

YOM KIPPUR SPEECH 2014

President Twyla Sable

Yom Kippur is the holiest and most solemn day of the Jewish year. The torah refers to Yom Kippur as Shabbat Shabbaton, “a Sabbath of complete rest,” while the Talmud denotes Yom Kippur simply as Yoma, “the day.” It is played out with the great human drama of reckoning and accountability, errors and misdeeds and – ultimately – forgiveness and making amends for past reconciliation.

As we begin this Holy of Holy Days, I ask this congregation for forgiveness if I have offended anyone. Even as we recite the Unetaneh Tokef prayer, we know that the ultimate truth and meaning of Yom Kippur lies in recognition of human imperfection and in our willingness to change. Teshuvah literally means “return” and is the word used to describe the concept of repentance in Judaism. Only by atoning for our sins can we restore balance to our relationship with God and our fellow human beings.

Yom Kippur is a time to reflect within ourselves and to be honest with each other. Being honest brings unity and Shalom in our congregation, where everyone can work together and enrich each other’s lives. We are a diverse, multi-generational synagogue with many personalities, that is our Minhag (custom). Our members sit anywhere, in any seat because we don’t have reserved seating based on what you donate or what position you hold – we are all equal.

The daytime services of Yom Kippur are characterized by their emphasis on the two major themes ...Teshuvah or repentance and forgiveness from sin.

The liturgy of Yom Kippur has a section of prayers known as confessions. In these prayers, the community literally recites an alphabet of different transgressions it has committed from aleph to tav, the first to the last letters of the Hebrew alphabet, in which the prayers are written. In Maimonides’ eight levels of charity (Tzedakah) each is greater than the next. One level is giving assistance in such a way that the giver and recipient are unknown to each other. Communal funds administered by responsible people are also in this category.

Rather than give a lengthy speech as many congregations traditionally do with the Kol Nidre appeal, we all need to extend our financial commitment to the synagogue. For this reason, I am asking for full participation of the members of this Congregation to the Friends campaign. Friends provides an amount equal to 15% of our annual budget and the Friends campaign is a critical part of our annual budget. You may also establish a gift to the CBY endowment fund in your will. You too can make a difference. Everyone is generous who gives. It is the thought and the giving itself that counts much more than the amount you give.

Yom Kippur is the only day of the Jewish year to include a Ne’ilah or concluding service. It is notable for its image of The Gates of Repentance closing their doors. The Reform Movement is writing a new High Holy Day Machzor, Mmishkan Ha Nefash. This is the new draft version of the traditional prayer for Ne’lilah:

You hold out your hand to those who do wrong.

Your right hand opens wide to receive those who return.

You teach us the true purpose of confession: to turn our hands into instruments of good, to cause no harm or oppression.

Receive us, as you promised in the fullness of our heartfelt T'shuvah (return to God)

L'shanah Tovah Tikatevu v' Tike temu