

Dear Skokie Valley Member,

One of my favorite refrains in the davening for Rosh Hashana is the phrase we recite after the blowing of the Shofar - "Hayom Harat Olam."

Hayom Harat Olam - translated literally means "Today is the day the world is pregnant!" What does this mean? I believe a more figurative but perhaps more accurate translation is: Today the world is filled with possibility.

Rosh Hashana helps us reflect on how we've grown in the past and the possibility for growth in the coming year. We do this by honoring our legacy and moving into the future, guided by the values that have been passed down from generation to generation.

This past year has been another year of great growth for our community in almost every aspect, the strength of our tefillot, the number of children in youth programming, the quality of our learning, the amount of chessed, the numbers of members. That growth is thanks to the dedication and passion of our community, from those who have been members for decades and stood firm during difficult times, to those who just joined in the last few weeks and have brought their energy and ideas to the synagogue.

We are a shul that is pregnant with possibility, and I can't wait to see what's going to happen this year!

I'd like to conclude with a (non-financial) appeal:

Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur are times of togetherness.

It's been a tough year for the American Jewish community. Our hearts are still reeling from the attacks on Tree of Life Synagogue and the Chabad of Poway. Know that our security team has worked tremendously hard, upgrading our security to meet this unfortunate new reality.

While security is critical, there is something even more important: Showing up.

In these challenging days, it is so important to show up, to be together and to strengthen each other.

I want to invite each of you to come to the High Holidays this year. Bring your families, grandchildren, cousins, bubbe, neighbor, co-worker - everyone is welcome and everyone has a place in the range of services and programs we offer.

This year we will be expanding children's activities, including teen programming, over the High Holidays. We will host our Open Service, 3:30pm on the first day of Rosh Hashana for those for who have barriers to coming to a morning service.

And, if you know someone who would be interested in checking out one of our services for the first time, please let them know about our special offer - High Holiday Seats free of charge for first time attendees!

To a sweet year full of possibility and togetherness,
Rav Ari