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RABBI EMERITUS

Dear Rockdale Temple Family,

The High Holy Days at Rockdale Temple are a time of introspection and spirituality, tradition and community. Every year we look forward to meaningful services full of awe-inspiring music and inspirational prayers and learning. We await those special greetings of old friends and relish feeling part of a sacred and historic congregation. We anticipate unique study opportunities and the chance to do the holy work of *cheshbon hanefesh*, accounting of our souls. This year, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we will experience High Holy Day services and programs differently, but all these truths remain. We will observe these Days of Awe together in safety and good health, as we search for meaning, inspiration, and holiness.

Rockdale's High Holy Day 5781 experience has been created with strong support from our leadership and input from a High Holy Day working team made up of a diverse group of congregants; this has allowed us to understand the needs, desires, and goals of our larger congregation. Our main services on Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, led by your rabbis from Rockdale's beautiful Messer Chapel, will be largely pre-recorded so that we may safely include the music you know and love. The pages of our prayer book, *Mishkan HaNefesh*, will appear side-by-side the service leadership. Each main service will be either preceded or followed by virtual opportunities for greeting one another and celebrating as a community. Special services and learning activities will be offered for young families and grade school students as always, brought to them live on Zoom with the support of our Director of Education. Yom Kippur afternoon will feature both familiar and new opportunities for study, meditation, and interaction with teachers and fellow congregants, including a healing service. We will even gather in-person – "in-car" – for a Parking Lot Shofar Service on Rosh HaShanah afternoon! Special gifts, materials, and resources will be provided to every Rockdale household prior to the start of the High Holy Days, and we will have adult education, discussion opportunities, and member schmoozes leading up to this season to help everyone make the most of the New Year 5781. Please read the enclosed High Holy Days Schedule and guide for Preparing Our Hearts and Homes for complete information.

Providing our High Holy Day services for 5781 online will be most inclusive, protective of our individual and collective health and safety, fiscally responsible, and logistically feasible for the Rockdale Family. And while this plan may come as a relief for many, it also carries a sense of loss for all of us. We yearn to be together in person, to see one another's faces, to hear each other's voices in prayer and song. This is not the High Holy Day season we all look forward to each year. And yet, we will come together for a meaningful experience, as we always do. Even as we mourn all that we have lost this year – and we know that this sacred congregation has faced significant loss – we will look to the New Year with hope. Until we can celebrate, mourn, and come together in person, we are grateful to be able to observe the Days of Awe together online as a holy community, trusting that this too shall pass.

Please reach out to your Rockdale Temple staff and leadership with any questions or concerns regarding these upcoming High Holy Days. We look forward to seeing you on Rosh HaShanah and send heartfelt prayers for a *Shanah Tovah u'Metukah* – a Sweet and Good New Year!



Rabbi Meredith Kahan  
Acting Senior Rabbi



Rabbi Shena Jaffee  
Rabbi in Residence