

Greetings from Our Rabbi

My Dear Friends,

The story of the Jewish people is one of adaptation and change. If you read the descriptions of Rosh ha-Shana and Yom Kippur in the Torah, you find very different ways of marking this time of year than the way we do it in modern Jewish practice. The Torah speaks of animal sacrifices and cleansing the altar of the Tabernacle. You won't find anything about special melodies, round *challot*, or apples and honey. When the Second Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in the year 70 CE, the Jewish community was faced with a dire choice - keep the holiday rituals as they had been and allow the religion to die off, or find new ways to mark time and worship God, thus breathing life into Judaism. Of course, they chose the latter and adapted to their new circumstances. Throughout Jewish history we find examples of Jews creating rituals, writing prayers, and inventing ways to be Jewish that their ancestors would never have imagined. When our people face challenge and crisis, we adapt to a new reality. We get creative. We come together to reimagine what Jewish life can look like.

Indeed, we are in the midst of a great challenge. This pandemic has forced us out of each other's physical presence, and we are not able to come together for the High Holy Days in the ways we have before. We didn't want this change to happen, but the leaders of this congregation have adapted and found a way for us to celebrate this time of year in community. They have allowed us to overcome a tremendous crisis in order to sing, to learn from one another, and to find the inspiration that we desperately need as we enter into the year 5781. I want to offer my profound thanks to all who dreamed up this new way of marking Rosh ha-Shana and Yom Kippur. Creating a new type of prayer experience is a huge undertaking, and so many people worked tirelessly in order for it to come together. We are better because of the dedication shown by those who had a hand in these High Holy Day services.

We don't know what this new year will hold, but we do know that it is filled with potential. I want to offer my deepest hope that you will experience sweetness and joy in this new year. Let this High Holy Day experience call you to *T'shuva*, *T'fila*, and *Tzedaka* - Repentance, Prayer, and Righteous Acts. Let the familiar words and melodies that were unknown to the ancient Israelites flow through you and lift you up. There is so much in these prayers that can touch our hearts and call to mind more peaceful times in our lives. May this season inspire us to do the work that our own souls need, and that our world needs as well.

L'Shana tova u-m'tuka - Wishing you a year of sweetness and goodness,
Rabbi Jake Singer-Beilin