

July, 17, 2020

Yomim Noraim before the Nine Days from Rabbi Baum

I have never offered thoughts regarding Rosh Hashana in the same Shabbat notes in which I disseminate guidelines for the Nine Days. Yet this year, because our concept of time has become disoriented, we want to do our best to plan a healthy and uplifting Yomim Noraim experience for our membership. We are committed to making you feel part of the Keter Torah community for the 5781 Yomim Noraim. We will be as creative as possible in using our magnificent shul campus, and perhaps beyond, to find a place for everyone who chooses to join us physically this year. Amazingly, but not surprisingly, many of our members have come forward with messages of encouragement and offers of assistance as we continue to formulate and evaluate our options for this crucial time period of spiritual ascent and family bonding.

Although we continue to pray for rapid improvement and recovery, it is currently unimaginable that we will be able this year to seat 1300 people simultaneously inside the shul, close to each other, and without wearing masks. However, this will not stop us from creating as many spaces as possible, including ones for you and your family. We will also do what is necessary to provide a meaningful experience for those who choose to stay home this year or perhaps to only come out for Shofar blowing or for other selected services.

In the coming days, you will receive a **Yomim Noraim 5781 survey**. Your responses will be helpful, and you are absolutely not bound by your responses. In this time of uncertainty, none of us can guarantee what will happen more than two months from now. The survey will also include a comments section for additional thoughts. Based on conversations I have had with many members who have reached out to offer support, encouragement and the deep desire to connect to Hashem, my questions were formulated to address two main goals:

- #1) How can we provide a safe space for as many people who are interested and able to physically participate?, and
- #2) How can we be a fundamental spiritual asset that can make these Days of Awe inspiring to every individual in our shul community, despite being different from anything we have experienced before?

Our Parshiot this Shabbat, recalling the many stops along the way to Israel, remind us that we are still on a journey towards clarity. We often find this lucidity in the confines of a Beit Knesset, a sanctuary in which we anchor ourselves to confront such challenges. Even after the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash, synagogue buildings, unlike private homes, were not required to have a designated unfinished area on the wall to commemorate the destruction (Ber Halacha Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 560). I believe that the message is that, in the face of destruction, we find solace and comfort in the Mikdash Me'at that to us is closest in context and purpose to the Beit Hamikdash. It is our prayer that, as we get closer to the Yomim Noraim, we will gain greater access to and inspiration from the holy building and the campus at 600 Roemer Avenue.