

Dear Members of CBI,

Despite the summer heat, vacations, and other interests, attendance at Friday night services has been wonderful. Each Friday night we have had 30-50 attendees who immersed themselves in the services and then enjoyed socializing with old and new friends at the Oneg Shabbat. This summer we were especially blessed with the presence of Rabbi Plost and Cantor Star Trompeter. Rabbi Plost's leadership and meaningful words and Cantor Trompeter's beautiful singing and Torah reading were an inspiration for all of us who took the opportunity to join together on Fridays during the summer. Thank you to all of you who participated.

It is difficult to believe that summer is drawing to a close and the High Holidays are just around the corner. As Jews we can prepare for the holidays in many different ways including but not limited to early food preparation, purchasing new outfits or even a trip to a mikvah. One tradition we follow in Corpus Christi begins several weeks before Rosh Hashanah when the Rabbi blows the shofar each Friday night. One interpretation of this ritual is that the sound of the shofar is a way of both announcing the coming of the High Holidays and alerting us that we are entering an especially serious and meaningful holy period—the days of awe. Although most of us will not head to a mikvah, we might ask how can we prepare for the days of awe in our contemporary world? How each of us chooses to prepare for the holidays is an individual choice but I would like to make some suggestions:

1. Make the holidays a time to set ourselves apart from our regular daily work routine. There are approximately 2080 hours in a normal work year-- can we not set aside 16 hours (.8% of the total work year) to attend Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services in which we have the opportunity for uninterrupted self-reflection, repentance, and rejuvenation. Perhaps this small investment of time will result in making our lives better the remaining 99.2% of the time.
2. Make the High Holidays a part of your children(s) education and come as a family to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur Services. The public schools recognize the importance of our Jewish holidays and children have excused absences and are able to make up any missed work. Yet how many of our school age children attend services? Yes, it is a little extra work but fits into the school's effort not only teach facts but to build character as well. It is a sacrifice (more an inconvenience) but serves as a reminder of the sacrifices our forefathers experienced to protect our heritage and indicates to our young people how important Judaism has been in the lives of our ancestors and how relevant it can be to us today.
3. Give a donation to the Annual High Holiday Appeal Fund. This year the proceeds from the drive will be used to continue upgrading the cemetery at Seaside Memorial and provide support for Jewish community members who are in need of a helping hand in these difficult times. Both of these causes are Mitzvahs that serve our local Jewish community and may touch us all in one way or another.
4. Consider giving to the CBI annual food drive to help replenish the Corpus Christi Food Bank. Bring a bag of food as a symbol of your contribution and if possible a check so that those less fortunate in our community can have the basic necessities so many of us take for granted.

5. Consider volunteering on one of our CBI committees. As a modestly-sized temple with a small but extremely competent administrative staff we are very much dependent on the help of congregation volunteers to make things happen. We have an all-too-small core of dedicated individuals with huge hearts who we call on over and over again to get things done. We need to have that group grow so that we can serve our congregants even better. The work of most committees takes an amazingly small amount of time but has a great impact on both the volunteers and our congregation.

I hope each of you will consider following one or more of my suggestions and through your efforts we will build an even greater family of families at CBI. I wish all of you a healthy, happy and successful new year.

L'Shanah Tovah
Jim Gold