

This Week's Shabbat Message from Rabbi Rick Rheins

Counting, Hearing, Reflecting & Renewing

This past week we looked up to see the emergence of the New Moon, the sliver of light that indicates the arrival of the Hebrew month of Elul and the countdown of one month before the New Year 5779. This traditionally is a time during which we begin the spiritual and physical process of preparing for the year to come.

While designating certain points in time with elevated significance can seem arbitrary, the wisdom of the Torah and our Jewish ancestors are, to put it mildly, deserving of our attention. The waning of summer and the beginning of the fall harvest are perfect metaphors to the cycle of human activities and life itself. In the budding promise of spring, we plan and scheme and fantasize about all of the possibilities. The heat and fervor of summer is the season in which those plans crash or come to fruition. We build and fix, we run in full energy to explore and fulfill all that catches the fancy of our eyes and hearts. Words, too, can be spoken with great heat and not so much head.

But the fall is a time when those words and our actions are factored in to the harvest we will reap. It is a time to reflect on that hurried journey we took and to consider ---“what now?”

The fall is that time of receding green and growth, a time of ingathering, sharing, making amends---because we know: winter is coming. No, I'm not foreshadowing the last season of Game of Thrones. Rather, we all know that, as the sun's arc gets lower and lower and the dusk comes earlier and earlier, fall and then winter are coming. And before that cold period of stillness is here, we'd better take stock, repair the foundation, seal the cracks and mend the tears. In spiritual terms, this is the time for all of us to engage in *Cheshbon HaNefesh*, an accounting of our souls.

We are taught in this week's Torah portion, *Shoftim: Tzedek, tzedek tirdof--Justice, justice you shall pursue*. The redundancy, the repetition of the word *tzedek* (justice) has classically been interpreted as signaling that true justice requires viewing the issues in dispute from both sides. That we need to weigh the facts and perceptions on a scale to give all their fair hearing.

The Jewish spirit is blessed with a tenacious love of life. Every generation has demonstrated a remarkable ability not just to survive but to thrive after

adversity. We reflect, we learn, we grow wiser and we march determinedly toward a better future.

We don't need the sliver of new moon to signal that we have entered a time of change and reformation. As we reflect, consult, learn and grow as a community, let each and every one of us take this time for *Cheshbon HaNefesh*, the accounting of our own lives and the spirit, the soul that animates, and consecrates our lives.

This *Erev Shabbat* service (6pm) will be made extra special as we say goodbye to our Israeli *Shinshinit*, Hadar Curiel. In honor of the occasion, Hadar will read Torah for the very first time. Denver's Israel Emissary Osnat Fox will share a few words. As we say goodbye to one friend, we'll also welcome a new friend, Melissa Oxenhandler, our new Temple Sinai Youth Director. She'll be introduced at this Friday's service.

On Shabbat morning, the early minyan begins at 9am in the Abrahams Family Chapel. At 10:30am Elan Brown will lead the Shabbat service in the Zwerin Sanctuary as he becomes a Bar Mitzvah.

I hope to see you at services!

Shabbat Shalom!

Rick