

# From the Rabbi's Desk

February 2019

Chaverim,

One of the many things that I've learned from my children is that they thrive through routine. The more they can accurately predict what is going to happen, the happier they are. Nava and Ilan are at a stage where they are fascinated by clocks and calendars. They have figured out that the sun going down does not necessarily mean that it is bedtime. And a warm day doesn't mean it's spring. The better clues are where the big hand of the clock is located and what holiday we've just had. They want to know what is coming, and how to predict what is coming. When we become adults, our affinity for routines does not disappear. Our bodies and minds benefit from regular sleep cycles, eating habits and exercise routines. A steady job or predictable returns on our investments are best for our financial health. A surprise now and then might jump start us out of a slump but overall, routine is the foundation of a balanced life.

Routine is the foundation of our spiritual health as well. There are many routine cycles and timetables in Jewish life. From the time we are eight days old, we are inaugurated into the routines of Jewish life and simultaneously welcomed into the Jewish community. Routines and community go hand in hand. There are very few things in Jewish life that we do alone. We come together to learn and study. We pray, celebrate, mourn together. Within the calendrical cycle we observe the festivals together. These are times for remembering both our people's history and preparing for our own future. The week begins with Havdallah, concludes with rejoicing in Shabbat and then begins again. With each cycle we see that an end is an opportunity for a beginning. There is no beginning without an end to something else.

At the same time we thrive through routines and cycles, life throws a lot of uncertainty at us. The uncertainty can sometimes be good, bringing spice to life, expanding our knowledge. But all too often uncertainty is an unwelcome disruption and can cause irreparable damage. We need ways to cope with uncertainty. Routines are the key to coping. Regular exercise and eating well builds strength. With that strength, more easily we can recover from various health problems or fight disease. If we've saved a few dollars each week, the better we can endure when unexpected expenses hit us out of the blue.

Our spiritual life is no different. We are unavoidably confronted by spiritual pitfalls: the loss of family members or friends, quality of life changes, the challenges of children or aging parents, struggling with illness and addictions, and much more. When things get spiritually rough we should turn to our faith and faith community for support. After a trauma or loss, routine can help get us back on track. When the spiritual challenges occur, they cause us to ask big questions and seek answers. We might ask, where is God; or even, is there a God? Why did this happen to me or my loved one? Does God answer prayers? There are so many questions that can come to mind when we are vulnerable or in despair. Our faith community is the right place to turn in such circumstances. But routine is important before trauma or loss. When things are going along well is the time to do your spiritual exercise. Come and study; come to services; come to community events; make connections with people, and with God. The more spiritual strength you build, the more you will get out of your daily life and the better prepared you will be for life's surprises.

L'Shalom,  
Rabbi Marc