

## Rabbi Fox's Column for Temple Beth Shalom's Tishrei/Heshvan 5767 (October 2006) Newsletter

*“Water, water every where,/ Nor any drop to drink.”*

--Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”

As you read this, we are about to join together for our Yom Kippur services, which I expect will be as enriching and meaningful as our Rosh Hashanah services were this year. With the assistance of Rabbi Alan LaPayover as our Hazzan, we recounted the melodies that echo through our life's memory and we celebrated the joy of beginning another year, another wonderful New Year, together as Jews and members of Beth Shalom. And when we look forward to the days ahead, Sukkot looms large in our Jewish souls. At the closing of our celebration of Sukkot is where we find the holiday of Shemini Atzeret. Like our renewal of our spiritual lives with the Days of Awe, Sukkot and particularly Shemini Atzeret, focus us on the renewal of our bodies by bringing attention to our need for water.

It is water that connects all life and, in particular, connects Jewish life, Israel, and Brigantine.

Water is as central to the life of Brigantine residents as the air they breathe and water is the elixir of life in Israel as each Winter's rains determine the abundance of the coming year. Whether it is where the water is (or where it isn't), where your home is relative to the water, what the temperature, texture, or color of the water is from day to day, or even who gets to use the water, water is at the center of who we are as a Brigantine community. Israel's relationship with water is not too far from our own, so dependent are our fellow Jews' lives on water.

There is no other holiday I can think of in the Jewish year that more directly connects to our lives at Temple Beth Shalom than Shemini Atzeret. “Shemini what,” you ask? Shemini Atzeret, the Eighth Day of Assembly, focuses our attention in two areas: the true completion of our repentance (and you thought that you were done on Yom Kippur!) and what our relationship will be with water for the coming year. That's right, even water has a day of its own, according to the Rabbis. And we honor this by reciting the prayer for rain, an abbreviation of which we add to our Amidah prayers until Passover.

You must remember that, in a world where growing food was the number one industry, how much water would fall in the coming year or how high the water table would be was a huge concern for everyone. That is why the libation ceremony, or water celebration, in the Temple during Sukkot held so much significance for our ancestors. Hoarding and rationing water all Summer long – normally without a single drop of rain for five months or more – and then with the arrival of the New Year and Sukkot, they reached the culmination of faith: Living with less in the hope that more would be provided. And so it is with us as we begin our prayers for rain – prayers that the rain will fall in abundance in its own time so that we will have what we need when the Sun has its time next Summer.

It is in this pool of our tradition that we see our reflection – we know that the year to come is being set as we speak. And it is our prayer that we will receive abundance when we normally do so that we may survive through the times in our lives that are more parched.

May this season only be a beginning to the blessings that will fall like rain into your lives, leading you through all you face in the coming year and beyond.

Hag Sameach,  
Rabbi Fox

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