



Message From Cantor Joshua Shron

Why do so many people attend High Holy Day services? Why do we attract 700 congregants on these three days, yet only a fraction on the other 362? Why do so many people opt to pray with us on what are the LONGEST services of the year?

Rabbi Kerry Olitzky, Executive Director of Big Tent Judaism and fellow New Jerseyan, writes that "Jewish guilt" is no longer the answer. Thankfully, the Jewish community has moved past that, and today people join us because they truly are uplifted and inspired by the experience. Specifically, Rabbi Olitzky writes, here are the top 10 reasons why one might attend High Holy Day services:

1. *The entire experience brings me closer to that which is greater than myself which the Jewish tradition calls God.*
2. *I am able to see myself more clearly—warts and all—in the presence of the Divine.*
3. *It provides me with the opportunity to be in solidarity with the Jewish community and the Jewish people through time and space while staying in sync with the rhythm of Jewish time.*
4. *The lessons of the holidays force me to face my own mortality, my own finitude, and help guide me on a path that will help to make my life count. These lessons are made evident in the liturgy and the spoken words.*
5. *I am uplifted by the music of the service and the words of Torah offered by the rabbi.*
6. *It provides me with a sacred space for prayer and offers me words of prayer when I am unable to shape them on my own.*
7. *The High Holidays provide me with guidance to set my life back on course where I may have strayed. They provide me with strategies for living a holier, more sacred life.*
8. *In the context of supportive community, I am not afraid to be vulnerable and I am buoyed in my efforts to become a better person.*
9. *I am able to reaffirm my faith in God and my belief in the goodness of humankind.*
10. *With all that I receive, I am able to leave the synagogue and face the year ahead—optimistically, joyfully, and humbly.*

Wow. For a rabbi or cantor, that's a lot of responsibility riding on our shoulders. We'd better make it worth your while. So we work throughout the summer...making sure every last detail is perfect, ensuring that our holiday experience is inspiring, interesting, participatory and fun.

FUN? Yup. We want you to leave with a smile on your face, perhaps chuckling from a joke that was told from the bima, perhaps humming the familiar, upbeat melodies of the holiday season. For me personally, that means reassembling the dedicated members of our congregational choir. Beginning about two months before Rosh Hashana, we meet weekly to rehearse our repertoire and to learn a new selection or two for the upcoming year.

Most synagogue choirs, however, do not exemplify FUN. They produce beautiful, haunting music, meticulously perfected and polished. For many congregations, they create the perfect High Holy Day service. For OUR congregation, this is not the answer. For OUR congregation, a typical choir creates an atmosphere of a stuffy, boring service...where praying becomes a spectator sport, not a participatory experience.

Our choir is made up of about ten passionate members of our congregation who LOVE to sing...and who effectively create an environment in which the congregation is moved to join in. Our goal is not to be a choir of PERFORMERS...but rather a community of joyful prayer leaders, engaging the congregation in song on the holiest days of the year. In the years we've done this, I've noticed that the choir's upbeat, joyful attitude creates a special, infectious spirit that spreads through the congregation. I hope you'll agree! If you do, please thank a choir member after services!

I look forward to greeting you and your family throughout the holiday season and beyond. Mairov, Simcha, Ellie, Sela, AJ and Tobey all look forward to seeing you as well...and join me in wishing you a Shana Tovah U'metukah...a happy, healthy, sweet, music-filled New Year!

Cantor Josh Shron



Teen Conversations with The Cantor at Starbucks in Little Neck

**Beginning Tuesday, September 8
At 8:00 p.m.**

Will meet next in October...dates to follow!