



Congregation Beth Israel

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RE-ENGAGE! REOPEN! RETURN! REDEDICATE! RECONSTRUCT!

July 20, 2021 / 11 Av 5781

Shalom, Fellow Members of Congregation Beth Israel and guests:

Beginning on Rosh Chodesh Elul (August 8) the blasts of the shofar will herald the new year and call us to the task of looking inward as we prepare to do *teshuvah* – to repent, to return, to make positive change. Our services during these Days of Awe (*Yamim Nora'im*) gather the entire community together to engage with this important spiritual work.

This year we find the metaphor of opening gates particularly poignant: after more than a year of forced seclusion and fear, the blessings of modern science and public health initiatives have enabled us to reopen and return to many of the communal activities of our inherited tradition. Still, our dedication to the preservation of life and health requires that our return and reopening be gradual and cautious, so we are still considering the safest ways to observe the larger High Holy Days gatherings this year (Rosh Hashanah day 1 morning, Erev Yom Kippur, and Yom Kippur morning).

The principal purpose of this letter is to inform you, as much as we currently can, of how our observances of the Days of Awe will unfold this year, and to invite your participation in sacred service during this year's High Holy Days.

Prayer Package pickup: Last year we invited you to come to BI to pick up “prayer packages” - bags containing a variety of items for use during the High Holy days (including a Machzor, honey straws, apples, a Yahrzeit candle, Shabbat/holiday candles, blessings, instructions for use of the materials and return of the Machzor, and a message from the rabbis). That opportunity was well received, and we will once again distribute “prayer packages,” along with this year's Yizkor book, which can be picked up at BI on **Sunday August 29, from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., and Tuesday August 31, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.**, when volunteers will be under the portico entrance to distribute them. These package pickup days will also be opportunities for you to contribute nonperishable food items for the Social Action Committee's holiday food drive (see enclosed information).

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In person services: We know already that there will be several opportunities to worship together in person. The possibility of and conditions (attendance limits, masking, distancing, signup) for worship in the sanctuary will in all cases depend on guidance from the COVID committee, so watch your email and check the website for updates about the status and conditions of in person services. All indoor services will be livestreamed via Zoom, so if you aren't able to attend in person you will at least be able to observe.

- On Erev Rosh Hashanah (Monday evening, September 6), services will be in person in the sanctuary.
- Weather permitting, a combined Tashlich and shofar service will be held [location TBD] on Tuesday afternoon, September 7, after the conclusion of that morning's services (which will be by Zoom).
- Services on the second day of Rosh Hashanah (Wednesday, September 8) will also be in person, in the sanctuary.
- Finally, the Ne'ilah service at the conclusion of Yom Kippur will be held in the sanctuary.

Please review the list below and email Laura Lee as soon as possible (**by Sunday August 7** at the latest), **which forms of Avodah (sacred service) you feel most called to engage in this year.** Check up to three items. We will do our best to accommodate expressed preferences, although we can't guarantee that all preferences will be implemented.

- Shofar blowing
- English readings
- Zoom gabbai (managing Zoom behind the scenes during services)
- Assembling and distributing "prayer packages"
- Hebrew prayer leadership
- Managing traffic and parking around prayer package pickup times and in person services
- Tech help (audio/visual set up, etc.)

We hope that participation in these events will be shared among the congregation as broadly as possible, so don't be shy about volunteering!

For up-to-date information about this year's High Holy Days, including the schedule, look for emails and visit <https://www.bethisraelmedia.org/high-holy-days-2021.html> Questions and concerns can be addressed to Laura Lee Blechner (llblechner@pragman.net) and Larry Hamermesh (larry@hamermesh.com).

Thanks, and we look forward to seeing all of you, at least on a screen, very soon! L'shalom,

Emma Wheelwright Lefkowitz, President

Rabbi Linda Potemken

Rabbi Nathan Martin

Larry Hamermesh

Chair, Religious Practices Committee

Laura Lee Blechner, RPC Vice-Chair of High Holy Days