

Yom Kippur 2017

Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, is the culmination of the days of repentance. It is a time to look inward, ask forgiveness, and make amends. We gather together in prayer. It is a challenging day in many ways.

The difficult Unetaneh Tokef prayer, is central to the High Holy Days. “On Rosh Hashanah it is written. And on Yom Kippur it is sealed.” However, it also says, “But repentance, prayer, and deeds of kindness can remove the severity of the decree.” What do we make of this?

I humbly offer an answer. It’s not only that we atone for our sins and for the ways we’ve wronged others. It’s not enough to be sorry. It’s not enough to seek forgiveness or atonement. We must also commit to try to do better, to be better. For me, by the end of Yom Kippur each year, I feel reinvigorated. I feel that my commitments - to my work, to my friends, to my family, and yes, to our synagogue – are renewed.

Commitment to our synagogue, Temple B’nai Abraham, takes many forms. TBA is doing well. We continue to attract new members. Our finances are in good order. Our congregation and its members do

much that is good. Our building and grounds are well maintained and in good condition. But we should not and cannot be complacent. We must keep alive our commitment to this synagogue, which means so much to so many of us.

A fundamental commitment is to be a part of our congregation: to be a member, and to remain a member. Membership in TBA shows commitment to the Jewish people, to Jewish worship, to educating our children to become the next generation of committed Jews, to educating ourselves about Jewish worship and heritage, and to much much more. Membership makes us part of something important that is bigger than ourselves.

Unfortunately, membership dues alone do not support all that takes place at TBA. If you can, we need your financial support beyond dues, especially by donating to our annual giving program, Partners in Leadership. Your donation directly supports our operating budget, funding the many activities and programs that take place within these walls, and your contribution ensures that membership is open to all.

Donations also help TBA meet specific needs. For example, we are just now completing renovations on the large room downstairs to become the centerpiece of the Early School. We are deeply grateful to

Nancy and Robert Eskow for donating the funds for this renovation. We are grateful also to Sisterhood for conceiving the idea and funding the restoration of our ritual silver items, and to Men's Club for its donation to the Jewish Learning Program.

Attempting to meet the goal of Tikkun Olam - healing the world – is, in my view, fundamental to being a Jew. Temple B'nai Abraham has an important heritage of dedication to making the world a better place. Our clergy, the Social Action Committee, the Teen Tikkun Olam program, Sisterhood, Men's Club, and all of us continue to work to fulfill this important goal.

Here at Temple B'nai Abraham, we support and care deeply about the State of Israel. At a time when many, especially young Jewish people, are questioning their bond with Israel, the act of going there is an important key to answering their questions. Many of us have gone on TBA trips to Israel, led by Rabbi Kulwin. Those trips solidified our connections to Israel, and to TBA itself. Being able to go together with other TBA members makes that experience of reconnection all the more strong.

Some years ago at a Men's Club meeting, those present were asked to tell the group something about themselves, something beyond what

they do for a living and how old their kids are. When it was my turn, and it was not pre-planned, I said that my main avocation is Temple B'nai Abraham. I meant it then. I mean it now. I feel a strong sense of commitment to our synagogue and to you.

“Repentance, prayer, and deeds of kindness.” We will say these words together later on in today’s service. They are more than simply words. They guide us in our daily lives. “Repentance, prayer, and deeds of kindness.” They guide us to atonement, to reconciliation, and to renewing our important commitments. I would not be standing here now unless I truly believed that one of our most important commitments is to the place we occupy right now, to our synagogue, Temple B'nai Abraham. I invite each of you to join me in recommitting yourselves to Temple B'nai Abraham. Make that commitment for yourselves, for your families, and for the Jewish people.

May the year to come be filled with peace and blessings for all of us. Shabbat Shalom. G'mar chatimah tovah. L'shanah tovah.