

Tehiyah gedollah!! The long, plaintive call to spiritual awakening that punctuates our services and calls us to reflection. This year, two colleagues, inspired by other social media challenges, offered, a *tehiyah gedollah* challenge—asking us to consider how we will make an impact on the larger community.

Given the state of the world, there probably could not be a better time for a challenge of this kind. And for me, there was a significant opportunity to build on thinking that has been part of my reflective process during this past year, one of many transitions in both my professional and personal life.

Let me begin by clarifying that this has been an energizing period, a reminder that change offers a bit of adventure—and possibility. Certainly, at Shir Tikvah we can be reminded of the possibility that change offers –having modeled a process that

- Acknowledged the loss that we would feel as Rabbi Melissa Simon departed for her own new adventures;
- Engaged in thoughtful consideration to determine what our needs would be;
- Found in Rabbi Jason Rodich a teacher who has already begun to significantly impact our thinking.

But, it is not on change that I wish to focus. My transitions provided an opportunity to ask fundamental questions about Jewish and communal life and the choices I wanted to make.

- I am an educator who has devoted much of my professional life to preparing youth who will have the skills to create the kind of Jewish community that will be meaningful to them. As I look ahead, where and how will I have the greatest impact? Institutions are fragile and increasingly, I have focused my attention on connecting with people, to help them shape institutions that are hopefully less fragile but that ultimately put touching lives deeply at their center.
- I am also a parent. Our two daughters and their wives are both expecting babies. Ginny and I are engaged in the transition to being grandparents. You may well want to join the chorus that has reminded us that our lives will be delightfully transformed. But I am also wondering, what is the world that will engage our grandchildren as they grow old enough to make their own choices? And what is my role, indeed my responsibility?
 - How will we make traditions meaningful to them?
 - How will we create new ways of meeting their needs for community?

At Shir Tikvah, we have been asking these questions as we seek to build our *kehilah k'doshah*.

- How can we honor multiple narratives and engage in civil discourse when we may disagree?
- This was critically important in our dialogue about the war in Israel and Gaza where, remarkably, we were able to create a safe place for people to share their conflicting emotions, their questions, their uncertainties.
- I had been craving that place in a climate of shrill voices and the process of discussion, of saying aloud gave me the opportunity to clarify my own thinking.
- I certainly hope that I can provide for my grandchildren a community in which we develop the skills to engage complex issues complexly and deeply.
- Are there other conversations we can and should be having if we are to create an alternate future for our children and grandchildren? The events in Ferguson have reinforced the growing recognition, highlighted by the racial divide in our nation and in Minneapolis, that we must be having discussions about race among ourselves and with others if we are to fully honor Jewish values of *tikkun olam* and even the growing diversity of our Shir Tikvah community.

A reading from *Mishkan T'filah* speaks to me as we respond to the call of the shofar:

Wake us, O God, and shake us
From the sweet and sad poignancies rendered by
Half forgotten melodies and rubric prayers of yesteryears;
Make us know that the border of the sanctuary
Is not the border of living
And the walls of Your temples are not shelters
From the winds of truth, justice and reality.

You need not experience major shifts in your professional and personal lives to ask fundamental questions about the impact we hope to have in the year ahead.

As you look to 5775, I invite you to ask your own questions:

- What are the ways you hope to impact Shir Tikvah?
- When YOU come you contribute to our experience. If you're a visitor or an annual high holy day attendee, which of our offerings would deepen your experiences as a reflective, growing Jewish individual during the coming year?
- What would you like to create? From the climate change minyan to meditation and healing services to dinners for elders, the initiatives of congregants have impacted Shir Tikvah and the world beyond our walls.

Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote, "To pray is to dream in league with God, to envision God's holy visions." What are our dreams not just for ourselves, but for our grandchildren? And as we hear the dramatic sound of *tehiyah gedolah*, what are the commitments we can make that reflect our deepest values and will make a significant impact in the year ahead?