

## High Holy Day Messages for the year 2018 – 5779 from our Liturgical Leaders

### Rabbi Aviva Goldberg: Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur 2018 – 5779

As Jews we are all too familiar with the ebb and flow of frightening historical events: our own stories have mirrored the too often unfortunate reality of humanity's ignoble deeds. Today, it would seem, we are again witness to perilous times; to the rise of totalitarian regimes, the debasement of civil discourse and debate, the moral and social erosion of institutions created for the benefit of humanity and this planet and last but certainly not least the world-wide upsurge of anti-Semitism, racism, xenophobia, homophobia and transphobia.

Though we have as a people experienced what our rabbis described as the fear and reality that in each generation there are those who have risen to annihilate us, we have more than just endured. We have survived and thrived. Indeed, as a people and as individuals, rather than succumbing to despair and despondency, we have demonstrated resistance and resilience. We have actively contributed to the scientific, to the political, to the intellectual, and to the artistic fibre of society.

How have we been able to do so? To paraphrase the words of our sages, this is what has sustained us, our tradition, our values, and our understanding of the oneness, the interconnectedness of the universe.

With the New Year upon us, as we see once again intolerance, senseless violence, tribalism and terror, I would suggest that we not just find comfort in these words but move forward with them. That we say not only "this is what **will** sustain us" – but "this is what **we will actively do** to sustain us" – we will stand up against oppression, call out all forms of prejudice, vote for honest leadership, give to the betterment of our small corner of this earth in whatever way we each can. And finally, let us pledge to take this message to heart and come together in community, in this very synagogue, to explore and learn more of the beauty of our tradition. Together let us make this New Year one of hope and celebration, supporting one another in times of sorrow, and rejoicing together in times of simcha.

May the New Year bring you and your loved ones, calm, happiness, peace and love,

Aviva

### Chazzan Gesundheit: Message for the year 2018 – 5779

To the members, friends, and families of our Shir Libeynu community,

This past weekend, I was visiting with a dear friend of mine. He was excited to tell me about a new app that he had just downloaded to his phone that sends him five notifications throughout the day — quotes from poets, philosophers, and notable thinkers — which remind him that he is going to die. According to the app's website, the

idea behind these morbid missives is “based on a Bhutanese folk saying that in order to be a happy person one must contemplate death five times daily.”

As my friend scrolled through the app, I started to recall the somber phrases of the *Unetaneh Tokef* and *B’rosh Hashanah*.

*Mi va’eysh* — who by fire  
*mi va’mayim* — who by water

These prayers, much like my friend’s death-reminder app, list the myriad ways we can die, in spirit and in body. When I tell my non-Jewish friends about the way Jews celebrate the New Year, through communally singing songs of atonement and reckoning, they are often perplexed. “Sounds like a party,” they say playfully.

Perhaps our earnest recitation of these prayers, and the act of turning our attention to our mortality, is essential to waking up to the beauty, to the ‘party’ of life.

I look forward to singing songs of mortality, atonement, and reckoning with you all so that we may move into — and fully appreciate — a new year full of sweetness and health.

Shana Tova,  
Daniela Gesundheit