

From the Rabbi's Desk



כִּי אֲנִי עַמְּךָ וְאַתָּה אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ, אֲנִי בְּנֶיךָ וְאַתָּה אָבִינוּ...
אֲנִי עַמְּךָ וְאַתָּה מְלִכֵנוּ, אֲנִי מְאֻמְרֶיךָ וְאַתָּה מְאֻמְרֵנוּ...

For we are Your nation, and You are our G-d.
We are Your children, and You are our Father...
We are Your nation, and You are our King.
We are Your designated ones, and You are our Designated One.
-Excerpt from the Repetition of the Amidah for Yom Kippur

Friday, 6 Elul, 5783 (August 25, 2023)

Dear CBAJ Family,

As *Yamim Noraim* (High Holy Days) come closer, and the year 5783 draws to a close, the majestic and awe-inspiring music of our *tefilot* (prayers) for this season begin to ring in my ears. The line above, sung so beautifully and powerfully by Jews across the world, implores Hashem to have mercy upon us and forgive us once again for all of our faults and shortcomings of the past year. It is G-d's mercy that sustains us and allows us to continue; we depend on His continued forgiveness at all times.

However, in addition to this plea, there is, I believe, a call to action. We do not simply refer to ourselves as G-d's children, nation, and designated ones to demand His forgiveness, but we also do so to remind ourselves who we are and what we are here for. We remind ourselves every year that just as we may "demand" that G-d forgive us as his children, we must also seek to live a life that reflects that unique relationship that we have with the Almighty.

Just this week, I received a call from an individual in our community, expressing concern over the wellbeing of someone they know in the Jewish community. This person asked me, what can I do, what can the *shul* do, how can I help the *shul* do something to help this other Jew? This proactive desire and effort to help someone else is what it means to be a child of G-d—to constantly ask ourselves, how can I partner with G-d to improve this world?

This year, I believe we must all ask ourselves – as individuals, and as a community – how can we live up to these titles that we recite every year: G-d's children, nation, and designated ones? This means asking ourselves questions like: What can I do to be better parent, child, relative, coworker, friend, and community member to those around me? How can I help someone who is in need, whether it be material needs, psychological needs, or social needs? How can I become closer to G-d through Torah study and *tefilah*? How can I make this a world in which the *Shechinah* (the Presence of G-d) is apparent?

May we go into this Yom Kippur proud to declare ourselves *amekha*, *banekha*, *ma'amirekha*, Your nation, Your children, Your Designated ones.

Miriam and I wish you a *shannah tovah u-metukah*, a year full of sweetness and blessing.

Rabbi Ben Kean