



Shabbat Shuvah – September 9, 2021 – 4 Tishrei, 5782

Dear TBE Family and Friends,

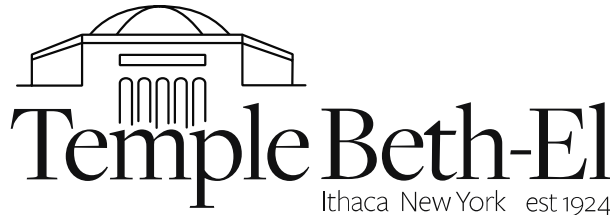
The Shabbat that falls between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is known as Shabbat Shuvah, typically translated as “The Shabbat of Return”. The term invokes images of a nostalgic return to an earlier, simpler era, a time before our own mistakes or life’s complexities had come to weigh upon us. But such a reading suggests a far more passive stance than we are meant to assume during a time of year dedicated to self-improvement.

In this season of *teshuvah* (“return” or “repentance”), I believe our tradition means for us to read the word *shuvah*, which comes from the Hebrew root SH-V/Y-V, not in the most facile sense of the word, as simple return to a previous location or state of being. Rather, in the context of Shabbat Shuvah, I believe the Hebrew root needs to be understood in a less common, but equally defensible guise, best captured in English as “reprise”, that is to say, an active process of review and critical reflection.

In designating the Shabbat we are able to enter as Shabbat Shuvah, I believe our tradition is signaling the need to apply even the typically passive interval that Shabbat represents to combing through our past decisions and actions, identifying points at which, given the opportunity, we would comport ourselves differently. After all, who given action to a cosmic “do-over” button would not find some instance in his or her past to which to apply this functionality?

Shabbat Shuvah is our “last, best chance” to engage seriously in self-review, not to hit the “reset” button, but rather to move “fast-forward” in our progress towards building ourselves into the most fully realized version of our potential that it is within our power to achieve.

Shabbat shalom and *g’mar chatimah tovah* – may each of us find our own path to make the coming year’s inscription a good one for ourselves and those we care about,



-- Rabbi Rachel Safman