

From the Rabbi's Desk

October 2018

On Rosh Hashanah morning, our service opened with a regal shofar fanfare played by Jose' Cordero. At my suggestion, Jose' composed and debuted this fanfare for us last year. He used his exceptional, musical creativity to express the theme of the *Yamim Nora'im*, the High Holy Days, expertly through this fanfare. Throughout the 10 Days of Awe, we encounter the imagery of God as King again and again. We may no longer understand God to be something like a king, but the weightiness of these days remains. The judge that we bring ourselves before is internal.

We examine and cross-examine ourselves against the moral and ethical codes of our tradition. We are not sentenced for any of our failings, rather we are released on our own recognizance with the hope that we have learned from our past experiences, flaws, and mistakes. Unlike the rabbinic imagery in which the gates close at Simchat Torah, our gates of self-awareness are always potentially open. As we confidently begin our journey into the year 5779, we are ready to make the most of our lives. Let us take on our journey a renewed commitment to thoughtful consideration of the world we encounter. May this year be transformational for you, for us, and for our world.

As I prepared to leave the social hall near the end of our break-the-fast, I paused. I stood by the Tree of Life, which commemorates many sacred moments in the lives of our congregational family. I scanned around the room and saw a beautiful sight; a wonderful mix of perhaps four generations of our Temple community. People were talking and laughing as they shared in the wonderful meal prepared by Greg Morea and his host of helpers. I thank our Sisterhood and Brotherhood for sponsoring this glorious meal. It was truly spectacular. If you missed it, don't, next year.

So many people helped to make our High Holy Days so beautiful and meaningful. There are just too many people to individually thank in this bulletin article. I hope you read my weekly message just after Yom Kippur in which I tried my best to enumerate them. I know I missed some. However, I must make special note of the beautiful Sukkah that the Brotherhood built. It was the best in years. This flurry of activity means we are living our mission. Jose's fanfare rang out loud and clear across Eastern Connecticut heralding this important message: Our house is a house of prayer for all people. We opened our doors wide for the High Holy Days; no tickets required. It seems people heard our call. Now let us dedicate ourselves to opening our hearts to continuously welcome new friends. Yom Kippur is the Shabbat of Shabbats. As we progress through the years, every Shabbat and every communal gathering is a new opportunity. Come join us as we continue building our vibrant community.

Rabbi Marc Ekstrand