

Rosh Hashanah – Day #1
Preparing for the High Holidays

It was very difficult for me to prepare for this High Holiday season. I had spent my month in Israel on sabbatical in July, studying in Jerusalem. There I was able to study and relax knowing that we were still waiting to get bids from construction companies for the new building. Then, in August, much work was done behind the scenes (once the bids came in), to figure out what our next steps should be. It was a very tenuous and unstable time and it became very hard to focus on the High Holidays.

I also realize that many people may find it hard this year to get ready for the holidays. There are those whose loved one died and are now facing the holidays alone. How does one celebrate the New Year when one may only be in the mood to grieve? There are those also facing a diagnosis of an illness that is quite serious. How can one rejoice when one is anxious? And there are those who may be planning to retire and the stock market crash has adversely affected those plans. How can we observe the rituals when one has such a burden to bear?

The answer to those questions is threefold – family, friends, and community. I am now beginning my 15th year with Shaare Tefila Congregation. As we celebrate our 15th High Holidays together I've gotten to know almost all of you through life cycle events. We have been through a lot together and we have become family. We look around us and we see our friends sitting with us. We know we can turn to them for a hug or a shoulder to cry on. And we look around the room and we see the wonderful community that our shul is. We have founding members and members who joined a month ago. All see something in Shaare Tefila that made them want to join. They see the commitment and dedication of the members. They see the warmth and support that we give to one another.

No matter what we are going through, the holidays come around to force us to be grounded. They force us to recognize to whom we need to turn for love and support. Through the comfort we receive we are then able to observe and celebrate.

May this New Year be one of fulfillment and peace.