YEARS AGO WHEN I STUDIED TO BECOME A YOGA TEACHER I LEARNED A profound concept that comes from the world of Zen Buddhism. At one point when we were learning inversions—think standing on your head—the teacher asked us to find our “beginner’s mind” in the pose.

Beginner’s mind refers to having an attitude of openness, eagerness, and lack of preconceptions when studying a subject, even when studying at an advanced level, just as a beginner in that subject would. So instead of approaching the headstand from the presumption of difficulty, we were being asked to approach it with an eagerness to apply what we already knew to a new experience.

It was mind blowing. Without too much effort, there I was standing on my head away from the wall for support. And I stayed there for a while. Even though I had done a headstand before, this time I felt a comfort in the pose I had never experienced before, and I felt strong and calm at the same time.

I was thinking about this idea in relation to how we approach Rosh Hashanah, another new year, another encounter with our routines, lives, school, work, and synagogue, another encounter with a ritual of renewal that sometimes is hard to pin down. It is often too easy to be dismissive of the incredible gift that is another year of life, to take for granted the knowledge and experience we have amassed in our lives, and think there is, as the book of Ecclesiastes taught, “Nothing new under the sun.”

So tonight as we begin a new year, I want to offer a teaching that on the face of it may seem basic or sophomoric to you, but if we can apply the idea of “beginner’s mind,” it might actually make a difference in the way we live and work, play and pray in our Jewish community.

In the Ethics of the Sages, Shimon Hatzaddik, Simeon the Just, taught: Al shlosha devarim ha’olam omed. The world stands on three things: Al hatorah, al ha’avodah, v’al gemilut hasadim. On torah/study, on prayer/service, and on acts of loving kindness. We sign these words, we teach them to our children, and it has become the underlying mission of many synagogue communities. The words are simple, but the levels of meaning are powerful.

So if you have heard this teaching before, imagine that you are hearing it for the first time. If you have never heard this teaching before, open your mind wider than you think it can stretch in order to embrace the deeper meaning of its words.
What might *Torah, avodah*, and *gemilut hased* mean for each of us this year? *Torah* represents our intellectual side: reading, study, questioning, learning. *Avodah* is our emotional side: prayer, songs, candles, meditation. *Gemilut hasadim* include acts of help, repair, compassion, attention, and justice. Very few of us can do all three categories well, all at the same time, but by joining a community we can complete the stability of our world. At the same time, the *Torah* as seen from an historic perspective is more dynamic than typical literature. Every generation reads the text through two perspectives—the time in which it was written as well as the time in which it is read. New challenges in life create new readings of *Torah*.

The *Torah*’s master story is the story of a journey. What begins as a journey of individuals ends as a journey of a people. Our people. We were slaves in Egypt, we moved through the wilderness, and ultimately arrived at the Promised Land. From slavery to freedom, darkness to light. From building images of Pharaoh in stone to constructing an experience of God in the soul.

That story represents our place in the world, and it shapes our identity, our ethics, our theology, and our dreams. We might even call it the constitution of the Jewish people, teaching us what to eat, how to act, what and how to celebrate. We also find within it a moral compass to navigate the world.

In the words of the late sociologist, Robert Cover, the *Torah* contains both *nomos*—rules, customs, and behaviors that help a community function—and narrative—those stories that amplify, support, and convey the import of the laws. According to Cover: “No set of legal institutions or prescriptions exists apart from the narratives that locate it and give it meaning. For every constitution there is an epic, for every Decalogue a scripture.”

*Torah* study is meant as an obligation. Something we do and that we teach our children to want to do. Just a few minutes ago we chanted the *v’ahavta* which invokes that we are to “teach them intently to our children, speak them when in our home or on the road.”

The gift of *Torah* is one given with love. Do we receive it that way? Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Kotzk told the story of a man who came to him asking how he could make his children devote themselves to *Torah*. The Rabbi answered, if you really want them to do this, then you yourself must spend time over *Torah*, and they will do as you do. Otherwise, they will not devote themselves to *Torah*, but only when they have a family, they will tell their children to do it and so on. (Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim*)

Whether you are a Gesher parent or an adult with grown children or no children, the practice of engaging with the sacred texts of our tradition can deepen our lives, and steady the world in which we live.

Two weeks ago in the middle of the *Kabbalat Shabbat* service, I asked everyone to put aside the prayerbooks, and instead of reading the *Amidah* standing prayer, I asked everyone to stand and be the *Amidah*. Using a yoga posture called *tadasana*—mountain pose—in Sanskrit, I instructed everyone to stand mindfully—feet grounded on the floor, knees under the hips, not hyperextended but micro-bent, collarbone broadened, shoulder blades sliding down the back, neck floating.

I asked people to offer a prayer from that place. The air changed in the room. The chatter that fills our minds quieted, and for 120 seconds there was a stillness that felt prayerful. It felt different. *Prayer—avodah* is a spiritual discipline that teaches mindfulness. It is about awareness, re-awakening to wonder, and a sense of the mystery of life.

I can imagine that many of you could describe “prayerful moments” even if you are also a person who says, “I don’t really pray.” Each one of us has likely experienced or perceived the miracle that is life, but those moments are few and fleeting. Prayer is and can be about holding and cherishing those moments. It is and can be about learning from those moments and remaining loyal to them even when they fade into our past.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel taught that “Prayer cannot bring water to parched fields, mend a broken bridge, nor rebuild a ruined city…but it can water an arid soul, mend a broken heart, and rebuild a broken will.”

These ideas are found in the simplicity of prayer. Just expressing what is in your heart is a starting point. Our challenge is that we have to work hard to replace skepticism with wonder, and the feeling that fervent prayer is often embarrassing in the way devoted study and action are not.

Rabbi Ed Feinstein of Los Angeles expressed it this way:
“We Americans are insane. Eleven PM every night, we snuggle up, ready for bed, and what's the last thing we do? We switch on the evening news. Thirty minutes of murder, brutality, corruption, catastrophe, moral lunacy, sports and weather. Good night.

And then in the morning, we are awakened by a clock radio set to some news station. And we begin the day with...murder, brutality, corruption, catastrophe, moral lunacy, sports and weather. And you want to know why so many Americans are depressed? Here's an alternative: Open your eyes each morning. Take a moment to gather yourself in, and say one line of prayer: Modeh ani lefanecha, melech chay v'kayam. Thank you, Source of Life, for returning to me in love, the gift of this new day of life. You take a moment to notice what a miracle it is to wake up, to remember that today is a gift, a fragile, perishable, infinitely precious gift.

And when you go to bed at night, stop a moment, and gather in your mind the miracles of your day: your spouse/partner, those you love, the things you've been able to see and enjoy in this world. And say the Shema. That's all. Two minutes a day. It might just change your life.”

Shabbat is the obvious place and time to feel the power of the collective “Amen” to our prayers. The practice of engaging in prayer, by yourself or with others can deepen our lives, and steady the world in which we live.

The Psalmist teaches: Olam Hesed Yibaneh (89:3)—The world will be built with loving kindness. In a commentary on the Psalm, The 13th century scribe, Yechezkel b. Yeikutiel adds: “If one does loving kindness with a friend, it is accounted to him as if he built the world.” Sefer Maalot Hamiddot.

The teaching here is clear: Acts of loving kindness are not just words on a bumper sticker, they really can build up the world one act at a time. The teaching here is about what underlies our actions—for ourselves, yes, but even more so for the benefit of others, and especially with the help of others.

The writer and activist Danny Siegel teaches that we just don't know when the person in front of us, or sleeping in the park, might be the messiah. The Talmud itself pushes us to see that even the messiah is not exempt from acts of loving kindness. The Messiah is the one changing the bandages of lepers just outside the city gates.

There are many issues local to San Diego, or more global to the general and Jewish communities that we can involve ourselves in for the purposes of changing lives. Social activism does not and should not have to live in a committee in order to be effective. There are lots of ways in which our kindness to one another can model how we can respond to the world around us, whether we are talking about gun violence, racism, immigration reform, homelessness and poverty, or economic justice.

Closer to home, Jewish tradition offers us an understanding of the fixed nature of loving kindness when we are taught rejoicing with the bride and groom, visiting the sick, give comfort and advice, give to the needy, clothe the naked, comfort the mourner and bury the dead. Ultimately, gemilut hasadim is about relationships, and that which underlies social action/justice. The teacher of my teachers, Rabbi Marshall Meyer z”l taught about the burning bushes everywhere and asked can we hear the voice inside them of the poor, disenfranchised, the fragile, the persecuted?

“The task of life is learning to make our ears the ears of God so that we can hear the world's cry for help. Learning to make our eyes the eyes of God so that we can see the opportunities to relieve the brokenness. Learning to make our hands into the healing hands of God so that we can complete the work of creation.” (Ed Feinstein)

The hasidic master, Shnuer Zalman of Ladi, taught that when you doubt the existence of God, or the compassion of God, then go perform an act of loving kindness. In that way, you will feel in your own hands the power of God's compassion, for yourself and for the world.

It is in this way that acts of loving kindness, and setting our moral compass outwards can steady the world in which we live. “To be human is to wander, to be Jewish is to know that we are never lost. To be human is to be lonely, separated from God. To be Jewish is to seek the presence of God, the miracle of life at every moment. To be human is to fear that life has no purpose, no meaning. To be Jewish is to feel life’s purpose in our hearts and hands. To be human is to wonder if the world isn't falling apart. To be Jewish is to always hope.” (Ed Feinstein)
"In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities; in the expert's mind there are few."

In the coming year, if each of us here at Congregation Dor Hadash pushed ourselves to be more engaged in passionate study, prayer that is heartfelt and revolutionary, and action in the world that is transformative, the world would feel more stable than it does today.

Al shelosha devarim haolam omed. Al ha-torah, al ha-avodah, v'al gemilut hasadim. We have Torah, we have our prayer, we have the compassion we share with one another and with the world.

Ki Anu Amecha. Because this is what it means to be a people called to God’s service.

Shanah Tovah u’metukah! A sweet new year for us all.

—Rabbi Yael Ridberg

Rabbi’s Rosh Hashanah morning sermon on pages 16-18

GET UNPLUGGED AND PLUG INTO SHABBAT
October 24/25.

Along with Jews in more than 200 cities in 35 countries across the globe, San Diego will celebrate International Shabbat. Unplug your computers, phones and forget your daily schedules, burdens, distractions and demands. For 25 hours enjoy personal rest, spend time with family and friends, attend services, study, enjoy a Shabbat dinner with blessings, challah and candles, and sing. Be invigorated by participating in community unity and global solidarity events. Shabbat San Diego, along with over 100 participating congregations, organizations, youth groups and schools, is coordinating a mega Challah Bake on October 23, followed on the October 24 and 25 with congregational Shabbat services followed by community and hosted private home Shabbat dinners and lunches, lectures and after Shabbat a huge Havdallah musical celebration. It’s free and available to all. Read about it and sign up at www.shabbatsandiego.org.

(Editor’s Note: CDH does not have anything specific planned but it’s not too late for a CDH member to get involved.)

SLEEPLESS SAN DIEGO
8th ANNUAL BENEFIT TO FIGHT HOMELESSNESS IN SAN DIEGO
October 11–12, 2014

Sleep out with the Madrihim Dream Team from Gesher School at Liberty Station, Point Loma

Make a Pledge at http://tinyurl.com/madrihimdreamteam

20th ANNUAL
SAN DIEGO JEWISH BOOK FAIR 2014
November 8–10 • Temple Solel
November 13–16 • Lawrence Family JCC • Jacobs Family Campus

Please go to their website <http://www.sdcjc.org/sdjbf/index.aspx> details on authors and schedule.

To learn more about what’s going on in the greater San Diego Jewish community, Jewish education, and about Jewish Federation activities, go to their website at http://jewishinsandiego.org.

October Ha Kesher – Page 4
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE PART OF A COMMUNITY?

This is a question that was asked at our Kehillah Gatherings last month. Each Sunday morning, children bring their parents into the library at SDJA to share in a 20-minute Kehillah (community) Gathering.

Each Sunday, the space is set up with chairs in a large circle. The children gather on the floor in the open space, and adults sit in the chairs. At the beginning of the school year, everyone wore name tags, and I offered conversation starters for everyone to find someone they did not know and ask them questions. Then, they had a chance to introduce their partner to the whole group.

We sang Hinei Ma Tov and Shehechiyanu to start the year, and each family put its fingerprints on our kehillah board. Children and adults with a birthday in September were invited up, and we sang Happy Birthday to them in Hebrew and English. They each received a yom huledet sameach pencil and sticker. For the High Holy Days, we sang L'shana tovah tikateivu, Sing Along Song, and These Are The Days. Each family gathered in small groups and wrote letters to themselves for wishes for the year ahead.

The letters will be handed out at the end of the school year, so families can reflect. Children and parents turned over a new leaf (literally) as they wrote apologies. A string of the leaves will be hung at the Yom Kippur family service.

We have four classes which we call havurot (friendship groups) at Gesher School this year. Each havurah is headed by a room parent and families gather throughout the year for social get-togethers and to celebrate Shabbat and other holidays. Each havurah is also responsible for hosting one school-wide mitzvah project during the year as well. In November, one havurah will organize Hanukkah gifts for JFS’s Embrace-a-Family program, and in February, there will be a synagogue-wide food drive sponsored by another havurah.

The Gesher teachers work on creating a community atmosphere within their classes as well. Giza’s Gan/Aleph havurah (preK/K/1st grade) begins its mornings singing Hinei Ma Tov as a way to welcome everyone and form a community feeling.

In Carolyn's Bet/Gimel havurah (2nd and 3rd grade) students learned each other's names, and each morning, they add something about themselves that the whole group tries to remember. They also work with partners and in small groups each Sunday playing games and learning. Playing on the playground during Hadash Nosh Café (break) also allows for community building time.

Mindy’s Daled/Hey havurah (4th and 5th grades) has meetings each Sunday morning where each student gets to share, and the tone is set for acceptance. They make decisions as a group, and every opinion is valued. They have shared goals (i.e. tzedakah goals), and they collectively decide how to reach them or if they should rethink them. The students recognize similarities in each other and appreciate each other's differences.

Holly’s Vav/Bnai Mitzvah havurah (6th and 7th grades) puts an emphasis on building trust among the students. She does this by modeling respect and by allowing each student to be him/herself. They are encouraged to contribute to the class conversations in a way that is meaningful to them individually.

Betsy leads Rosh Hashanah Family Service
## GESHER SCHOOL DATES

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Join Rabbi Yael Ridberg and get ready for Shabbat with a joyous intergenerational experience filled with song, story, and schmoozing! Kids and grown-ups enjoy a friendly, welcoming atmosphere and embrace the festive feeling of Shabbat at Shababa Yaḥad.

*Will return November 7, 2014*
GESHER KIDS FOR PEACE MITZVAH TRIP
October 5, 2014

Calling all Teens, Parents, Congregants, Friends, Musicians and Educators
Trip to the Casa Hogar Orphanage, in Ensenada, BC

When: Sunday, October 5, all day. Meet at 7:00 a.m. for 2-hour drive. Return 8:00 p.m.

Where: Casa Hogar, Cañon Buena Vista Orphanage in Ensenada B.C.

Who: Giza Braun, Cynthia and Hoppy Chandler leaders from Dor Hadash

Requirements: All participants must have a valid passport or be accompanied by their parent with their birth certificate.

Cost: $25 for food. We serve lunch to the children at Casa Hogar and will have a late dinner.

For more information please contact CDH member Cynthia Chandler, Gesher Kids for Peace Leader and at cynthiaedtech@gmail.com or you may call her at 858.663.8563

Important: All teens traveling unaccompanied need to have signed consent forms and release liability for transportation. RSVPs needed to Cynthia by October 3rd.

DONATIONS ACCEPTED
to purchase food, backpacks, and school supplies for the 21 children at Casa Hogar
ATTENTION ONLINE SHOPPERS!


Shop online!

Please share these links with your friends; ask them to shop through our website.

- Shop at amazon.com? Go through Dor Hadash’s website and earn $$$ every time you shop.
- Looking for Judaica items? You can now shop at judaism.com. Ten percent of everything you spend will be donated to Dor Hadash.
- Dor Hadash is a “cause” on iGive.com. iGive will donate every time you shop at any of thousands of online stores. Use our special link to register:
  
  http://www.igive.com/CongregationDorHadash

Please go to our website at http://dorhadash.org. Click on the navigation link on the left—Support Dor Hadash—to be taken to our Support Dor Hadash page. You will find links for amazon.com, judaism.com, iGive.com, eScrip.

Want to make a difference at Dor Hadash?

Join the Membership Committee!

Growing our community is the key to our future. Join current members Peter Bonavich, Fran Meronoff, Lillian Meronoff, Bob Siegel and Patti Nussbaum, and share your ideas for reaching potential members. The committee meets once a month at Bob’s house in University City, a freeway-friendly location! It would be so helpful to the congregation to have a Gesher School parent join our committee.

Questions? Call Patti at 858.349.9043 or email her at pattinussbaum@hotmail.com.

CRACK! BAM! FLOWER!

Learn how these three words translate to specific tiles in Mah Jongg, an ancient game originating in China. For several years a Dor Hadash group has been playing American Mah Jongg on the second and fourth Thursday of (usually) every month at 7 p.m. The group meets at members’ homes on a rotating basis.

We welcome all Mah Jongg players! Beginners are welcome. For more information, contact Susan Enowitz.

FUNDRAISING OPPORTUNITY

MightyNest for Schools is an internet shopping fundraiser. Shop at your convenience for healthy everyday items and 15% of your purchase price will go to Gesher School.

http://schools.mightynest.com/faqs

VONS SHOPPERS!

Sign up your Vons Club Card with eScrip! Every trip to the supermarket raises funds for Gesher School/Dor Hadash. Only cash, check or debit card at the grocery store earns a percentage. Credit cards are no longer part of the Vons eScrip program.

However, a percentage of all purchases made with your registered credit cards/debit cards at eScrip merchants will be given back to Gesher School and Dor Hadash! There are no receipts to collect, no vouchers or certificates to buy, no hassles! Go to escrip.com to register. Dor Hadash’s Group ID is 137701052.

Shop at eScrip’s online mall and earn $$$ for Dor Hadash. Go to: http://shopping.escrip.com
The group will get together November 17 at 1 p.m. at the home of Judy Hante to discuss the acclaimed book, *The Man in the Sharkskin Suit*.

Book synopsis from [amazon.com](http://amazon.com):

Lucette Lagnado’s father, Leon, is a successful Egyptian businessman and boulevardier who, dressed in his signature white sharkskin suit, makes deals and trades at Shepherd’s Hotel and at the dark bar of the Nile Hilton. After the fall of King Farouk and the rise of the Nasser dictatorship, Leon loses everything and his family is forced to flee, abandoning a life once marked by beauty and luxury to plunge into hardship and poverty, as they take flight for any country that would have them.

A vivid, heartbreaking, and powerful inversion of the American dream, Lucette Lagnado’s unforgettable memoir is a sweeping story of family, faith, tradition, tragedy, and triumph set against the stunning backdrop of Cairo, Paris, and New York.

**Note:** Due to the cancellation of August’s discussion, just prior to the discussion on the new book, the group will spend a few minutes discussing August’s book, *See Under: Love.*
Services are at the Al Bahr Shrine Auditorium in Kearny Mesa. Morning services will begin at 9:30 a.m. (new time) and will end one-half hour earlier than they have in past years.

**Friday, October 3 — Kol Nidre**
7:00 p.m.   Service

**Saturday, October 4 — Yom Kippur**
9:30 a.m.   Children’s Programming/Service
9:30 a.m.   *Yom Kippur* Service
4:30 p.m.   Text study—*K'doshim*
5:30 p.m.   *Yizkor* and Martyrology
6:15 p.m.   *Neilah*
7:15 p.m.   *Havdallah* followed by Break-the-Fast (reservations closed)

**Aliyot for Torah Services at the High Holy Days**

If you are a member of a formal or informal committee or group at Dor Hadash, you are invited to participate in an *aliyah* during the Torah services:

**Yom Kippur, Saturday, October 4**

1st *Aliyah*   Ritual Committee and High Holy Days Committee
2nd *Aliyah*   Those in need of healing or thinking of someone in need of healing
3rd *Aliyah*   Torah and *Haftarah* chanters (during the past year and for High Holy Days)
4th *Aliyah*   Marketing/Communications/Office Volunteers/HR Consultant
5th *Aliyah*   Shir Hadash
6th *Aliyah*   *Madriḥin, madriḥim* leadership, Education Committee, Room Parents
7th *Aliyah*   Gesher teachers, Education Director
Maftir *Aliyah*   Jewish members or non-members, age 13 and over, who have never had an *aliyah*, or this would be the first *aliyah* at Dor Hadash

Join the Rabbi and the community in the *sukkah* for *Sukkot* and *Kabbalat Shabbat*, Friday October 10, 6:30 p.m. Bring food to share (and serving utensils) for a *dairy* potluck dinner, brief service, and siddurim presentation to the Vav students at the home of Bob Siegel and Ros Goldstein

We will once again consecrate our new Gesher students and celebrate *Simchat Torah* with the Congregation Beth El community on Thursday, October 16, at 6:30 p.m. in the Stone Family Sanctuary.
Today is called the birthday of the world...the day of its creation. We are also creating ourselves anew at this time. We honor these days of awe with self-examination and repair—adding up promises kept and failures unresolved. We seek forgiveness for missing the mark we aimed for last year.

Our holy days read from Torah selected portions chosen to give us a perspective that our liturgy alone may not give. The traditional reading for today is called "The Birth of Isaac." It's a portion that offers a lesson on profound human frailty, unlike the alternative reading of Creation, which is an option considered more progressive.

When the Rabbi and I discussed the various portions assigned for this time, our preferences differed. In the words of the Godfather, "she then made me an offer I couldn't refuse." She offered me the chance to explore them both. I've never approached two portions this way, looking for connections in seemingly unrelated stories. So today will be different for all of us.

Torah is enriched by commentary, and I begin with a thought that may alter our understanding of this birthday. Julius Lester poetically calls today When the Beginning Began. Rosh Hashanah celebrates that beginning, the first day of Creation. However, there is a counter position.

It is a long held belief by some that Rosh Hashanah may mark the sixth day, the day that humans were created. If so, today becomes more about the birth of the relationship between humankind, the world we inhabit, and of course, the Source of it all that we call God. Meaning then shifts and today has new purpose. It becomes personal. It is our creation that we acknowledge, examine and attempt to repair.

The traditional Birth of Isaac can (and should) make us uncomfortable. We see Sarah as a jealous mother, acting to protect Isaac's birthright, even if Ishmael is Abraham's oldest son. We are troubled by Abraham's weakness of character as he banishes Ishmael and Hagar to almost certain death in the wilderness. The story is chilling. Our ancestors fall short. We see no atonement and no forgiveness. The "creation" of Isaac, his birth, offers little insight on how to forgive and be forgiven. It carries a different lesson.

The alternate reading, the Creation, is obviously a myth, but study uncovers a clear vision of human responsibility that is strangely absent in the traditional portion. When looked at together, the teachings remind us of both the birth of the world as well as its less than perfect people. Both also highlight ethical behavior only humans can accomplish or ignore.

Torah gives us ancient guidelines on living rightly. It also, on occasion, gives us a harsh dose of reality. The writer Frank DeFord once said about athletes, that not all role models have to be good. We learn much from those who fall short. The Torah is full of cautionary tales. Rabbinic Judaism emphasizes the power of these lessons.

There also exists something called the living Torah which helps us explore these ancient words through commentary and interpretation. This is a work in progress, not a finished book. It absorbs ongoing religious teachings and thought, not just the fixed Sinai revelations. It permits us to search for answers and inspiration from centuries of brilliant and creative thinkers. It asks that we stay open to new ways to live and to learn Torah.

We evolve. Our prayers evolve. Torah evolves as well, not in its words, but in how it's presented as well as received. Both portions are challenging, but fortunately we are shown how to challenge back. The living Torah is inclusive and never static. It makes relevant what a literal reading may hide.

The Birth of Isaac is painful to examine. Sarah demands the banishment of Ishmael. Abraham hesitates, asking God what to do. God appears to selfishly affirm Sarah's position, knowing Isaac must pass on the covenant. We are witness again and again to Abraham's unique and powerful relationship with God, yet it's clear that his path to fulfilling God's commands is not orderly or simple. We are shown that humankind is far from perfect, far from godly and far from who we want to be.

The people of Genesis do not follow Torah because it doesn't yet exist. Regret at falling short simply doesn't occur. The story exposes our instincts and they are dark. The sins are profound. The real work of becoming godly lies ahead but is not yet undertaken. We are left shaken, as perhaps we need to be.

The Creation myth actually makes more sense to study as we mark the New Year. The imagery is poetic and factually without any standing at all. This lack of reality, fortunately, allows us room for interpretation. We are a people of memory and story. Rabbi Arthur Green tells us in his commentary on Creation that there are several mitzvot in the story that more than justify "remembering."

(continued on page 12)
First, by remembering creation we are remembering the creator, however we define that word. Second is the concept of humans beings created in the image of an imageless God. Third is the mitzvah of the seventh day, a Shabbat for all living things. And ultimately, we have the mitzvah of being guardians, for being put on earth to be God's partners.

But what lies ahead is a roller coaster of emotion as failure after failure to fulfill the partnership occurs. We realize that simply creating on any scale isn't enough. God's creatures have no instructions as to how to succeed as caretakers, but they discover quickly how to fail. The price paid is high.

Fortunately, we learn over time that despite our human flaws, we have the capacity to discover and accept values that separate us from the rest of creation. Our future stories, commandments and commentaries prove that to be true. By the end of our journey in Deuteronomy we have learned much, been given much, and have received a clearer picture of what our partner requires of us.

The Birth of Isaac seems more real than Creation. When Sarah gives birth in her old age, she names the baby Yitzchak which means he shall laugh or simply, “laughter.” The name certainly doesn't reflect how his life plays out. Rabbi Joseph Telushkin refers to Isaac as: "The one to whom things happen." Family rifts fill the Book of Genesis. From Cain and Abel to today's reading, through the schism between Isaac's twin sons, Jacob and Esau, until the very end of Genesis, when Joseph is sold into slavery by his brothers, no family is untouched.

Tomorrow we study the Akedah, the binding of Isaac, one of the most difficult readings in Torah. Isaac is central to both Rosh Hashanah readings yet he is a cipher. He rarely speaks but is omnipresent. The perfection created by God "in the beginning" is short-lived once humans become involved and self-protection becomes the norm.

Complicated ancient stories—but for me they both impact these holy days. Each is a powerful reminder of the strengths and weaknesses of the only creation God calls "very good." We are shown as works in progress. No one is born with a map of his/her journey. We have much to learn and much to do to fulfill our partnership and repair the world. Our ancestors are loving and hating...caring and overcome with jealousy...blindly following God's commands as well as blindly rejecting them.

At every service we are reminded that in addition to the gift of life, we have also received the gift of choice.

Choosing rightly is not instinctive. Survival again and again forces bad decisions that sometimes seem necessary and sometimes are the precursors to devastation.

Humans are simply human. We are not yet the best we can be. Torah teaches us that what we become is our own responsibility. Humans may hesitate when called upon to do something difficult. Humans can manipulate, lie, sacrifice those they love...and very selectively follow the path toward holiness. The effort to find the godliness within ourselves is a daunting task. This is the time to try...

Both portions trigger appropriate and deeper questions. Where does our godly likeness reside and how do we call on it when needed? What's our real responsibility to our unknowable partner? How can Abraham agree to banish his first born? How can Sarah ask? Why is there no punishment for these bad acts when we already know God is not afraid to punish? Generations will pass before we begin to understand judgment—of ourselves as well as others. We're still learning.

We know all too well that we are far from perfect, but we can feel right and wrong. We are able to cringe at cruelty and ask why it exists. And it can get harder...later in Genesis, reading of Jacob's being renamed Israel, we know we also may be called on to wrestle with what we may not understand.

The "why" question is not always answered. The stiff-necked people we call ancestors aren't easy. They fail often but keep going. So do we. We learn more from our failures than from our easy successes...

Return requires a place to return to, the holy place within, our personal Eden, and we will only grow into our better selves if we remember to watch where we are going. Obstacles must be seen in order to be avoided. That's how we change—and why Torah teaches, challenges, and continues to strengthen us—but only if we let it. That's why we're here today.

Be strong...make amends...open our eyes...begin again...

Shanah Tovah,
Barbara Carr

“Just to be is a blessing. Just to live is holy.”
— Abraham Joshua Heschel
Did you hear the one about the chicken and the salmon who go for a walk? I know it’s a tough visual. The chicken and salmon go for a walk, and as they walk they see a big sign outside a restaurant: “Lox & Eggs Breakfast for Charity.” The Chicken says, “Come on, let’s go in, looks like fun!” The salmon hedges and says, “I don’t know.” The chicken says, “Why, what’s holding you back? C’mon it’s for a good cause!” The salmon says, “Look: it says ‘lox & eggs.’ From you they want a contribution, from me they want commitment!”

It’s a cute joke, of course. But in a year that has seen a report by the Pew Foundation on the decrease in identification and involvement within the Jewish community, increased acts of anti-Semitism across the globe, with synagogue memberships dropping, and the exploration of new dues structures that look more like fee for service than communal commitment, the questions as to what is required of us as Jews in the 21st century loom large in my mind.

On the face of it, our Jewish inclination for pessimism and hand wringing is alive and well. Lots of organizations like to capitalize on crisis as a means to engagement. But today I need something different. As I spoke about last night, I need a return to basics. The kind of simple but meaningful way to take Torah, avodah, and gemilut chasadim—the learning, service, and acts of kindness—to the level that brings each of us more deeply into communal life. I want to feel the kind of optimism and cooperation where everyone feels their contribution is actually a kind of commitment to something bigger than themselves, rather than an extraction of themselves or motivated by victimization.

Every year I dedicate this sermon time on Rosh Hashanah to some examination of communal life, because I believe that the beginning of a new year is an opportunity to call forth our highest aspirations for the community we call home. But like the story of the chicken and the salmon, in this day and age many of us are caught on the horns of the dilemma as to what is required of us. Is a contribution enough or do I need to commit to something in order to make meaningful communal life.

I know that many Jews may not looking for greater engagement, but after 16 years as a congregational rabbi, I still believe that if you are here, guilt is NOT the driving factor, but a genuine interest in Jewish life is why you sit here instead of in your office. Which is not to denigrate those at work today, it is just to acknowledge and affirm the choice you have made in being here.

What is it that brings us through these doors each year? What compels us out of our routines, to sit together, welcome one another and a new year with ritual—old and new? It has never ceased to amaze me the shear numbers of Jews who step out of their comfort zone and into the synagogue on these days.

Last night I spoke about the way to stabilize our world is through learning, prayerful service, and caring deeply about the world around us. This morning, I would like to take that teaching and align it with a teaching of Maimonides, about what it means to be connected to another person, and from there, to understand the implications for how to build community.

It seems to me that each of us is likely in a different place from the person sitting next to us, and even if the intention for engagement is there, it may not be clear how one can move from one place to the next, and what it looks like.

Maimonides differentiates three friendship categories. Three categories of haver, which means “companion” in Hebrew.

The first category is haver le’davar, a utilitarian association that depends on reciprocal usefulness. Each partner knows what he or she is getting from the other—and it is fine. Basic needs are met in each direction and everyone is happy.

The second category is haver le’delach, someone with whom to share worries, sorrows, troubles, and also joys. We need this kind of relationship in order to lighten our load. Joys are multiplied and sorrows are divided when they are shared.

The third category is haver le’delah, a joint dedication to common goals. Both partners dream of realizing great ideals, and are prepared to act with a readiness to sacrifice for their attainment. This kind of haver is someone with whom you share a vision of what is possible in the world.

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Right now I can see your minds running, figuring out which category you are in. While Rambam might have seen them as increasing in value, before we jump on his bandwagon, I’d like to imagine that all three are important to the whole.

People move or can move from one category to the next, and our ability to see the capacity for incorporating elements of each is important to the big picture. All of us can think of those categories of companions/acquaintances in our lives, and they all have important roles.

But when we are talking about Jewish communal life, it is easy to see the attraction of the haver l’davar model as it relates to the synagogue community. “Membership” seems like it would be the same as joining a gym. In this case, you pay your dues to the synagogue, I get a salary, and you get a powerful and inspiring Rosh Hashanah sermon. Don’t we all feel good?

Yeah, not so much. I’m not saying you don’t deserve a killer sermon, but I am saying playing the numbers game isn’t very satisfying. You may wonder, “This is what I get for my money?” Or begin to tick off the ways you don’t use the synagogue, and then maybe you become the person who scribbles a note on the dues renewal form saying, “The synagogue doesn’t meet my needs anymore.”

I think all of us want more than that. And as responsible as a synagogue is to create a community you want to be a part of, each of us has a responsibility to make it that kind of community.

We want to come together in study, in prayer, in acts of loving kindness, and feel our time together is deeper than when we are apart.

So haver l’deah kicks it up a level. Lid’og in Hebrew means to be concerned about, or to worry. There’s a reason for a misheberach list, so we can ask how someone is, visit them, remember them, and share the news.

There’s a reason we put out shiva information when someone has suffered a loss, so we can show up, show concern, show love. There’s a reason we invite the entire community to b’nai mitzvah, so we can show up, celebrate, and witness our children’s coming of age. What makes that concern and care emerge at critical moments is a sense of deep connection to those around us.

Over the years as a rabbi I have been accused of “noodging” too much for people to come to services. Guilty as charged. But please understand that my “complaint” is out of genuine desire for more with you, not less. I want more intimacy, more joy, and more spiritual highs to help manage the difficult lows. I am optimistic about Jewish life when I hear of a community that’s being built on sacred relationships, sharing a vision of what is believed to be possible.

We want to come together in study, in prayer, in acts of loving kindness, and feel our time together is deeper than when we are apart.

That to me is the third Maimonidian category—haver le’deah. It isn’t just about services, of course. It’s about learning, Jewish literacy, activism and social justice. It’s about local efforts and opportunities that impact all of us somehow, and sometimes invite us to wear expressly Jewish lenses to see the world.

Fifteen years ago, Steven M. Cohen and Arnold Eisen researched American Jewish attitudes and behavior in order to understand the discovery and construction of Jewish meaning in contemporary America. The results of their study were collected into the book, The Jew Within.

The essential conviction of Cohen and Eisen was that American Jews enact and express their decisions about Judaism predominantly in the private sphere, among family, friends, reflection. The institutional arena was and sometimes still is no longer the primary site where Jews find and define who they are, and who they want to be. As a result, Cohen and Eisen describes the principle authority for contemporary American Jews as “the sovereign self.”

The “sovereign self” means that each person fashions his/her self identity by pulling together elements from Jewish, non-Jewish, and American repertoires, rather than simply operating out of the previously understood “inescapable framework of identity given at birth.”

So today some people like to meditate or do yoga, take long walks, surf, or run, which bring them to a place of spiritual connection. But when you stop to consider the value of the minyan—the prayer quorum needed for certain communal acts like reading Torah or saying mourners kaddish, our need for other haverim is palpable.

We want to come together in study, in prayer, in acts of loving kindness, and we feel our time together is deeper than when we are apart.

(continued on page 18)
If I am honest with myself, I can’t help thinking that I want people in my community to feel like the person sitting next to them is a hader le’delah, the companion on the journey who acts with kindness and compassion to those they know and those they do not; the person who is challenged by the study of Jewish texts, but wants to find more opportunities to wrestle with the text towards a blessing; those who sing out loud in services because they love the melody and feel taken somewhere when they sing it. They want to feel that from others because it inspires them to be a hader le’delah as well.

We see our actions in everyday life as reflective of the greater commitment we have made to be relationship with one another. You are or become a hader le’dea when you—we—I understand the nature of covenant and relationship. How we can be a small but real community of meaning and engagement, and we feel that we are more mighty than if we added 100 more member families, although that would be nice too.

So during Sukkot we are going to have three community conversations—all the same topic—just in different locations. The purpose is to help us examine together what brings each of us through the doors of Congregation Dor Hadash? What do you need to move from one category of involvement to another—from transactional to relational—if that is what you seek.

What are the kinds of experiences you need that would generate enough surprise and delight inside, to say this is working for me!

Jewish communal life can offer us a shelter against the perfect storm that is the intersection of hyper-individualism and challenging economics. We can bemoan what is broken or we can do something. We actually can have a vision of a communal future that is inspiring and engaging.

So the next time you make that quintessential Jewish breakfast of lox and eggs, maybe with a bagel and shmeer, you’ll remember what contributions you have made to Jewish life, and what commitments you are inspired to take on for the future.

We want to come together in study, in prayer, in acts of loving kindness, and feel our time together is deeper than when we are apart.

Od lo avdah tikvatenu. We have not yet lost hope in our ability to see commitment and engagement as nourishing and nurturing to the Jew within each of us.

This is truly what it means to belong to the Jewish people.

Shanah Tovah u’metukah—May the coming year be sweet and may be inspired to keep coming back to the Jewish communal table for more.

—Rabbi Yael Ridberg

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**Dear Members:**

As we have recently marked the one year anniversary since moving to our two campus model of congregational life, we thought we would take this opportunity to bring our community together in conversation about what is working and what we can do to enhance our experience. We invite you to join us at one of these meetings, as the content will be the same at each one. Please complete the Doodle poll <http://doodle.com/ze77rk56vk8wehvs> to let us know when you will join us.

When we were exploring moving from Ronson Ct., the community meetings were essential in understanding our connections to one another and our synagogue community. We hope you will join us once again for these important conversations.

Please RSVP by October 6, and you will receive the address of the the host.

L’shalom,

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**UPCOMING TOWN HALL COMMUNITY MEETINGS**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Host</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, October 9</td>
<td>7:00 pm – 8:30 pm</td>
<td>College Area</td>
<td>Home of David Kamper/Joanna Brooks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, October 12</td>
<td>9:30 am – 11:00 am</td>
<td>Carmel Valley</td>
<td>San Diego Jewish Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, October 14</td>
<td>7:00 pm – 8:30 pm</td>
<td>University City</td>
<td>Home of Ros Goldstein and Bob Siegel</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
DONATIONS

Dor Hadash has many opportunities for you to put your money where your heart is. These funds supplement items in the annual budget. Donating is easy. Donate online, send in your check or call the office. Congregation Dor Hadash gratefully acknowledges your generous donations.

Bikkur Holim: To support people in crisis.
Children's Education Fund: For support of Gesher School.
Endowment Fund: Financial investment for the future of Dor Hadash.
General Fund: For miscellaneous items approved by the Board.
Gesher School Supplemental Fund (Lily Goldstein Memorial Educator Fund): To provide additional funds to support Gesher School expenditures not covered by the budget.
Mishkan Fund: For capital improvements to the synagogue.
Madrigim Fund: To support the teen team assisting the Gesher School.
Music Fund: To benefit the musical enrichment of Dor Hadash.
Prayer Book Fund: To repair and replace siddurim (prayer books).
Rabbi’s Discretionary Fund: For expenditures the Rabbi deems necessary and appropriate.
Scholar-In-Residence Fund: To cover the costs associated with hosting a scholar-in-residence each year.
Scholarship Funds (Vicki Selzer Memorial Education Fund and Joshua Adam Flores-Wolfert Fund): Gesher School scholarships for those in need.

Thank You

Look for September and October acknowledgments in the November issue of Ha Kesher.

Learn what’s going on throughout the Jewish Reconstructionist community.
Go to: http://jewishrecon.org

Do you have experience working on websites? If you have experience with any CMS and would like to help re-imagine and update Dor Hadash’s website, please contact Susan Levine.
SEPTEMBER

John Evans 10/2
Clay Libanoff 10/2
Elizabeth Freedman 10/3
Mark Nussbaum 10/4
Rabbi Yael Ridberg 10/6
Julie Davidson 10/10
Jeffree Itrich 10/11
Thomas Jablecki 10/12 9th
Robin Whitman 10/12
Ella Kamper 10/13 11th
Eileen Barron 10/15
Jay Silverman 10/15
Orion Schultz 10/20 6th
Marlene Bellamy 10/22
Barbara Chancy 10/22
Jonathan Slonim 10/22
Michael Carr 10/25
Samuel Chessler 10/25 15th
Kevin Delgado 10/28
Leon Natker 10/28
Susan Bisom-Rapp 10/29

REBECCA LEWISON AND ROBERT GERMAN 10/5 12th
ADAM AND ROBIN WHITMAN 10/6 13th
ANDREA GLASSER AND ELLIOT WEINSTEIN 10/12 34th
JAMIE MERONOFF AND LILIAN BARTLETT 10/12 2nd
MARLENE ZAGON AND MORT TUCHIN 10/18 16th
STEVEN AND NANCY DEUTCH 10/20 35th
BARBARA BRAASCH AND SHARON SNYDER 10/22 9th

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MARLENE ZAGON AND MORT TUCHIN 10/18 16th
STEVEN AND NANCY DEUTCH 10/20 35th
BARBARA BRAASCH AND SHARON SNYDER 10/22 9th

MI SHEBEIRAH

Miriam Abrams Serena Nnambi
Barbara Booth Barbara Rose
Tamar Booth Marilyn Scheininger
Mike Bryant Shalva Schneider
Hana bat Shayna Jill Schwartz
Aaron Harel James Sistek
Sybil Ingber Muriel Sobelman-Jencks
Dean Karp Kristina Teslik
Raisa Hana Karp Ellen Wasserman
Char Katz Ilene Wasserman
Terry Keister Virginia Welch
Barbara Maitles Wes Wessel
Betty Matteson
Charles Morris

MAKE A DIFFERENCE. GET INVOLVED.
JOIN A DOR HADASH COMMITTEE.
As long as we live, they too will live for they are now a part of us, as we remember them.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>In remembrance of</th>
<th>Remembered by</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
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<tr>
<td>Vivien Truax</td>
<td>Clay Libanoff</td>
<td>Clay's mother</td>
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<tr>
<td>Betty Herscovitz</td>
<td>Dr. Dennis D. Cook and DeDe Herst</td>
<td>DeDe's mother</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maurice Libanoff</td>
<td>Clay Libanoff</td>
<td>Clay's grandfather</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hyman Weinstein</td>
<td>Andrea Glasser and Elliot Weinstein</td>
<td>Elliot's father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann Sultan</td>
<td>Rabbi Yaffa-Shira Sultan</td>
<td>Yaffa-Shira's mother</td>
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<tr>
<td>Glenda Walker</td>
<td>Alex Green and Genell Greenberg</td>
<td>Genell's sister</td>
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<tr>
<td>Esther Frank</td>
<td>Ethel Slayen</td>
<td>Ethel's mother</td>
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<td>Alexis and Scott Pearce</td>
<td>Alexis' grandmother</td>
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<td>Marlene Bellamy and Don Maescher</td>
<td>Marlene's father</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alex Pincus</td>
<td>Richard and Arlene Pincus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donald Kirschenbaum</td>
<td>Sheila Kirschenbaum</td>
<td>Sheila's father</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evelyn Shields</td>
<td>Barbara and Michael Carr</td>
<td>Barbara's aunt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paul H. Keister</td>
<td>Terry Hall Keister</td>
<td>Terry's aunt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martin Kinsler</td>
<td>Judy Hante and Steve Forney</td>
<td>Judy's uncle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sydney Moss</td>
<td>Richard Warburton and Bleema Moss</td>
<td>Bleema's father</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emanuel Zagon</td>
<td>Marlene Zagon and Mort Tuchin</td>
<td>Marlene's father</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dorothy Attiyeh</td>
<td>Jessica Attiyeh</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Ellen Margolis and Larry Cahn</td>
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<td>Deborah and Richard Kremsdorf</td>
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<td>Jack Scheininger</td>
<td>Marilyn Scheininger</td>
<td>Marilyn's grandfather</td>
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