

## **A High Holiday Message to Our Community**

After much consideration, we, the undersigned congregations, have decided that we will not hold our usual large, in-person High Holiday services this year. Instead, we will each provide virtual and outdoor opportunities, in consultation with medical professionals, for our congregations to each come together and celebrate the holidays safely.

We did not arrive at this decision lightly and are making this joint statement as a sign of unity within our part of the South Jersey Jewish community. We make this statement together in the hopes of reinforcing the principle that says *Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh Bazeh*, meaning all of Israel are responsible for each other. (Talmud Shevuot 39a) This implies an obligation on all Jews to ensure that other Jews have their basic needs for food, clothing, and above all good health taken care of in the interest of protecting Jewish life. The Talmud further teaches “One who has saved one life, it as if that person has saved the world.”

We believe this decision not only protects Jewish lives, it enables us to move forward toward the High Holidays together. There is no way to predict now what will be permitted or advisable in September. However, it is reasonable to assume that large, indoor gatherings with singing may be among the last things to return to some semblance of normalcy. We will continue to monitor local conditions as we plan, with the understanding that the situation may or may not continue to improve and become less restrictive.

We have decided to go this route for a number of reasons:

- An at-home experience is safe. We know now that we will be able to do it, no matter what is happening in September. This approach also puts no one's health or safety at risk.
- An at-home experience is equitable. Everyone can participate equally from home. We will not have to make difficult decisions about who may come to our synagogues and who may not; congregants and their families will not have to make decisions about whether or not to attend.
- An at-home experience is proactive. By making this choice now, we have time to make the alternatives the best they can be. We also will do our best to make sure that everyone in our community can access these experiences, including by providing technical assistance. We can devote our resources toward creating an innovative and meaningful holiday experience, rather than on the complex requirements to try to ensure the safety of everyone attending a large, in-person gathering.

All Israel is indeed responsible for one another, and as we enter these unique High Holidays we feel that now more than ever. Our sense of community, of solidarity and of shared purpose have sustained us as a Jewish People, and will indeed carry us forward through this sacred season and well into the future.

**Congregation Beth El  
Temple Beth Sholom  
Adath Emanu-El  
Temple Sinai  
Congregation Beth Tikvah  
Temple Har Zion  
M'kor Shalom**

**Temple Emanuel**  
**Nafshenu**