



Message from Jamie Flagal, Shir Libeynu President & High Holy Days Coordinator

It is with delight that we look forward to the [2016-17/5777 High Holy Days](#). (Rosh Hashanah: Sunday, October 2 - Tuesday, October 4; Kol Nidrei and York Kippur: Tuesday, October 11 - Wednesday, October 12). Please join us again this year for deep, joyous and participatory services with Rabbi Goldberg and Chazzan Daniela Gesundheit leading us. All will take place at the congregational building of First Unitarian Toronto (St. Clair W. and Avenue Rd.).

[Registration](#) for memberships (which include tickets to all services) has begun. Single service tickets for non-members will be on sale in late August, subject to availability. Members may purchase single service tickets for their friends and family right NOW. Children to the age of 13 will once again benefit from a host of wonderful programs and special services; they must be registered for them, and a small fee applies this year.

Through 2016/17 (5777), we have planned more services and holiday celebrations than at any time in our history. A number of esteemed academics and speakers will give adult sessions as well. Our children's program throughout the year has been enhanced to include special projects for those ages eight to 12 as well as those for the younger set, and as always all children are always welcome to join us in the chapel. We continue to pursue the goals of future planning as set out in our [Strategy 2021](#), and invite all of you to be a part of this remarkable initiative.

This year we also conducted a community dialogue facilitated by member Danny Nashman. Spanning from the AGM through to March, we came together on several occasions and interviewed each other to discover what keeps us together and our vision for the future. It was striking how so many of our stories that brought us to Shir Libeynu had so many similar themes - and how the shared objectives we all had for our community. The results of our dialogue were distributed to members and is [posted](#) on the website, so now the real work begins to bring this vision to life. As our mission statement that we arrived at says, "Our goals are to joyfully celebrate and experience all aspects of Jewish life and spirituality within an environment of inclusiveness, innovation and intellectual challenge. We welcome new rituals and liturgy while recognizing and affirming the many paths our tradition offers."

As an unaffiliated congregation without support from major foundations or federations, your membership [fees](#) and donations pay for all that we offer at High Holy Days and during the year: staffing, rentals, administration, kiddishes and other free meals, adult education, children's programs and all other costs. Being a member of Shir Libeynu places you within a *haymische*, progressive community and gives you access to spiritual

services, cultural and educational programs and a circle of caring, creative people dedicated to a meaningful Jewish life.

- Jamie Flagal, President & High Holy Days Coordinator

Rabbi Goldberg's 2016-5777 High Holy Day Message

In contemplating the upcoming High Holy Days, I find myself reflecting on the life of author, philosopher, teacher and witness Elie Wiesel who died in early July of this year. To paraphrase words from our sacred text, Wiesel was truly an individual "called in righteousness, to be a light for the nations." His legacy to the world and to our people is immeasurable.

In this New Year, when all around us we see and hear the venomous rhetoric and violent acts of anti-Semitism, of racism, of homophobia, and demagoguery, freely being spewed and endorsed by state leaders and citizenry alike, we must take upon ourselves the task begun by contemporary prophet Elie Wiesel.

He understood full well that this is a most difficult task. He acknowledged that, "Though there may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice; there must never be a time when we fail to protest." This is the self-same message embedded in words we recite on Rosh Hashanah. It is, to me, one of the central lessons of the High Holy Days. For as the prophet Isaiah said, "This is the kind of fasting I want, to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the ties of oppression, to release into freedom those who are broken and to break asunder every burden." As Wiesel stated, "The opposite of love is not hate. It is indifference. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented."

Let us silence the voices of discord and enmity in our personal lives and in the lives of those with whom we share this planet. Let our collective voices ring out this year that we may work towards a world of peace, and of understanding.

Shana Tova to you and yours,
Aviva

High Holy Days 2016-5777 Greetings from Chazzan Daniela Gesundheit

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

Each summer, when I open up my notes and start reviewing the complex and beautiful melodies that weave their way through the High Holy Days' liturgy, I experience a wave of anticipation — it is equal parts excitement and anxiety. I am transported to the garden behind the First Unitarian Congregation, quietly gathering my thoughts before a service, or to the bimah alongside groups of congregants wrapping one another in tallit for an aliyah, or I see myself standing facing you all for the *Avinu Malkeinu* as we all sway and

sing together.

This anticipation reminds me of a book by Rabbi Alan Lew called *This is Real and You are Completely Unprepared*. In it, Lew investigates the significance of what we embark on each year during the High Holy Days. He notes the importance of reflecting on our actions and decisions of the past year and earnestly undergoing teshuvah, a turning toward positive transformation. He argues that year after year we have no way to prepare for such a task. We return to shul each fall as novices, learning our own lives anew. Judaism gives us the solace of community and the assurance of familiar melodies on which we can lean as we undertake this daunting endeavour.

I look forward to joining Rabbi Goldberg on the bimah for my ninth year with Shir Libeynu, and to ringing in a sweet and fulfilling new year with you all.

L'Shana Tova,

Daniela Gesundheit

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