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# the Shofar



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Etz Chayim Conservative Synagogue's Monthly Newsletter

SEPTEMBER, 2020

ELUL/TISHREI ,5780-5781

**REGULAR SERVICES ARE CURRENTLY CANCELLED DUE TO COVID 19.  
FIND VIRTUAL SERVICE INFORMATION UNDER UPCOMING EVENTS AND ON OUR WEBSITE.**

## FROM THE RABBI

### **Not Villains, not Heroes — But Striving all the Time**

This depressed me: “A Fox News poll last month found a remarkable share of Americans under age 30 think the country’s founders are better described as ‘villains’ (31%) than ‘heroes’ (39%).”

Being over 30, I would not be asked to participate in that poll. If I were asked -- and if I had to choose one answer or the other -- I would say that the founding fathers were immensely heroic.

As a student of history, I am conscious of how fortunate we are to enjoy American democracy. As a Jew, I am especially conscious of how fortunate we are to practice our minority faith in unbridled freedom. These blessings are the gifts of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison, among others. But that’s a side point.

The poll made me think of September. I don’t mean September 17, which is Constitution Day. I mean instead that I thought of September 18, on which Rosh Hashanah begins this year. The themes of Rosh Hashanah (and Yom Kippur) are that most people are neither villains nor heroes. Most of us, rather, are complex individuals with all sorts of flaws but also with the capacity to change and to improve.

Slavery was crucial to the founding of our country. Black people lived, and often died, at the will and whim of others. Native Americans were grossly mistreated in order for America to take its place among the nations. When our country was founded women could not vote. These injustices went on for a long time. But the challenge of America is that we as a nation recognize our failings and strive to do better.

The founders of our nation were highly flawed human beings. But they created a bold system of government that essentially makes it possible for the

people as a polity to learn from their mistakes and to make the government better. The same can be said of each of us in our own individual lives. We are flawed human beings. We admit this openly every Yom Kippur. We are selfish, petty, envious, hypocritical. (I don't know how we might evaluate ourselves on that binary Fox News poll; heroes are in very short supply!) But the important thing is that we can examine our deeds. We can be honest with ourselves (that's the hard part). And we can resolve to do better. We can apologize, we can make amends, we can reconcile with each other. That is what counts!

My teacher, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, said that we shouldn't think of ourselves as "human beings." We should rather call ourselves "human becomings." We are, as it were, being polled by the Holy One on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. We know the questions. How shall we answer?

I wish all of you an especially sweet New Year in this strange and challenging time. We shall pray together (separately, but together) in the hopes that "the sorrows of the old year will be behind us, and that a new year, with only blessings, will dawn upon us."

Stephen Listfield

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### **Bending the Rules**

Some years ago, I refereed soccer. The older refs (and yes! there were actually some refs older than me!) used to say,

"You know why the rules are written in a paperback book? You can bend them a little bit when you need to." Oddly, or ironically, in soccer the rules are called "laws"; the "laws" of soccer.

For this year, we'll have High Holy Day services online. As Etz Chayim members, you should soon receive instructions on how to participate via video conferencing or phone dial-in options. Those of you who are not members are encouraged to join (hint, hint). Seriously though, if you are not currently a member of Etz Chayim, give us a try. Regardless of your membership status, you are welcome to join us for High Holy Day services online. Contact me ([hallga@gmail.com](mailto:hallga@gmail.com) or 256.361.9501), and I'll get you or direct you to the person who can get you the online information.

Last time I saw our Torah scrolls, the parchment had some flexibility to it. Maybe during this COVID High Holy Day Season, we'll bend the laws just a little and do some things we said we'd never do for the greater good of Judaism. I'd like to encourage all of you to come "Bend the Rules," and join us this month for High Holy Day services. I can almost guarantee this year will be an experience you'll never forget.

Shanah Tovah U'metuka,

Gary Hall

## LANDSCAPING

If you have been by the Synagogue lately, you will notice the new landscaping

in process. Lynne and Steve Edmondson and Scott and I have been working diligently to make the building look nice prior to the High Holidays. Additional plants are on order, but we have decided to give the plants time to become established before we completely fill in the beds. We have taken the advice of the Security specialists in our removal and selection of plants. Please do not plant anything additional without speaking to one of us.

Natha

### HIGH HOLIDAY PRAYER BOOKS & SISTERHOOD NEW YEAR BOOKLETS

We will be distributing the High Holiday prayer books and the Sisterhood New Year Booklets of EC members in the Synagogue parking lot on Sunday, Sept 13, 1:00 – 3:00 pm. If you are unable to pick up a book at that time, contact Max or Millie (256-882-9417), and we will make arrangements to get the book to you. The Sisterhood is also giving away a small jar of honey to sweeten your New Year.

### ETZ CHAYIM GIFT SHOP

Donna, the Gift Shop Chairperson, will be at the synagogue at the time mentioned above (September 13, from 1-3) for your New Year shopping needs. She will have some items displayed on a table outside as well as offer access to the entire gift shop on a one-at-a-time basis to those interested (you must wear a mask). She will have hand sanitizer available for use. There are new items to choose from, so consider the EC Gift Shop!

## SISTERHOOD

Hi all,

As we enter the High Holiday season, we have our biggest fundraiser coming to print, our New Year Book. Thank you to our Sisterhood members, Congregants, and neighbors who have contributed messages, ads, and donations for the book. Please come by the Synagogue on September 13<sup>th</sup> from 1pm-3pm to pick up your book, as well as a sweet little treat that the Sisterhood Board put together to wish you a Happy New Year. During this time, you can also pick up your High Holiday prayer books for our virtual services and check out some of our Gift Shop items--all in the parking lot.

The Synagogue Landscape Committee has spent a lot of time and effort designing and planting new greenery outside the Shul. They planted jewel box distylium, Indian Hawthorne, kaleidoscope abelia as well as lots of other plants that are soon to be planted, too. Be sure to drive by the Shul to see the progress.

There are no definite plans for a Sisterhood social event in the near future, but we hope to be able to put something together soon so we can socialize and commune again.

New year, lots of new things and changes. Shanah Tovah to everyone!

Amy

## CURE FOR THE WUHAN VIRUS

I lied, we do not have the cure for the Wuhan Virus, but while you are waiting, we suggest that you participate in the Synagogue Book Club. There is no cost, no pressure, just a chance to gain some knowledge and spend an hour on Zoom participating in the discussion of the latest book selection.

We meet every other month, discussing a non-fiction book by a Jewish author or a book of Jewish content.

The next meeting is on October 15 at 11:30, and the book is "The Notorious RBG". If you email or call either Barry Meyer or Max Rosenthal, they will give you the Zoom information.

We hope you will participate.

Max

## DONATIONS

### General Fund

From: Diana & Howard Polin

To: Stan Belsky & Family – In Memory of Diane Belsky. Our heartfelt sympathy to Stan and the family.

To: Sue & Joe Paddock - In Honor of their 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary.

From: Nannette Schwartz  
In Honor of the High Holidays

From: Stan Belsky  
In Loving Memory of my wife, Diane

From: Dorothy & Bill Goldberg  
A Most Generous Donation in Honor of the High Holidays

### Rabbi Fund

From: Lucy & Charlie Fisher

### Landscape Fund

From: Natha & Scott Hancock

### Prayer Book Fund

From: Ron Goldberg

### Sisterhood Fund

From: Mary Dunne & Howard Ross  
In memory of Ted Roberts

### Outdoor Lighting Fund

In Memory of Gertrude & Perry Schlein from their daughters Natha Hancock & Robin Slomka and their families.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**(Services are virtual unless noted)**

- Aug 31 Virtual Gathering with Rabbi Listfield, 6:45 PM
- Sep 13 1 PM-3 PM, **parking lot pick-up** of High Holiday prayer books, distribution of New Year Booklets (if you have an entry in it), the Gift Shop is open (if you are wearing a mask!), and Sukkah frame building (mask!).
- Sep 12 Selichot at 8 PM
- Sep 18 Erev Rosh Hashanah, Shabbat Services
- Sep 19 10 AM, Shabbat Morning Services; 7:30 PM, Rosh Hashanah Services
- Sep 20 10 AM, Morning Service; 4 PM **actual** gathering for Tashlich

and Shofar blowing at Aldridge  
Creek near Walmart  
Sep 27 6:15, Erev Yom Kippur Service  
Sep 28 10 AM, Yom Kippur Morning  
Service; 5 PM Yom Kippur  
Afternoon Service; 7 PM Break  
The Fast  
Sep 30 2 PM, Complete the building of  
the sukkah (mask!)

### BIRTHDAYS

Sep 06 Janet Schindler  
Sep 08 Arlene Polin White  
Sep 14 Robin Slomka  
Sep 18 Sara Brigadier  
Sep 18 Rudy Sainker  
Sep 19 Russell Roberts  
Sep 23 Jesse Kalachman  
Sep 24 Lydia Honan  
Sep 26 Molly Lapidus

### ANNIVERSARIES

Sep 03 Sandy & Marvin Kalachman  
Sep 17 Sandy Pepper & Fernando  
Cerezo

### YAHREZEITS\*\*

Aug 31	Elul 11	Milton Baum*
Sep 01	Elul 12	June Rothfeder
Sep 01	Elul 12	Leonard Flank*
Sep 03	Elul 14	Albert Goldner*
Sep 04	Elul 15	John Goldstein*
Sep 06	Elul 17	Molly Silver Rodkin*
Sep 07	Elul 18	Edward Kahn*
Sep 10	Elul 21	Phil Wiederecht*
Sep 11	Elul 22	William Karmioli*
Sep 11	Elul 22	Beatrice Sainker*
Sep 12	Elul 23	Alfred Freeman, MD*

Sep 13	Elul 24	Abe Goldberg
Sep 14	Elul 25	Percy Sacks*
Sep 16	Elul 27	Nannie Ford
Sep 20	Tishrei 02	Daniel Flank*
Sep 23	Tishrei 05	Louis B. Lepp*
Sep 24	Tishrei 06	Sylvia Zarovsky
Sep 25	Tishrei 07	Sam Natt*
Sep 25	Tishrei 07	Walter Ford
Sep 26	Tishrei 08	Jerome Gaftman
Sep 27	Tishrei 09	Rose Schindler
Sep 28	Tishrei 10	Harriet Sacks
Sep 28	Tishrei 10	Shirley Irene Jacobs*
Sep 28	Tishrei 10	Zachary Fuerst
Sep 29	Tishrei 11	Murray Rosenthal*
Oct 01	Tishrei 13	Bernard Fisher
Oct 02	Tishrei 14	Terry Lee Green*

\* Plaque

\*\*Light Memorial candle sunset of  
previous evening

### THE GOAT: YOM KIPPUR'S PRIMA DONNA

By Ted Roberts, the *SCRIBBLER ON  
THE ROOF*

Rosh Hashanah marks the birthday of the  
world – the anniversary of its Creation.  
First, say our sages, the Creator made  
heaven and earth. Now on earth's  
birthday He wants a birthday gift from us.  
No, not the trinkets we hand each other,  
He wants more. He wants the gift of  
the heart, the gift of goodness.

Every Rosh Hashanah He asks us to take  
a self-administered test, grade ourselves  
and underline those areas wherein we  
are deficient. Lastly, we should repent  
and ask forgiveness so that on Yom  
Kippur – ten days later – our personal  
scorebook rates an A plus.

Truly these are the Days of Awe, but even in these ten days of tension, we need nourishment. And since we are Jewish – the People of the Kitchen as well as the People of the Book – we may as well eat with joy.

We eat sweet things with the hope that it will help to bring on a sweet year. A traditional round challah bread and sliced apples dipped in honey are served along with wishes for a sweet year. And of course we tell the story of the scapegoat in Leviticus.

I know the Lord loves all.

I know the Lord loves all His children – human and animal. But I have a feeling that He has a soft part in His heart for goats. You don't agree?

You remember it's described in Leviticus: Aaron shall "confess" over the scapegoat all the sins of the people, symbolically transferring a load of guilt from us to the dumbfounded animal – who is then led off to the wilderness wailing over its lot with its thin, piercing, shofar-like voice. He is the goat who relieves us of sin on Yom Kippur.

Its fate was scripted on the Holy Day, the first day of Creation. This was a big day in Eden. All the animals were assembled in the meadow by the water hole. One by one they were summoned to appear before the throne. Here, they would receive their assignments.

"Goat," said the Lord, "I have chosen you – not one of my most elegant creations – to be the savior of Israel. Your swaying back shall bear the sins of the people. I shall send you with your noxious bundle

far away into the forsaken lands where the sun never shines. Every year at Yom Kippur, the High Priest shall select one of your breed to perform the solitary mission of absolution. You, one of the lesser creations – crying as you enter the wilderness – shall bring forgiveness"

The goat listened. Fear gripped his heart and he pawed the earth. He nervously fluttered his lovely eyelids several times in succession. Even then he had long, curly lids. But the rest of him was strictly junkyard gray with a long, skinny tail like a possum that ineffectively lashed at flies that would torment him in the life to come. His ears, like the donkey's, were outrageous. He had no horns. So, when the goat heard his magnificent, but perilous assignment, he figured the Lord might be generous enough to improve his imperfect appearance. "Lord," he bleated thoughtfully "Considering the service my tribe will render to your people, could I make a few simple requests?" And the Creator of all things from the moss on the tree trunk to gravity, nodded positively.

Now, remember that most of the other animals had already been formed, including the sheep. The goat was wary. He could just see those heavy-handed shepherds with biting shears shaving the trembling lambs.

"Please, sir," he shrilled in his high voice, "no thick, rich fleece for me, but a nice coat of scraggly fur to keep me warm will be just fine."

And somehow this farsighted creature knew of mutton stew supplied by fat sheep. So, he begged the Creator to make him a muscular animal with stringy flesh. "Boney will be great, please."

“And I almost forgot,” said the world’s first negotiator, “how ‘bout some horns instead of these embarrassing ears. There should be grandeur in my banishment to the wilderness, not burlesque.”

The Lord sighed and agreed. The bargain was struck. So, the goat had his way, which is a small price, I say, for the load of sin he carries off to the wilderness.