

Monthly Musings From Rabbi Rene

To New Beginnings

September always feels like a beginning. The new school year, the return to routine, the long days of the summer giving way to a more structured time again. Families get ready for the new school year. But for the Jewish calendar, September brings something more profound: not just a restart, but a return, teshuvah. Not only to work or to schedules, but to ourselves.

Each year, as Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur approach, we are offered a rare and powerful opportunity: to pause, to reflect, and to ask some of life's deeper questions. Who have I become in the past year? Where have I fallen short – not by anyone else's standards, but by my own? What values still anchor me when everything else feels uncertain? These are not religious questions in the narrow sense. They are the

challenges that human beings have faced since the dawn of time; a necessary halt to take stock before choosing the next steps.

In fact, one of the most beautiful aspects of this season is that it doesn't ask for perfection, or even for piety. It simply asks us to stop and pay attention to our actions, our relationships, our inner lives. To begin again. For that, you need to be willing to look honestly at where you are, and where you still hope to go.

Perhaps that invitation feels especially meaningful this year. The world around us continues to be unpredictable. Whether we're talking about climate anxiety, political polarisation, or the relentless pace of modern life, it's easy to feel overwhelmed, disconnected, and exhausted. And when we feel like that, it's

tempting to go on autopilot: to numb ourselves, to avoid difficult conversations, to power through without really checking in.

But the High Holy Days interrupt that pattern. They are Judaism's way of saying: stop. Breathe. Pay attention. Observe. Come back to yourself.

This isn't about revamping your life overnight. Judaism offers us 10 full days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, because meaningful change takes time. Small steps matter. And these 10 days recur every year, as if to say, do not worry, you'll get another chance.

Even silence can be holy. In a world full of noise – the noise of media, headlines and opinions – carving out space for reflection is itself a spiritual act. That is one of the many gifts of this season. You come along, sit, listen, and you do not need to do anything. And when the shofar sounds, with its broken, piercing calls, 100 times on Rosh Hashanah, and at the

end of Yom Kippur, you are invited to awaken and to remember that we can begin again, renewed and ready.

So, as September arrives, I invite you to take a moment. Not to make resolutions, but to reconnect with yourself and with the world. Ask yourself gently: What still gives me hope? What kind of person do I want to be this year? And what small step can I take toward that?

From all of us at the synagogue, may this season bring you clarity, courage, and peace. Shana tova u'metukah, a good and sweet year to you and your loved ones.

Rabbi Rene