



## **High Holy Days 2015-5776 Greetings from Congregation Shir Libeynu's Liturgical Leaders**

### **High Holy Days 2015-5776 Greetings from Rabbi Aviva Goldberg**

Contemporary scholar, activist and mystic Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote that in our modern society we have lost the power of true celebration.

We seek to be amused or entertained; a passive state of being. "Celebration," he said, "is giving attention to the transcendent meaning of one's action." It is an active state; an act of reverence and appreciation. As we, the community of Congregation Shir Libeynu, come together for these High Holy days, let us find this true meaning of celebration.

During these Days of Awe, when we are enjoined to engage with the themes of *teshuva* (repentance), *tefilla* (prayer) and *tzedakah* (justice), let us remember the profound words of Heschel that it is indifference and apathy to the sublime wonders of living that is the actual root and meaning of sin. May this New Year 5776 bring each of us health and happiness and may we renew our commitment to restoring and repairing our personal relationships with family and friends and with the world in which we live.

*Wishing you all a Shana Tova, Aviva*

### **High Holy Days 2015-5776 Greetings from Chazzan Daniela Gesundheit**

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

I remember in grade seven I decided to join my shul's choir. It was a professional choir and all of the singers were paid (not to mention at least fifteen years my senior), but I somehow convinced the musical director to let me participate.

At the first rehearsal, we began with a version of the *Aleynu*. I turned to the page in the siddur that I had turned to countless times, even though I had it memorized, and was surprised to see everyone around me pull out folders with sheet music, the words spelled out phonetically in English, and the melody set to western musical notation. It seems strange to say now, but at that point in my life, I could not comprehend how these prayers that were so close to my heart, that I had known for as long as I could remember, could

be reduced to notes on a page, to be sight-read by anyone. When we sang the prayers in the daily services at school, or during the High Holy Days, or on Shabbat, they had a magic to them, an effervescence that felt unquantifiable.

At this first rehearsal, the melody and the words of the *Aleynu* were the same as they were in *shul* - so what had changed? Why did my heart sink instead of sing when I heard the prayer being recited without feeling, mechanically?

I learned in that moment that prayer is reflexive; it becomes sacred by way of the people who tend to it, and it in turn transforms those people who participate in it. One need not understand the literal meaning of the words of a prayer to be transformed by it, but that transformation does require intention, or *kavanah*. Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman writes, "Music thus acts to convert individuals into a group where they can experience together the message of the alternative world being established in their prayers." Each service at *Shir Libeynu*, (which appropriately translates to "song of our hearts") presents us with a new opportunity to gather together and sing the prayers with our full presence and attention, to illuminate the words in the *siddurim* and sing a new world into existence.

I look forward to joining Rabbi Goldberg on the *bimah* for the High Holy Days as we, along with our community, say goodbye to a year of profound joys and challenges, and usher in a new year that I wish will be sweet and fulfilling for each of you and your friends and families.

*L'Shana Tova,*

Daniela Gesundheit

**To view our High Holy Days schedule, membership and ticket price list, and limited income guidelines and criteria, please visit our High Holy Days information [page](#).**