

We have a lot going on! – Re’eh 5782

So, some are taking the last few days of summer for vacation, and for others, school is starting, or has started already.

In our Jewish Calendar, we are beginning the month of the Elul, which is the final month of the Jewish year, the final month prior to Rosh Hashanah.

This is a very special time in which we spiritually prepare for the High Holiday season of reflection and repentance.

Elul is the time for introspection and *cheshbon hanefesh*, a personal accounting of the soul, which we do to prepare for Rosh Hashanah, when, as our tradition teaches us, all of humanity is called to account and judgment is issued from on high.

We have some customs. One is the weekday blowing of the shofar after traditional morning services. Another is to recite Psalm 27, which speaks of God’s protection, and includes a plea that God will not forsake us.

Parashat Re’eh, read at the beginning of Elul, which is our Torah portion for this Shabbat, begins with God saying to the Jewish people: “See, this day I set before you blessing and curse: blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I enjoin upon you this day; and curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn away from the path that I enjoin upon you this day and follow other gods, whom you have not experienced.”

The first step in taking an account of one’s life is to look, to see clearly the possibilities laid out in each moment and to choose the path of blessing.

One of the best-known teachings about Elul is that the Hebrew letters of the month’s name are an acronym (*aleph-lamed-vav-lamed*) from the verse in Song of Songs: *Ani l’dodi v’dodi li* (“I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine.”). Song of Songs is understood to be an allegory in which the lovers are God and Israel.

Elul is thus understood to be a time of recommitting to our relationship with God, and a time of divine closeness, where connection to the Divine comes easier than at other times of the year. It is a very good time to do our inner work of repairing and deepening our relationship with God.

We might reflect on any or all of the following questions:

How did I do over this past year?

Where could I have done better?

What will I do better this coming year?

What lessons can I learn from my own life in the past year?

Have I mistreated anyone, deliberately or not?

Have I sought reconciliation with loved ones who I have struggled with?

Have I not fulfilled promises?

Have I improved my connections with others?

Have I tried to focus on personal behaviors that I would like to change?

What can I release or let go of?

What grounds me?

What am I thankful for?

What is my soul calling me to do?

What is arising or new in my life?

May we each find depth, meaning, connection, and new hope and aliveness as we move not only through the month of Elul, but through the Ten Days of Awe, the High Holy Days.

Shabbat shalom,

Rabbi Lisa