

Rabbi Fox's Message for Temple Beth Shalom's Elul/Tishrei 5767/5768 (September 2007) Newsletter

Our Future Begins from Within

You are wherever your thoughts are. Make sure your thoughts are where you want to be.
—Rebbe Nachman of Breslov

As many of you have remarked in various ways, I am blessed to be able to see things as they are in life. While I did not create the phrase, “It is what it is,” I have found it a comforting aphorism to acknowledge that we cannot make things we encounter in life different than they are unless there is such an aspiration from within. Just like the old joke, “How many psychiatrists does it take to change a lightbulb? One, but the lightbulb really has to want to change,” we rarely make an adjustment to our path in life without an outside force tapping into a very meaningful place in our heart and exciting the seed of change already within us.

So here comes the High Holy Days. We may say we should do this or that in life, but unless we want something from within, we will likely continue on our present path without change. We must want to be different if we are to make the shift to a new reality.

In the last year, I, as your Rabbi, and you, as the congregants of Temple Beth Shalom, have made such a change. We mutually decided to make a shidduch and to share our paths moving forward. And look at what such a lovely shidduch has produced: More service attendance, more Board energy, more interest in learning about our heritage, more connection with our fellow congregants, and so on. There is an energy building at Temple Beth Shalom. I am invigorated by the enthusiasm that has met my enthusiasm for this lovely community. We are well on our way to creating an even more joyous experience of Jewish life here in Brigantine. Our island may be known for its beauty and its wildlife, but soon it will also be known for its beautiful Jewish community, as well.

With the year that has passed, I have come to reflect on how things have gone for us as Rabbi and Congregation, and to developing a vision for a dynamic future. With your ever increasing generosity of spirit and time (even beyond your financial generosity), Temple Beth Shalom can only hope to grow in numbers of congregants and in the numbers of those congregants doing good for the Brigantine Jewish community.

So, as we approach and share the New Year together, I ask you to consider sharing with me and our leadership that part of you that would like to grow, to learn, and to be more connected with your fellow Jews and their families. I know that I am excited to learn what is important to you so that we can forge a strong future together.

Part of forging that strong future involves being honest in our relationships. During the Jewish month of *Elul* leading up to Rosh Hashanah and throughout the *Yamim Noraim* (Days of Awe) we are commanded to ask each other for forgiveness for those inevitable gaffs and slights during the previous year. In doing so, we free our past and empower our future.

As Rebbe Nachman intimates, great relationships begin with great intentions. Our thoughts need to inhabit the places that we would like to inhabit so that nothing is wasted in our lives – not even the simple greetings one might share with others at the end of an Erev Shabbat service. If we do nothing else in the coming year, let us do that: Commit to each other

that we will listen first so that we react later, that we will love first so that we harm less, that we will give first so that we receive even more in return.

And so it is with me and the coming New Year. I remain honored to be your Rabbi and to learn together with you about everything from Hebrew letters to Judaism's life lessons.

May you and your family be blessed with a year of joy, health, and an engaging life!

L'Shanah Tovah Tikateivu – May you be inscribed for a good year; from both me and my wife, Sarah,

Rabbi Gerald Fox