in this world, you can’t

with that we’re reminded that every one of us is made **B’tselem Elohim, in the image of God.** That means God gave us gifts, the qualities and characteristics our world needs from us. God is showing us the way to be, the way to give back. It’s goodness, love and depth.

You see the natural world has people in it doing whatever they want because they can. They’re angry and there’s no etiquette to anger. There’s no kindness in selfishness. That is the dog eat dog, survival of the fittest, natural world we see.

On Rosh Hashanah we find the opposite. We find the super natural. The supernatural world is doing good. The supernatural helps us find meaning. The supernatural world is being righteous. We can do this

within ourselves goodness, love and depth. We have the ability to show we care with loving kindness, with gemilut chasidim.

This is the essence of our faith and even more, this is what we should be doing. We take care of each other. And most importantly, we do it whether we agree with each other or not. Too many in our world merely want to prove what they believe is right rather than what is good. And what is right for me, may not necessarily be right for you. But what is good? What is kind and caring? That is who

One of the most remarkable privileges we rabbis are blessed to experience is watching this unfold in real time, seeing the magic happen in relationships, in community. We see pain and challenges in life and it can be overwhelming. But balance that with the goodness we witness, well, it lifts the spirit up all the time.

A few years ago, during that first months of the pandemic, we created a Chaplaincy Corps here at temple, with the hope that some might be interested. A few individuals stepped up who would meet with us rabbis, and they were told of others in our congregation going through a rough patch. Some had health challenges, others were caring for an ailing spouse, a few were mourners. They would check in, engage

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in meaningful conversations, and just be one additional connection to help out. Over time, genuine relationships developed. It was beautiful what organically occurred.

We didn't anticipate what would happen next – though maybe we should have. This past year, the husband of one of the leaders in our Chaplaincy group took ill. He was diagnosed with cancer. And within what seemed like minutes, both individuals this person had been connected to, turned the tables, and started calling her, sending weekly cards and checking in. My blessing was that they all shared with me how meaningful it was to hear from the other. They called me to make sure I knew – and that I was checking in and reaching out too.

This is the power of kindness, what happens when you are willing to give of yourself, to sacrifice so meaningfully. That elevated care is why we are a part of a community. Actually, it is what makes us a community. It's how we feel God's presence in our world.

**This is the power of kindness, what happens when you are willing to give of yourself, to sacrifice so meaningfully. That elevated care is why we are a part of a community. Actually, it is what makes us a community. It's how we feel God's presence in our world.**

These High Holidays are the 36th High Holidays for Temple Shir Shalom. 36. Double Chai. So much life. So much good we have done and that we do. But I believe Rosh Hashanah is our call to action for what more we can do. Picking up from what our Chaplaincy Group began, why can't we all be a part of it.

- Wellness Calls – we connect you to one another to help. Keep us informed and will check in. Someone is sick? Tell us. Not just for a misheberach. Tell us so we can check in.

- Mitzvah Drivers – our very own shuttle service. You want a ride to a temple program, not only services? We want you with us – and we have members who want to drive. By the way, if you want to be a driver, we need you now too!

- Or how about building upon our Soup for our Souls – what our 8th graders started doing this year, in making chicken soup here at temple and putting it in the freezer, so that one of us, or one of you then can deliver it to members who might need a little pick me up. Let's grow this. Now you know about it. We can do more.

We know we can do more. Real things. Real connections. Wellness Calls. Mitzvah Drivers. Soup for the Soul.

Rosh Hashanah 5784 – We're starting off our 36th year.

Our first dozen years, we were about surviving.

The next dozen, we were about thriving.

The following 12 years, we were about creating.

And now? Now we are living and celebrating our existence, and magnifying our opportunities to connect more, to help more, to love more.

We are living in the image of God because we bring goodness, love and depth into our lives, into our relationships, into our congregation – and yes, together, into our world.

That's the Book of our Life – and that's our blessing, for our past, our present and our potential.

Amen v'Amen





# Rosh Hashanah | President's Address



**Allison Parr**  
President

Thank you Rabbi and hello to everyone. For those of you who don't know me, I'm Allison Parr, Temple's President. It's hard for me to believe that this is my third and final High Holiday address. You should know that I feel truly honored to serve this role. I am thrilled to give back to this special community that enhances the lives of myself, my husband Harry and our 3 daughters. Lately, I have been also thinking about how belonging to a Temple is a crucial way to take a stand against rising anti-semitism. For surely what I know is WE are stronger when our community is connected and standing together side by side.

So with this in mind, I'm pleased to report that this past year has been another milestone period in the life of Shir Shalom. At a time when congregations around us continue to shrink, we have welcomed 21 new families this year alone. Last week, I was lucky to be on hand at the JCC for the opening of

our Shoresh program. The excited and happy energy was infectious! We kicked off the year with approximately 200 kids enrolled and that number will continue to climb throughout the fall. In fact, one new parent told me that his family came to Shir Shalom because our reputation is that we instill our kids with a strong sense of pride and a love of being Jewish. For me that says it all! And this commitment to our kids continues through high school. Our Fruman Youth Program for high schoolers on Sunday night welcomes 60 teenagers each week. You can find many of those same high schoolers helping lead our family services down the street at WB high school.

When I first became president, we had begun formulating our audacious dream we called Project All Together. This dream centered around adding on to our building as it was originally envisioned by our founding rabbi, Dannel Schwartz. Our goal was to bring all of our Shir Shalom kids, preschool through Shoresh, back to our building. In doing so we also planned to secure our financial future by paying off our current mortgage, putting an end to paying rent elsewhere for our educational programs, and welcoming more celebrations into an updated social hall. At the time, our \$9 million goal seemed daunting. But let me affirm that the generosity of our

Shir Shalom family has been awe inspiring. Our dream started to become a reality with the lead gifts from June Gurwin of blessed memory and her daughter and son-in-law Fran & Gary Grossman. Since then, 175 families have donated to Project All Together. More specifically, to date we have received \$6.3 million and have received additional \$1.1 million in commitments and multi-year gifts. This has enabled us to make tremendous progress. So far we have begun to pay down our mortgage, we have transformed our social hall to a welcoming, natural light filled space. And you all have seen our impressive addition

We are truly in the home stretch. Thank you to those of you who have made this happen. Please, I invite the rest of you to jump in and be a part any way you can of Project All Together's success and Shir Shalom's legacy. Many naming opportunities still exist at all levels, and we need your help to reach our remaining \$2 million goal.

But I digress because this is the High Holidays, a time of reflection, Jewish community and togetherness. Here at Shir Shalom, I have found these concepts come up often. And nothing underscores this more than the fact that both of our rabbis have

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– our newly created indoor spaces are almost complete. And so I am overjoyed to tell you that this January we will finally be bringing our preschoolers and our Shoresh kids home under our Shir Shalom roof!

spent their careers here with us alone. For Shir Shalom, it does always come back to relationships. That is our superpower. It's why I feel so connected to our Temple. Even as we continue to grow in membership, we remain





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a close-knit community with real relationships with our rabbis, with our beloved Cantor Penny and with our tireless Executive Director, Brian Fishman and with each other. It struck me that this priority is the real reason I feel good about standing here today and again asking you all to give at this special time of year.

Because this is the time of year when we, as a congregation, make sure that everyone who wants to be a part of our

Temple and everyone who wants to give their child the gift of our Jewish education can do so despite their ability to pay. While careful fiscal conservatism and member generosity has made temple operations run smoothly we still live in challenging times. As a result, approximately 40% of our members look to us for some form of dues relief. This makes up 1/3 of the kids in Shoresh who could not attend our program without our financial help.

So, at this sacred time of year, we are counting on your support, so that nobody is turned away. For those of you who are wondering what is the amount needed to make up our dues shortfall: Well, it is **\$313.67 per household**. A gift of this amount (or any amount) to the High Holiday Appeal will be a mitzvah and will help us to bridge this gap. Best of all, your gift will be doubled again this year by a generous group of donors who have pledged to match

all of the dollars raised from our High Holiday Appeal.

If like my family, you are able to help out your neighbor: Please do so. I want to sincerely thank those of you who already made a donation in advance of the holiday and those who still intend to. You can mail back the HHD appeal envelope or simply go to [ShirShalom.org](http://ShirShalom.org) and click on the High Holiday tab and easily follow the prompts.

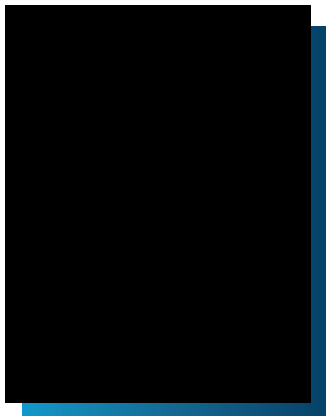
Thank you so much for listening. Finally, please know that I welcome all ideas, questions, and feedback from you. You can always find my contact information in my *Scribe* articles. Shana Tova to you and your family.







# Rosh Hashanah | Family Services



SSTY Vice President  
of Religion & Culture

My favorite princess has always been the Little Mermaid. Ever since I was young, I was always drawn to Ariel. At first I just liked the songs she sang and the fact that she was a mermaid, but as I got a bit older and watched the movie over 100 times, I became drawn to her for other reasons.

The Little Mermaid, even if I didn't realize it at the time, was my biggest role model. I began to emulate her in so many ways. She was a kind person to everyone around her, and I wanted to be that kind of person as well. I also admired her confidence and bravery with challenges she may have been afraid to do at first. Her adventurous spirit pushed her to do things that many others would not even attempt. If I was scared to go across the monkey bars at the playground or ride my bike without training wheels, I thought of Ariel and how she set her fears aside and never gave up until she achieved what she set out to

accomplish. I knew I could do it because she could.

As I got a bit older, I realized that I was not going to grow up to be a mermaid, but her sense of determination stuck with me. As I started to become involved in gymnastics, I began to have new role models in my life. Being a competitive gymnast, I used to want to be an Olympian. I would watch Olympic gymnast Simone Biles perform incredible skills and wondered if I could ever be as good as her. She made me want to keep practicing and work harder. I soon had to accept that I, unfortunately, was not going to make it to the Olympics, but that did not matter because I had developed the drive to push myself just as Simone had done.

A role model is someone who we look up to and often imitate their behavior out of admiration for their character, actions and achievements. As we celebrate Rosh Hashanah, the beginning of a new year, we are reminded that it gives us all the opportunities to better ourselves from the past year. So, who is your Little Mermaid or Simone Biles? Who is your role model and why do you admire them? How can you be more like them this coming year?

Something that inevitably comes with achieving goals is failure. Princesses, superheroes and athletes

often fail before they can succeed. Gymnasts fall off the beam 100 times before they stay on once.

In my case, when I was 10 years old, my family and I moved to West Bloomfield from Chicago. It was very difficult at the time to adjust to a whole new life here; new friends, a new house, new school, and a new

making new friends, and I was grateful for everything I had in Michigan. I was becoming like my role models. I was proud of myself for what I overcame and I knew I did it all on my own. While it's important to have people to look up to in life as a way to set goals for who you want to be or what you want to achieve, it's even more important that

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environment. For a while, I didn't feel like I fit in, and I was rather lost as to how I could completely start over. However, I thought back to my role models and the hardships they had to overcome. If Simone Biles could win a gold medal and Ariel could get her voice back, then I could persevere and beat this challenge much like the monkey bars; I just had to take one step at a time.

During that first year, there were a few times I felt like I fell off the beam. But about a year after we moved to Michigan, I felt like I was finally adjusted to my new life – I had stuck my landing. I did miss Chicago, but I was

you focus on the qualities of your role model and not just their superpower. Throughout the year, each and every one of you will face challenges. Look within and harness the qualities that make you special. I guarantee you will come out even stronger. As we look toward 5784, I challenge you all to be your own princess or superhero even if it seems daunting. Become the person you have always looked up to.

I hope everyone has a happy and healthy New Year! Shana Tovah!



# Yom Kippur | Kol Nidre Services

## Time for Our Do-over



**Rabbi Michael L. Moskowitz**

*Al cheyt* – We made mistakes, missteps. *Al cheyt*. Not malevolent malfeasance. Not felonious failures. We just blew it. We missed the mark. And tonight we show up and say it is time for a do-over. Time to course correct and move on. And just in case we're having memory lapses, the prayer book is filled with a literal catalogue of sins from A to Z.

We say these same words every year. We beat our chest. And perhaps to prove the point, our prayer book makes the world say out loud with every one that is reading along, that even the holy know-it-all and local smart person, your rabbi, must admit this in living color as well. In front of the entire congregation. *Al cheyt*. I have made mistakes by the score, failures by the bucket load. Not anybody's fault but mine. I feel like a failure.

All you have to do is look around. Remember the days of people coming hours

before services, wearing extra layers of clothing just so they could take off a few and drape them over rows of seats to save? Over 1000 were seated right here on Kol Nidre. Look at it now. I feel Rabbi Schwartz the elder looking down from Maine and saying, "Michael, what did you do?" Talked to colleagues around town and around the country, and it's the same thing. And Rabbi Schwartz is looking down on them too. They just don't take his phone calls.

**In a world of changing values, in a world that has a dearth of leadership, a world bifurcated by bullies, it is time for imagination and change. No one is having a crisis of faith. It's a crisis of imagination.**

I have heard the excuses. Worried about coming to services and catching something. There are definitely some who are at a greater risk and wisely have chosen to stay home and watch. And I feel blessed that we can offer live streaming during all our services. But I know in my heart of hearts for some, while they say they worry about big gatherings, if offered Taylor Swift tickets, large crowds would be far from their concerns.

For the majority of American Jews, we have learned it's ok not to go to services or it's ok

even not to watch services. It's ok to do nothing synagogue connected on Yom Kippur. You all here tonight, even you online, you get it. You're the ones showing up. So now, you're the ones who need to help us with the answers.

*Al cheyt*. It's on us. Maybe we're not making services interesting enough. One might think that if we brought Madonna to Shir Shalom we could make something of ourselves. George Clooney as a speaker on Kol Nidre.

Probably standing-room only. People have a strange habit. If we want to do something, we'll find a way. If we don't want to do something, we find an excuse. We just have to make it something you want to do. That folks have a need. That it interests them. That it's special. But that's on us, our challenge.

In a world of changing values, in a world that has a dearth of leadership, a world bifurcated by bullies, it is time for imagination and change. No one is having a crisis of faith. It's a crisis of imagination. 2000 years ago,

the great sage Rabbi Hillel had an answer. Just like us, much the same problem. Bullies, belittlement, banality. His answer, *b'makom she'ayn anashim hishtedayl lihiyot ish* – **in a place where there are no humans, strive to be one.** He knew things were bleak, but he still believed we had potential.

The world had changed. People's needs were different. There had been a paradigm shift. Some say it's a similar reality today. But maybe it's more. Maybe the paradigm is the wrong paradigm. Why should we assume people will come just because we have services? Granted in Hillel's time most weren't able to make the pilgrimage, even though you just had to show up in Jerusalem. Many paid to have someone else bring an offering on their behalf. Yes, the world was changing. But maybe Hillel knew we would be ok. He knew our history. He had studied Scripture, knew Ecclesiastes. Already 700 years before his time, his ancestors, our ancestors had overcome challenges. They looked out at the world, and proclaimed, **"all things toil to weariness...** And *ayn chadash tachat hashamash, there's nothing new under the sun.*" Was that a positive? Like, we've been here before and don't worry, we'll be ok? Or was it, oh man, here we go again?

**Imagination. It's in our DNA, navigating challenging times and figuring out what we need now and what we need next and what we need tomorrow. We have experience, times when our ancestors learned how to move without the ball and innovate. Times when folks thought we were doomed, our end was near. But looking back, we see success occurred when we asked the right questions. When we looked within to find out what our people needed at that very moment.**

Nothing new under the sun. One plague, one virus and look at us. Some have proclaimed that Covid has made happen what antisemitism could not. People won't be coming back, they say. But maybe the mistake is only counting tuchases in the pews. Maybe we should be more about remembering what keeps us connected and what has the potential to lift us up.

Imagination. It's in our DNA, navigating challenging times and figuring out what we need now and what we need next and what we need tomorrow. We have experience, times when our ancestors learned how to move without the ball and innovate. Times when folks thought we were doomed, our end was near. But looking back, we see success occurred when we asked the right questions. When we looked within to find out what our people needed at that very moment.

Nearly 2000 years ago after the Temple's destruction in Jerusalem, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai was walking through the rubble and fallen stones when he found his student with his head in

his hands. His student cried out, **"How can we make the sacrifice? Rabbi, the altar is destroyed. The Temple is no more. How can we atone for our sins?"** To which Yochanan responded, **"we no longer have to sacrifice animals. Instead we will give of ourselves. We will give kindness, compassion and acts to help others."**

With that, he created an entirely new paradigm of how we would gather and exist as a community, of how we would not merely survive, but do so with intent, with a way that brought meaning into people's lives. Remarkable. It worked, until it didn't. Until that changed. Until we became a little too Babylonian, or was it too Greek or maybe it was Roman. Until we became like them, assimilated a little too much. Like I said, been through this before. But we picked ourselves up and brushed ourselves off. We said, *al cheyt*. We figured it out and moved forward.

Yochanan asked the right question. What did his people need? That vision still guides us today – that we should create opportunities

that answer the felt need questions. Give us the questions, we will figure it out with you. We're looking for values in what seems at times to be a valueless world. We're looking for connections, relationships, others we learn with, and with whom we can navigate the challenges.

A temple needs to meet people where they are, physically and spiritually. We need to create for each other meaningful experiences. We have to be ageless. Not merely a Judaism for teaching our children, but relationships with everyone in our community, singles and couples, young and older, straight and LGBTQ, Jewish and not-Jewish. It's about making people know they are wanted, necessary and important. Essentially, we love bomb – making one another feel welcomed and comfortable. This is how we make our faith work.

It's what Shir Shalom has always done well. We begin every service by turning to greet one another and to meet someone new. It's about openness and warmth. Now we have our special

Shabbat onegs, with cocktails and chords, or whatever the theme might be. **Oneg is the Hebrew word for joy** and those Shabbats radiate just that in our being together. And this year, one of our board members said to us no one should be alone for break fast. Opened up her home and said, come and join us. That has meaning. I love this example of who we are. If you like that idea but didn't sign up in time, your rabbis and cantor are doing something too. A little smaller. Here in the garden after concluding services, stick around for a nosh and some sips. Whether you're new in town or a guest here tonight or new to Judaism or just want to break the fast with others, stick around after concluding services. My friend's grandmother used to say, there's always enough chicken soup to go around. And if you need, just add a little water. No one should be alone.

What more can we do? Euchre nights, game days, Shir Shalom Sunday bike rides. They're ways to connect, to be included. In home chavurahs, in your neighborhoods. Bringing couples together or singles or families, to share time on Shabbat, to learn together, to create what you want. Want one in Huntington Woods? We'll help coordinate. In Farmington Hills, we'll help connect you to others. We will meet you where you are. We did this a few years back – and I see some of you out there, connected through





temple, who became over time the closest of friends. And now 20 years later there is so much joy in seeing you together at each other's children's weddings.

Yom Kippur is our state of the community address, the time when you all get to think about and let us know what you need. It's sort of like our giant focus group. We just happened to invite every single member to the table. It's why we have an extended tish tomorrow, specifically on this day, so you can ask anything. And we can engage in discussions of depth and meaning and get things you want to see happening in motion. At last year's tish,

name tags were suggested for our onegs. Simple idea. Great idea. We do that now and it connects us more.

28 years of doing this. I know the strength of this community and how we care for each other. I know what we have within and what we can do.

What more is possible? That's on me. And it's on us all. *Al cheyt*. We learn from each other. But even more, we need each other.

Rabbi Hillel must have been overwhelmed by the realities swarming around him 2000 years ago. The world literally was beginning to

crumble. Somehow he stayed positive. Can you imagine his thinking? Got Romans to deal with. Got rebels among my own people. Got Essenes who just seem to be a bunch of unfocused hippies. And everyone is talking about the end of the world. But still Hillel said, *b'makom sheh ayn anashim hishtadayl l'hiyot ish*. In a place where there are no humans, where humanity's goodness and creativity is missing, still find ways to be good, to do good. Where we don't see imagination, find it. Be that kind of human.

2000 years later, we're telling that story. Because it is who we are and what we do. No

matter the mistakes, *al cheyt*, we have to move on. We have to move forward. We are learning to be mensches. To be good, to include, to build relationships that matter and community that can give us hope.

This is what we need in our lives.

That is the blessing we will hold on to here – and the blessing we make a reality for years to come.

Amen v'Amen





# Yom Kippur | Morning Services

## Kodak Moments



**Rabbi Daniel A. Schwartz**

A priest, a minister and a rabbi were having their monthly lunch together when the topic of death came up. What do you want people to say about you at your funeral?

The priest went first, “I want them to say, “He was an honest man, righteous and generous. He was a good shepherd to his flock.”

The Minister spoke next, “I would like them to say, “He was a family man. He was kind and fair. And he was good to his parishioners.”

And finally, the rabbi went, “I want them to say, ‘Look! He’s moving!’”

It’s a great idea, but since there’s a 100% mortality rate in the world, the question becomes, when our time comes, what is it that we want said? Will we even be remembered? And what will we be remembered for?

Every practice and tradition during this day of Atonement, let’s just call it a dress

rehearsal. Some of us wear soft soled shoes as if we’re mourners. Some even have the tradition of wearing white, which at one time was the color worn by mourners and for burial shrouds.

It was Anne of Brittany who changed all of that when she married King Louis XII, she believed that black, which was the usual color of wedding dresses, didn’t work for her. And like the Kardashians of her day, she convinced France to wear white for wedding dresses. Queen Victoria popularized it for the world in the 1840’s when she married Prince Albert. That’s why some wear a white kittle today, the robe that reminds us of mourning. It’s why we dress the Torahs on the bimah in white. A memory trigger.

I remember spending the holiday in my Savta’s, my Israeli grandmother’s, synagogue one year. Grown men were fervently praying with tears flowing down their cheeks. They were afraid for their lives. Had they prayed enough? Had they properly asked for forgiveness? Had they given enough tzedakah?

The Book of life was closing. It was too late. They were already at their funeral. That’s why they were crying. They didn’t live up to their own expectations. It could be that they saw themselves through other people’s eyes, through

guilt, through all they weren’t rather than through what they were. Would they make it into the Book of Life for another year?

As for me – not my shtick. For me, today isn’t about guilt or worrying if my actions of the past year will get me over that hurdle, if they will get me into the Book of Life.

For me it’s a day to think about what’s most important. It’s about if I met my own expectations. Did I make a good impression? Did I do all that I could? It’s about memories and memory triggers and have I made them?

When I was the program director at camp and counselors weren’t sitting where they were supposed to or weren’t doing what was needed, we had a code. It was a short phrase, 4 words, that when they heard them, they knew they were to stop what they were doing, look around and figure out what needed to be corrected. It wasn’t about guilt, it was about making sure they were doing what was right, what was needed of them.

Those 4 words? “It’s a Kodak moment.” And it worked every time. Without the campers realizing what was happening, the staff made the necessary adjustments.

For those not old enough to remember, Kodak moments

were a little different. Kodak moments were about capturing experiences on film and holding onto them. But how do we do that now?

In a digital world, where my phone alone has almost 41,000 pictures on it, most of which I’ll never look at again for more than a second or two, how do I capture those moments and paste them in the metaphorical photo album in my mind?

**For me it’s a day to think about what’s most important. It’s about if I met my own expectations. Did I make a good impression? Did I do all that I could? It’s about memories and memory triggers and have I made them?**

What’s worth it? And how do we make more of them? It goes back to that idea of the mystics of keva and kavanah. Keva – those fixed routines we create for ourselves increase our chances of having kavanah – the intention and meaning that we work to create in our lives.





It's the Shema that Elana and I sing to our children. There's not kavanah every time we recite it. But singing it every

Or, as soon as the service was over, it was easier to get out quicker. Click. It was a Kodak moment.

remembering the impact they had, the smiles they brought to our faces, the lessons we learned. Click. Those are

that? That's a gem. You think she will? I'll bet her parents are going to remind her of it throughout her life. Click. A Kodak moment.

## Because, when we climb up to the attic of our minds, and think about those moments, what do we remember most? It's experiences. It's people.

night gives us the chance to find what we're looking for and for inspiration to come. Sometimes it gives me pause. I think about the meaning or contemplate what God wants from me. Sometimes it's because one of the kids makes a comment or asks a question. And I'm also hoping it leaves an imprint on them.

If we focus on the kavanah - If we continue creating experiences, if we keep doing, we'll do more of the good ones. We'll start thinking in terms of Kodak moments. And we'll hear that shutter capture them... click.

Because, when we climb up to the attic of our minds, and think about those moments, what do we remember most? It's experiences. It's people.

In my family the High Holy Days were sacred. We never imagined going to school. In fact, it was schadenfreude knowing our friends were still suffering in school and we got to miss it. It was my parents knowing just the right place to park, where they wouldn't get stuck after services.

And for those of you in the back, don't think I don't know why many of you are there. I know because, I was you. I would sneak out for a break.

When my grandfather died, I would walk with my dad to the synagogue down the street so he could say Kaddish. And then we'd stick around for the kiddush lunch afterwards.

He loved the herring. I wouldn't touch it. But there were plenty of sweet treats for me. Click. Another Kodak moment.

There were the special Shabbat delights. The drive to rural Illinois, to the Whitmond hotel where we would have family style country suppers, long before farm to table was a thing. And then the pitstop on the way home to get a piece of fudge. Click. A Kodak moment.

This afternoon's Yizkor, its a Kodak moment too. I remember being escorted out of a Yizkor service once because at that point I wasn't an official mourner. No, it wasn't law that I couldn't be there, it was just bad luck. It's just that you're not supposed to grow up and want to go to a Yizkor service.

But when we do gather for it, when we recite those memorial prayers, we are supposed to be celebrating the lives of people we love or people we respect,

Kodak moments. Often, it's not the image of the people we remember, it's the act of doing.

That's what Judaism is about. Actions to connect to us. And lighting the Yizkor candle becomes a muscle memory for those around us. You don't think they're watching? Think again. We do these actions so that others will do it for us. And sometimes you just have no idea the kind of impact little things have. I was reminded of that a few weeks ago with one of our Temple preschool students.

For the last few years, she's welcomed Shabbat with her classmates and rabbis every Friday morning during the school year and in our camp. But this summer, in preparation for kindergarten, she took a week off to go to Safety Town. She'd been there all week and was getting ready for her last day. It was a Friday morning and so she asked her parents, "Which Rabbi is going to be there? Rabbi Mike or Rabbi Dan?"

After questioning why she thought one of us would be there, she said to her parents, "It's Shabbat. We always start Shabbat with the rabbis. You'll think I'll ever forget

We all have that potential. All of us can have an impact on someone else's life. Our faith gives us the path to doing this for others, to share our values and life's lessons so that they learn them, and so that one day your memory is kept alive through their actions. They are opportunities in which we can engage and which we can share with others. They are the rituals, practices and obligations we have.

It's like the quote by Ahad Ha'am that **"More than the Jewish people have kept the Sabbath. The sabbath has kept the Jewish people."** By engaging in these rituals and celebrations, we're reminded of who we are, of our core values and of who we want to be.

And just as our preschoolers link us rabbis to their Shabbat, when teaching and participating in these other rituals with family and friends, they'll remember you.

Light Shabbat candles with a child, a spouse, a sibling or a friend. If you're in person, do it together. Different places? Choose a time and Facetime each other. It'll be a Kodak moment.

Maybe this is the year you buy a lulav and an etrog for Sukkot. Find someone to shake them with. Or, have a meal in a sukkah. If you don't





have one at home, come here and use the one at Temple. It'll be a Kodak moment.

Bake a challah weekly. Raisins or no raisins, whatever floats your boat. Not a good baker? Buy the pre-made frozen dough variety. Make one. Make two. Give them to somebody. Wish them a Shabbat Shalom. Click. A Kodak moment.

**Often, it's not the image of the people we remember, it's the act of doing.**

And these rituals, not only do they become memory triggers, but they return us to our values as individuals and as a people.

The Torah portion we just read reminds us of that choice we get to make today.

As we chanted and read, *ki hamitzvah hazote*, these teachings, these rituals, they are not in the heavens or across the sea that we can't reach them. And they are not just for the leaders of our community.

They are for everyone and they are near to us. They're ours for the taking, as long as we choose to grab them.

On days like today, these walls create meaningful memories. There are individuals who I can't forget because they made that choice.

I think of Howard Camden, of blessed memory. Howard would sit in the front row for the High Holidays with his stopwatch, time our sermons to make sure they weren't too long. After the service was over, he would tell me the length and his tips on how to be successful here. Click.

Kodak moment.

I think of Jan Landsberg, the former librarian who shared her love of books with me. I remember her oversized shirts which always had a pun on them or how she would torture noisy teens when she ushered. Click – another Kodak moment.

I think of Shelley Barr, of blessed memory, our accompanist for many years, who shared with me the history of Temple through her eyes, who taught me about noodling, that soft playing of the piano between or sometimes beneath a reading or a prayer that she did weekly. But today especially, I think of her with that transition of the prayer for our country to the prayer for Israel and how she masterfully blended the "America the Beautiful" with "Hatikvah," so that you

didn't even realize she made a transition. Click. A Kodak Moment.

Howard, Jan and Shelley, they all made an impression on my life. They shared something positive with me, a treasure I picked up along the way, that I held onto. And in doing that they became part of my psychological memory palace. I think of them and question whether I am following their teachings.

This year may you too choose to grab hold of those rituals. May you share them with others and make Kodak moments. And in sharing with joy, may your values and lessons be passed on as well. May you be entered into the *Sefer HaChayim*, the books of the living, of your family and friends. And for God's sake, may you be sealed for good.





# Yom Kippur | Family Services



**Charlotte Brager**  
SSTY President

Hello, my name is Charlotte Brager, I am the president of our SSTY youth group.

I'm so excited to speak to all of you today, about something that I hope might just change the way you see the world around you. I want to talk about connections. Connecting with people and connecting with the nature surrounding us, and disconnecting from the screens attached to our hands and our eyes.

a whole big world out there, full of adventure, surprises, and amazing people. In the real world, you can hear, smell, touch, and feel.

Let's start with the people. When you put down your screens and look around, you'll appreciate your family, your friends, and your teachers. These are the people who care about you, who love you, and who can teach you so many things. They have stories to tell, games to play, and lessons to share. When you connect with them, you create beautiful memories that no screen can ever replace.

Now, let's talk about the physical world around you. Have you ever noticed the wind in the trees, the birds in the sky, or the freshness of blooming flowers. Have you explored your neighborhood or your local park? Nature is

real-life experiences can be even more rewarding, exciting and inspiring than anything on a screen.

I'm not saying screens are bad. They have their place, but they shouldn't replace your life. Think of them as tools, like toys you use when it's time to play, but then you put away when it's time to learn, talk to people, or explore the world.

This summer I traveled to Colorado and went on many hikes. One thing I noticed was the higher up into the beautiful ginormous mountains I climbed, the less connection my phone had, the fewer notifications I was receiving. Ever so often I would take it out to capture a photograph, however, I knew that I did not need to record the entire hike because I will be able to remember it for what it truly

did it allow me to reconnect with myself, but also became closer to my mom, dad, and younger sister who joined me on those hikes. After services today I recommend that you take some time to reflect on yourself. Do you feel connected to yourself? Or just your phone. Try and disconnect for a little bit today, take some time to reflect on your year, and set goals for this new year. This is what Yom Kippur is all about. It's a time when gather as a community, see our temple friends, and notice a little more closely what is special around us. No screens. Just people. People who we can pray with and sing with, laugh with and love.

Remember, the real world is full of wonder and adventure, just waiting for you to feel and explore it. So, let's put down those screens and embark on this exciting journey together.

**I was able to be present in the moment because my phone was disconnected. I love going to mountains, beaches, or even just my backyard to connect with nature and the world around me. The hikes that I went on became such a special experience because not only did it allow me to reconnect with myself, but also became closer to my mom, dad, and younger sister who joined me on those hikes.**

I understand that in our world today, the easiest way to stay connected is virtual. Now, don't get me wrong, screens can be super fun. They have games, videos, and all sorts of cool things. But do you know what's even more tangible and real? The world outside of that screen! There's

filled with incredible things that wake up your senses and make your heart smile. When you step outside and explore, you'll find adventures waiting for you. You might discover a new flower, hear a bird's song, or simply enjoy the feeling of the warm sun on your face. You'll find that

was. I was able to be present in the moment because my phone was disconnected. I love going to mountains, beaches, or even just my backyard to connect with nature and the world around me. The hikes that I went on became such a special experience because not only

You'll be amazed at what you can find when you start connecting with the people and the world right in front of you.

Thank you, happy New Year.