

## High Holydays: The Ten-Day Self-Improvement Journey

Rabbi Sid

Part of the genius of those who crafted the Jewish calendar was to understand that we cannot reach our full human/spiritual potential in one moment. It is always a journey. We should not enter Rosh ha-Shana cold. The entire month of Elul is designed as a preparation for Rosh haShana. And the 3-part theme, introduced during Rosh ha-Shana, about “repentance, prayer and acts of kindness and justice,” does not get fully realized by anyone during a 3-hour service, nor even over the course of a 2-day festival. We have the ten days, until Yom Kippur, to wrap our brains around it and, hopefully, begin to integrate the meaning into our day-to-day behavior.

Preparation and warm up. Whether in sports, the arts or any professional pursuit that demands excellence, we are familiar with the need. If you enter the “main event” without proper preparation and warm up, you are likely to fall short of peak performance.

I will speak to this idea during the Rosh ha-Shana service and that will kick-off the “Ten Day Self-Improvement Journey”, known in Hebrew as the *aseret y'mai teshuva*. Everyone will receive a hand-out with a series of question-prompts that we will ask you to reflect on. Three members of the congregation have been asked to share some of their own, preliminary responses, to those questions publicly. And then, it is your turn.

Towards the end of the Rosh HaShana, first-day morning service, I will invite everyone to stand up and find a partner with whom they can work over the holiday season. The partner cannot be a relative and preferably, should not even be a person you know. Finding a partner with whom you have no history, will make your conversations richer and it also becomes a way to weave strong bonds of relationship through our Adat Shalom community.

You will exchange contact information with your partner and set up at least one time to connect by phone or Zoom during the 10 days between Rosh haShana and Yom Kippur. In Hebrew, such a partner is called a *chavruta*, a study-buddy. The prompt sheet you get during the service is the worksheet that will guide your conversations. Hopefully, if your exchange is rich, you will choose to meet more than once. There is no reason why you cannot continue this study partnership throughout the year. It is up to you. It is important that both partners get a chance to speak and express themselves.

*For those who will not be present during the second half of the Rosh haShana service, or who did not find a partner during services, you can still participate in this “10-Day Self-Improvement Journey”. Please contact Loren Amdursky at [ASchevruta@gmail.com](mailto:ASchevruta@gmail.com) and include your name, cell phone and email, and she will help connect you with a chevruta partner.*

Wishing everyone a fulfilling journey.