

♪ *Henay Ma Tov*

*He-nay ma tov, u-ma na-yim
She-vet a-kheem gam ya-khad*

---Psalms 133:1

SHANAH TOVAH AND WELCOME TO ALL!

How good and pleasant it is for all of us to come together as best we can this evening. While generations past may never have imagined rituals by Zoom, we are thankful that we have this way of gathering with one another as we greet another year with the isolations and sorrows of a global pandemic.

We have come together—family and friends, adults and young people of diverse heritage, Jews by birth, by choice and by association—to celebrate Rosh Hashanah, New Year’s Day in the Hebrew calendar. Tonight throughout the world, we gather from Israel to the farthest corners of the globe, some in person in synagogues, around family tables and living rooms, while others like us gather on computer screens connecting us far and wide. In many different languages, Jews join together as we do here, to celebrate the turning of the year.

As the first day of the Jewish year, Rosh Hashanah marks a turning point of hope between what was and what will be, between what is and what ought to be. As one year ends and another begins, we gather to reflect upon our words and deeds, and to renew our commitments to ourselves, and our world.

--Rabbi Benjamin Biber

Our nation’s challenges are many, but Rosh Hashanah is a transformational holiday. We know that facing history is a difficult, uncomfortable process filled with emotion, anger, despair but also pride in our achievements, resolve, and hopefulness.

As Jews, humanists and Americans, we are committed to unveiling the truth.



As we go through our service this evening, let us weave these challenges past and present, bringing some of these difficult matters out of the shadows, and think about how we can participate in drawing the arc of justice closer to fulfillment. Through Rosh Hashanah, we shall welcome a new day.

CANDLE LIGHTING

Ma na-eem ha-or b'-o-lam
Ma na-eem ha-or b'-a-dam
Ma na-eem ha-or b'-Rosh Ha-sha-nah.

How lovely is the light of the world
How lovely is the light within people
How lovely is the light of Rosh Hashanah.

We kindle the lights that mark the start of Rosh Hashanah. They remind us of candles lit long ago by countless generations who found beauty, warmth, and serenity in their glow, as we do now.



ROSH HASHANAH IS A BIRTHDAY

According to the Talmud, Rosh Hashanah is also the anniversary of the world's creation, a birthday. What does this mean? Was there ever a time when the world as we know it didn't exist? The Torah tells of an all-powerful god who creates the world from nothing in six days and rested on the seventh. This story is the source of resting on Shabbat and also why all holidays begin on the evening before, as the text reads "...it was evening and morning (*erev v'boker*) the first day."



People and cultures around the world make meaning from stories of how the world began. In many places and many ways, including within Priestess traditions of Judaism, the divine feminine and genderless figures counter the patriarchal stories that many of us have learned.

With storytelling as such a powerful element of how humans have been sharing across generations, our community also calls upon the ever-changing study of science to learn how the universe was created, and how all life evolved over billions of years. Science, unlike all the creation stories from long ago, offers explanations about our amazing universe that can be discussed, tested, and even replaced when better ideas are proven. Human beings like to ask why.

Thousands of years ago, our herding ancestors settled down to create agricultural communities, celebrating their harvest festival in the fall. As Judaism changed through time, the fall harvest became an opportunity for the nation to distinguish itself and its god from their neighbors' sun and nature-worshipping holidays celebrated in the Spring and at the solstice. Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and the ten days between—known as the "Days of Awe"—became a religious period when an all-knowing god passed annual judgment on the Hebrew people.

How do we celebrate Rosh Hashanah now?



We examine our own lives and determine how we can improve ourselves and our world. During the period of Rosh Hashanah through Yom Kippur, the role of introspection, apology, forgiveness, renewal and healing are the foundations for a better year. For students and educators, this is also time to start the new school year. In this season of life, new worries accompany the excitement of meeting teachers and friends, and the harvesting of fresh lessons. We search within ourselves and reach out to repair our relationships with one another and the Earth in tender moments.

♪ **Turn, Turn, Turn**

--Ecclesiastes; Pete Seeger

**To everything turn, turn, turn,
There is a season, turn, turn, turn--
And a time to every purpose under heaven.
A time to be born, a time to die, a time to plant, a time to reap.
A time to kill, a time to heal, a time to laugh, a time to weep.**

**To everything turn, turn, turn,
There is a season, turn, turn, turn--
And a time to every purpose under heaven.
A time to build up, a time to break down, a time to dance, a time to mourn.
A time to cast away stones, a time to gather stones together.**

**To everything turn, turn, turn,
There is a season, turn, turn, turn--
And a time to every purpose under heaven.
A time of love, a time of hate, a time of war, a time of peace.
A time you may embrace, a time to refrain from embracing.**

**To everything turn, turn, turn,
There is a season, turn, turn, turn--
And a time to every purpose under heaven.
A time to gain, a time to lose, a time to rend, a time to sew.
A time for love, a time for hate, a time for peace,
I swear it's not too late.**

OTHER KINDS OF CREATION MYTHS

Just as science has revealed the early origins of the universe in a way that mythology cannot, true history of America must replace our national mythology about America's beginnings. Our leaders and activists are calling out for us to address it. In the past year, we have seen pushback in the form of banning the teaching of "critical race theory", as if silence would make the history of our racism disappear. We must work to deepen our understanding of how to repair and address over 200 years of slave labor and the societal institutions created in its place to carry on inequity in our legal and prison systems.

We as a people recognize how mistaken beliefs still influence our country's struggle for racial and environmental justice. Sadly, the intersection of Jewish oppression and American racism have been front page news in the last few years. Domestic acts of terror against people of color and Jews have occurred in the divisive political landscape here and abroad. As Nazi Germany proved in our own times, national myth is a powerful and destructive force. Responding as individuals and as a community remains for us all to address as the season of truth and change reminds us.

ROSH HASHANAH IS A TIME FOR TRUTH AND CHANGE

The guiding principles of the 10-day period between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are self-examination, employing the concepts of *Teshuvah*, *Tefillah* and *Tzedakah*.

Teshuvah is usually translated as "repentance," but it actually means "return."

For humanistic Jews, teshuvah, returning to ourselves, means returning to our highest values and ideals.

Tefillah is traditionally translated as "prayer," but comes from a word that means self-reflection or contemplation.

Tefillah reminds us to think about what kind of person we aspire to be.

Tzedakah, usually translated as "charity," has a deeper meaning. It is related to the word *tze-dek*, meaning "justice." In Yiddish a *tza-dik* is a righteous person, one who listens to their deepest intuition of what is right to do, and then does it.

Tzedakah reminds us to seek justice.



TESHUVAH—A RETURN TO OUR HIGHEST VALUES

Rosh Hashanah gives us the opportunity to reconnect with family and our communities of choice. We reflect on our commitments to parents, children, brothers and sisters, partners with whom we have chosen to spend our lives, relatives living and dead, and everyone whom we embrace and honor as family. Just as we define our families, our families define us. In this season we begin to heal our relationships. Who among us has never been in error?

Return Again

by Rafael-Simkha Kahn

**Return again, return again,
Return to the land of your soul. (2x)
Return to who you are
Return to what you are
Return to where you are
Born and reborn again.
Return to the land of your soul.**

We accept responsibility for our own lives. As we grow, we develop a sense of inner wholeness.

When the Return is Hard: Solidarity and Compassion

Though it is the season of honey and apples, and wishes for a sweet new year, it is also a time of transition, of uncertainty during difficult times. It is an era of an ever-changing pandemic which ebbs and flows, still mutating through a world largely unvaccinated, thus giving rise to more infectious strains. It is an era of already irreversible global warming, giving rise to extreme heat and cold events, more powerful storms like Hurricane Ida, flash floods where there were none before, drought and monumental fires here in California and across the world, crop failures and starvation, sea rise, and species extinctions. Through all of nature's changes, political conflicts across the globe continue, causing death, oppression and the flight of millions of refugees.

What are we to make of the human experience under stress? Does it spur us to hide or to become our best selves? During and after WWII in both Japan and US, our psyches struggled to deal with the enormity of the atomic bomb. On the one hand there was Sartre and existential despair, and on the other, a spate of monster movies—remember Godzilla, Rodan, and Mothra, and the Beast from 20,000 Fathoms? We gave ourselves countless afternoons of fright, after which we could walk into the sunshine, go home, and seemingly find normality.

How are we dealing with all that we face today? How can we address our contemporary monsters at the start of this new year, in a way which can accommodate hope as well as sadness and despair?

A Leonard Cohen song tries to address this dilemma:

*Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.*



—Leonard Cohen, 1992, “Anthem”

We have all been “cracked” these past few years, and crave the light getting in. What do we want or expect to see happen? We humans can fight or reconcile; we can face one another or turn away. Can we calm or nurture ourselves and our loved ones in the next year? Can we inspire one another? In this place of transition through Covid, global warming, our awakening to racial justice efforts, or changing our own dysfunctional habits, being in the “middle place” is uncomfortable.

All of our ancestors faced their own serious dilemmas, some more immediate and deadly than the ones we face now. Their stories of survival matter, just as our stories will matter to our descendants.



A time for small group reflection

When the return is Hard: Our Stories Matter

We invite you to share a bit of how it is that YOU are experiencing this in between time - what are you doing to cope? What are you doing to grieve or what are you doing to inspire hope? What do you want to the future to say about how you survived this time?



As we return from our conversations, let us be reminded that our stories and our knowledge are not the beginning, nor the end of the human conversation. As we look forward and look back on the year and the seasons of our lives - we remember the cycles of our planet, of our lives and of human resilience in times of grief and uncertainty. We are connected to those who have bent the arc towards justice ever so slowly. It is our work to carry forth in the fights for justice, equity and compassion even as voting rights, women’s reproductive lives, health care, climate catastrophe and so much other news arrives day in and day out.

♪ *Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around*

*Ain't gonna let nobody turn me around, turn me around, turn me around
Ain't gonna let nobody turn me around, I'm gonna keep on a-walkin',
keep on a-talkin', gonna build a brand new world.*

*Ain't gonna let no hatred turn me around, turn me around, turn me around
Ain't gonna let no hatred turn me around, I'm gonna keep on a-walkin',
keep on a-talkin', gonna build a brand new world.*

*Ain't gonna let racism turn me around, turn me around, turn me around
Ain't gonna let racism turn me around, I'm gonna keep on a-walkin',
keep on a-talkin', gonna build a brand new world.*

TEFILLAH: LOOKING AT OURSELVES



Rosh Hashanah reminds us that we are members of the Jewish family, that we are part of the Jewish people. We are an old family, begun thousands of years ago. During that time we have developed rich traditions within many countries.

Jewish culture is more than religious ritual experiences framed in rabbinic tradition. It encompasses everything that we create to strengthen the bonds of community and serve human needs.

Styles of food and clothing, language, literature, music, and dance are culture. Our political aspirations, ceremonies and celebrations, even jokes and gestures, are part of our cultural heritage. Jewish culture is the ongoing, world-wide expression of an imaginative and resourceful people.

***We are the proud children of a legacy worth preserving and perpetuating.
All that we are, all that our civilization has accomplished, has arisen from
the past. We are part of a great historical process.***

There is a connection between our Jewish culture and continued existence over millennia. Randall Robinson observed about the descendants of former slaves torn from Africa that “No people can live successfully, fruitfully, triumphantly without strong memory of their past, without reading the future within the context of some reassuring past, without implanting reminders of that past in the present.”

Jews know the value of memory, for without it we could not have sustained our Jewish culture over the millennia, through slaughter, expulsions and forced conversions since the fall of the second Temple in Jerusalem.

As Humanistic Jews, we strive to uphold an ethic of radical inclusion, with full equality and celebration of LGBTQ+, multi-racial, and interfaith / intercultural households, and anyone adopting Humanistic Judaism. Our commitment to living these values requires personal transformation, with ever-growing knowledge about diverse identities. In a study commissioned by the Jews of Color Initiative, 80% of those surveyed had experienced discrimination in Jewish settings and only half agreed that they have felt a sense of belonging among white Jews.

TZEDAKAH: JUSTICE MUST COME

Reparations by Germany and its companies to Holocaust survivors and to Israel for two decades of genocide, stolen labor, property, and racism will never compensate the Jewish world for what was done. Still, there was an apology and some measure of repayment, still ongoing seventy years later. Reparations by America to the Japanese American community for stealing their property and sending them to internment camps during WWII have also been made, and again, not nearly enough to repair the tremendous damage done to lives, wealth and communities.

Black Americans are the only group that has not received reparations for state-sanctioned racial discrimination, while slavery afforded some white families the ability to accrue tremendous wealth. And, we must note that American slavery was particularly brutal. About 15 percent of the enslaved shipped from Western Africa died during transport. The enslaved were regularly beaten and lynched for frivolous infractions. Slavery also disrupted families as one in three marriages were split up and one in five children were separated from their parents. The case for reparations can be made on economic, social and moral grounds. The United States had multiple opportunities to atone for slavery — each a missed chance to make the American Dream a reality — but has yet to undertake significant action.

--Rashawn Ray and Andre M. Perry, Why we need reparations for Black Americans

Can our nation be truly healed without a national conversation, perhaps a truth and reconciliation commission and reparations? These are questions worth asking.

TIKKUN OLAM—TO REPAIR THE WORLD

Humanistic Jews are sometimes described as nonbelievers, but in truth we have many strong beliefs about life and people. Humanity is at the core of our humanism. We care for ourselves and for those close to us, but our concern extends to the whole world.

Every new year the sound of the shofar calls us to attention. In recent years, young voices have called out – blasting like shofars around the world—telling us all to stop what we’re doing, listen to the scientists, and face the urgency that catastrophic global warming represents. We must awake.



On this birthday of the world, preserving life as we know it on earth is the least we can do, by doing the most we can do.

Young people insist we not fail them so they and their children and their children’s children in every country have a chance to live out their lives, as we have had the privilege to do here. We are special not because we are different, we are special because we are the same—part of life everywhere on earth, composed of the same atoms that make up the universe, and just as vulnerable.

Albert Einstein wrote: “A human being is part of the whole called by us ‘Universe’, a part limited in time and space. People experience themselves...as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical illusion of consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires, and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures, and the whole of nature in its beauty.”

As humanistic Jews, we seek to free ourselves from the limitations that Einstein described. We rely on observation, study, art, and exchange of ideas to reveal our world. We question injustices and work for reform. This is humanistic and Jewish. It expresses the Jewish mandate that each of us bear a responsibility to repair the world.

TEFILLAH—WHO DO WE WANT TO BE?

We want to be much more than we are. Each of us is capable of unimagined greatness. Each of us is a treasure house of vital potential. On Rosh Hashanah, each of us can think about conquering our fears and challenges and becoming the person we know we can be.

Cultivate this choice in ourselves, and it will take root!

Cultivate it in the family, and it will grow.

Cultivate it in the community, and it will multiply!

Cultivate it in the nation, and it will be abundant.

Cultivate it throughout the world, and it will flourish!

We come with resolve that our deeds reflect compassion. We seek forgiveness from ourselves and from others. We seek wholeness as we enter a new year.

We celebrate this Rosh Hashanah by being mindful of how we help create the world in which we live. On a personal level, was there love in our home this year? Or was the affectionate word left unsaid? Were we helpful to our families and friends? Were we there when they needed us? Did we mind only our own business, or did we feel the heartbreak and share the joy of others? Did we encourage our children to speak out when they saw someone being bullied? Did they have the confidence to tell a teacher or other adult?

May I always have the courage to do what must be done.

♪ *Aifo Oree*

--Rabbi Sherwin Wine

*Ay-fo o-ree? O-ree bee,
Ay-fo tik-va-tee? Tik-va-tee bee.
Ay-fo ko-khee? Ko-khee bee,
V'-gam bakh, v'-gam bakh.*

**Where is my light? My light is in me,
Where is my hope? My hope is in me.
Where is my strength? My strength is in
me, and in you, and in you!**

Rabbi Sherwin Wine, the founder of Humanistic Judaism, wrote:

Some people dream of utopia and imagine that someday there will be no fear. Other people speak of heaven and promise another place, in another world, where danger will vanish. But worlds without danger are fantasies. Death is real. Pain persists. Hatred is as popular as love. To live life honestly, with no attempt to deny the darker side of its reality, is hard. To face the truth, with no effort to hide from the facts of human nature and human existence, is frightening. Yet what else is the life of courage? ...Courage begins with honesty, the willingness to confront the world as it is and not merely as we want it to be.

When we think of the Holocaust, we can imagine German people, who, faced with the brutal rise to power by the Nazis, thought the way most people do when faced with someone else's adversity—who am I, I am no one, what can I do, I must save myself. We then think of those who did risk their lives to save people like us, and we are humbled.

Last month, the U.S. completed one of the largest airlifts in history with more than 120,000 people evacuated to safety at the end of 20 years of war in Afghanistan. We are now faced with the ongoing challenge of opening our hearts and minds to the many refugees from war, despair, climate change and a thousand horrors who seek freedom from oppression. Indeed, courage begins with honesty...

♪ *Lady of the Harbor*

--Joe Jencks (Brother Sun)

**From far away and distant lands
The tempest-tossed with hopeful hearts and callused hands
Reached toward the light, the torch held high
And cast their gaze upon the lady of the harbor**

**And she welcomes them with open arms
She says let my children in
Shine on, shine on
Oh you lady of the harbor**

**And so it was with my own kin
They fled from deep inside the Pale of Settlement
Their earthly cares packed in their bags
They cast their gaze upon the lady of the harbor**



**And she welcomes them with open arms
She says let my children in
Shine on, shine on
Oh you lady of the harbor**

**Now we're locking down the corners
And we're filling up the jails
And we say they don't belong
How conveniently do we forget
We've all come to sing the same sweet song?**

**Will the dream survive the strain?
Will huddled masses have the chance to learn its sweet refrain?
Or will we fall into our fears,
And turn our backs against the lady of the harbor?**

**And she welcomes them with open arms
She says let my children in
Shine on, shine on
Oh you lady of the harbor
Shine on, shine on
Oh you lady of the harbor**

**Shine on, shine on
Oh you lady of the harbor
Oh you lady of the harbor**



We Jews are the children of immigrants in a wide diaspora the world over, a diaspora spurred by pogroms, forced conversions, wholesale banishment, the Inquisition, and economic repression. We know from our own family histories and from our written tradition that we must offer kindness and hospitality to the stranger, as we were once strangers as well. Let us not forget the families and unaccompanied children who continue to arrive at our southern border who risked their lives to make the journey.

We consider the limited time we have on earth to use it wisely. Together we can confront the endlessly arising challenges to our world that require new solutions. This is the humanist creed.

♪ ***Hatov O Hara***

--*Felice Friedman*

Ha-tov o ha-ra (2x)	(Good or evil,
Zot ha-sheh la (2x)	That is the question--
Ha-tov o ha-ra (2x)	That is the problem--
Zot ha-ba-a-ya (2x)	The decision is ours.)
Ha-tov o ha-ra (4x)	
Zot ha-ba-a-ya	
La-a-dam Ha-bei-ra.	

THE SHEMA---HUMANITY IS ONE

♪ ***Sh'-ma Yis-ra-el, E-khad A-may-nu, A-dam E-khad***

Hear, O Israel, Our People are One, Humanity is One.

HEAR O ISRAEL!

Judaism begins with the commandment: Hear, O Israel! But what does it really mean to hear? The person who attends a concert, while thinking of other matters, hears -- but does not really hear.

The person who walks amid the songs of birds, thinking only of what will be served for dinner, hears -- but does not really hear.

The person who hears the words of a friend, mate, or child, and does not catch the note of urgency: "Notice me, care about me," hears -- but does not really hear.

The person who stifles the sound of conscience, saying, "I have done enough already," hears -- but does not really hear.

The person who hears the shofar sound, and does not sense its call to change, hears -- but does not really hear.

*As the New Year begins, we must strengthen our ability to hear.
May we hear the music of the world, the infant's cry, and the lover's sigh.
May we hear the call for help of the lonely, the sound of the breaking heart.*
--Jack Riemer and Harold Kushner (adapted)

♪ Naaseh Shalom

Na-a-seh sha-lom ba-o-lam (Let us make peace and
Na-a-seh sha-lom a-lay-nu friendship for the world.)
V'-al kol ha-o-lam
V'-eem ru, eem'-ru sha-lom

*Na-a-seh shalom, na-aseh sha-lom,
sha-lom a-lay-nu, V'-al kol ha-o-lam (2x)*

♪ Dust in the Wind

—Kerry Livgren, KANSAS

I close my eyes,
Only for a moment and the moment's gone.
All my dreams
Pass before my eyes with curiosity.
Dust in the wind,
All they are is dust in the wind.

Same old song,
Just a drop of water in an endless sea.
All we do
Crumbles to the ground, though we refuse to see.

Ahh, Dust in the wind,
All we are is dust in the wind.
Oh, oh oh....
Now don't hang on,
Nothin' lasts forever but the earth and sky.
It slips away
And all your money won't another minute buy.

Dust in the wind,
All we are is dust in the wind.
Dust in the wind,
Everything is dust in the wind.

SOUNDING OF THE SHOFAR

Bill Nemoyten and Ben Brussell

An ancient sound calls the Jewish people to attention and to action, the sound of the shofar, the ram's horn. It was the first musical instrument of our ancestors, and the natural sound maker for nomads and shepherds. It warned of danger and called them to battle against attacking enemies. It summoned people to public meetings, and announced the election of new rulers. In later years, it became the special instrument of the New Year, the sound of Rosh Hashanah. It warns us of the danger of doing nothing. It summons us to work together to make a better world. It says that the time for change is now. Like Jews in generations past, we call our community together on Rosh Hashanah with the sound of the shofar.



The first sound is *Te-kee-ah*. It is loud and strong. We could say that it means, "Listen--always listen--to the voice of truth."

CONGREGATION: *Te-kee-ah!*

**** Shofar sounds ****

The second sound is *She-va-reem*. It has low and high notes, and we can say it tells us that whether we are big or small, we can live happy, useful lives if we really wish to.

CONGREGATION: *She-va-reem!*

**** Shofar sounds ****



The third sound is *Te-roo-ah*. It consists of little broken notes that say, "Pay attention to the little things in our lives. Every minute is precious. Let's not waste time."

CONGREGATION: *Te-roo-ah!*

**** Shofar sounds ****

The fourth is the longest, loudest blast of all, *T-kee-ah Ge-do-lah*. The greatest of all—one single sound that stands for all the others. It tells us to open our eyes, our ears and our minds to the world around us. Once we've done that, to make good use of the truth that we discover.



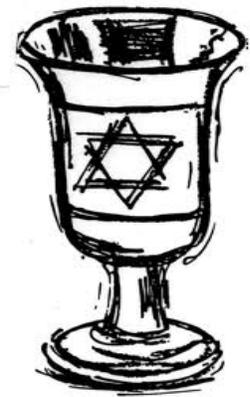
CONGREGATION: *T-kee-ah Ge-do-lah!*

**** Shofar sounds ****

ALL: The blast of the shofar is a call to action, that we become all we are capable of becoming. May the sound of the shofar not fall on deaf ears.

KIDDUSH

To conclude our ceremony we will now toast the new year, break bread together, and share apples and honey—all of which express our hopes for sharing a sweet and bountiful new year.



*Let us bless the source of life
that swells the tree's fruit with sweetness.*

*May the year be sweet as apples dipped in honey
and full as the ripe pomegranate with blessings.*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

♪ *Shalom Chaverim*

*Sha-lom kha-ve-rim,
shalom kha-ve-rim
Sha-lom, Sha-lom!*

(Greetings, friends,
until we meet again...!)

*L'-heet-ra-ot, l'-heet-ra-ot
Sha-lom, Sha-lom!*



Happy New Year! *Shana Tova!* *Gut Yontif!!*

Acknowledgements

Singer/Song Leader

Ben Brussell

www.bennybemusic.com



Shofar Sounder

Bill Nemoyten

www.thehornman.com



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