

## A Rabbinic Perspective *By Rabbi Seymour Rosenbloom*

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### Why We Come to the Synagogue



In a few days we will gather for the High Holy Day services. On most *Shabbatot*, even with the biggest of double *B'nai Mitzvah* ceremonies, our sanctuary provides ample space for all worshipers. But come *Rosh HaShanah* and *Yom Kippur*, we have to push the walls out and make room for a throng of congregants who gather for these special, memorable days.

Why do we come? What is the power of this time of year that lures us and holds us through the final sounding of the *shofar* on *Yom Kippur*?

I am reminded of the story told by Yiddish humorist Harry Golden in his book *Only in America*. He recounts how his father, a confirmed atheist, would nevertheless attend *minyán* each evening at their local synagogue. Confused by his father's apparent loyalty to a God he did not believe in, he asked him about the strange, faithful behavior of a man who eschewed faith. His father explained: "You know my friend, Schwartz? Schwartz goes to *shul* to talk to God. I go to *shul* to talk to Schwartz."

So it is with us. Some of us come to talk to God. And some of us come to talk to our friends and renew ties that may have frayed through the hectic pace of the year. And whatever the reason, I am glad that you will be here with us!

You make up the fabric of Congregation Adath Jeshurun. And as we get ready to usher in our 150th Anniversary Year, it is you who make this celebration possible. Without this generation of congregants, the past would only be history. You make it a living reality.

What an amalgam of souls we are when we come together. Each with dreams and successes, losses and disappointments. Some of us faithful in the observance of the kashrut laws, the Sabbath and holidays, and others for whom they are alien. And many of us smack in the middle, sort of like the kid one of my university colleagues observed with amusement who was sitting in McDonalds, eating a Big Mac, all the while wearing a *kipah*! But I think we come for more. It is said that every Jew has within him or her what is called in Yiddish "*das pintele Yid*," the spark of the Jew. It is that identity, no matter how dormant or developed, that brings us to the synagogue. It draws us as an act of hope—that perhaps this will be the year the spark will ignite into a passionate flame and infuse us with its fire.

And so we come. We see our friends. We hear the familiar words and melodies. And we hope for a good year. As good as the last, if it was a good one. Better, if it was a year of disappointment. And we set off again on the next leg of this journey of life, hoping not to stumble too much, and that in another year hence, when the calendar bids us again to pause and take stock, we will all be here again.

Cindy, our children, and I wish you all a wonderful new year. May it be of peace and blessing, hope and renewal, connection and vision. *L'Shana Tova Tikatayvu ViTayhataymu*: may we all be inscribed and sealed for a year of peace, goodness and blessing.

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