

YOM KIPPUR SPEECH
By President Twyla Sable
2015

Yom Kippur is the holiest and most solemn day of the Jewish year. It is played out with the great human drama of reckoning and accountability, making amends for past errors and misdeeds and – ultimately – *forgiveness and 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, *the Awesomeness of God*, we know that the ultimate truth and meaning of Yom Kippur lies in recognition of human imperfections 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.

We are a diverse, multi-generational synagogue with many personalities, that is our minhag (custom). Our members sit anywhere, in any seat because we do not have reserved seating based on what you donate or what position you hold – we are all equal here.

The daytime services of Yom Kippur are characterized by their emphasis on the two major themes, teshuvah or repentance and of God’s forgiveness from sin.

The liturgy of Yom Kippur has a section of prayers and 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.

Yom Kippur embodies our prayer to God to forgive us. Repentance and forgiveness are the essence of Yom Kippur day.

Although the spiritual aspects of Beth Yam are what really count, the very real daily part of CBY with all the staff, programs and congregational operations needed to keep us running – we need your continued financial commitment to this temple.

I am asking for 100% member participation of Congregation Beth Yam to this year’s Friends Campaign. This year the Friends Campaign is chaired by Ted David and Judy Bluestone. The Friends Campaign provides 15% of our annual operating budget and is critical to our operation. We cannot fall short of this goal.

Also please consider a commitment of a gift to our endowment fund in your will that will help guarantee the future of CBY.

Yom Kippur is the only day of the Jewish year to include a ne'ilah or concluding service.

Our prayers traditionally last all day, as did the service of the high priest. We recall, the ne'ilah (closing) at the conclusion of Yom Kippur that goes back to the time of "closing of the gates" that was a feature of the temple's everyday ritual.

May I conclude with this from our new Yom Kippur Machzor:

Let our speech be pure and our promise sincere.
Let our spoken words – every vow and every oath – be honest and well-intentioned
Let our words cause no pain, bring no harm,
And never lead to shame, distrust or fear.
And if, after honest effort,
We are *unable* to fulfill a promise, a vow or an oath,
May we be *released* from *its obligation*
And forgiven for our failure.
Let our speech be pure and our promises sincere.

L'shanah tovah tikatevu v'tiketemu