

Reflections from Rabbi . . .

As the summer begins to draw to an end, we turn our attention to the beginning of school and a new academic year. However, as summer ends we are also reminded of the coming of the High Holy Days. The High Holy Days are a time for reflection and for *tsuvah* (repentance). Both of these tasks require hard work and we cannot accomplish it in one day or even in ten days. Jews often arrive at shul on the first day of Rosh Hashanah to begin the process. That is too late. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur only come near the end of this process. An athlete or actor would never show up to a competition or a performance without first reviewing the plays or the script. In-stead they are prepared, knowing every move and every word. So too we should not show up to synagogue on the High Holy Days without first reflecting on our life and actions of the past year. When we walk into synagogue on the High Holy Days we should know what we are doing *tsuvah* for and how we want next year to be different. Doing this preparation beforehand allows us to connect with the liturgy of the High Holy Days and feel more spiritually connected to the holidays.

Our Jewish tradition knows that *tsuvah* is a process that requires a lot of time. Introspection and taking a deep look at our flaws is one the most difficult tasks we have to do. If we are rushed or pressured, it cannot be done effectively. Therefore, the rabbis set apart the entire month of Elul, the month before Rosh Hashanah as the opportunity to begin this work. As we end the *Shachrit* service each morning during the month of Elul, we sound the shofar. The blast of the shofar each morning is our reminder of the approaching High Holy Days. The blasts are intended to rattle our hearts and to propel us to spend a few moments each day preparing for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The process of reflection and *tsuvah* should take us the entire month of Elul, so that when we arrive at Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we can complete our *tsuvah*. May we each find the time to properly prepare for the High Holy Days during this upcoming month of Elul, and enter Rosh Hashanah prepared for the days and year ahead.

Rabbi Kushnick