



Rosh Hashanah 5786/2025

Temple Rodef Shalom – Alternative Services

Shanah Tova. Happy New Year. But what does **Rosh Hashanah** really mean? We use it to mean new year though *shanah* and *rosh* have other meanings. How might these additional translations impact the way you think about these words?

ראש **noun**: head, beginning of, master, chief, captain

שנה **noun**: year

לשנות **verb**: change, repeat, do again

Traditionally, the first day of Rosh Hashanah is considered *yom ha'din* (a day of judgment), and a mystical teaching is that the second day of Rosh Hashanah is *yom ha'rachamim* (a day of mercy). In this season of *teshuva* – of returning and reflection – it's important to think about both the good things that we do that we want to repeat as well as the things that we want to change and improve in our lives.

Most of our High Holiday liturgy is recited communally, in the first-person plural. Now is your chance to reflect personally on what you want to do this year.

How will you be the master of your changes and your repeats in the New Year?

If you are thinking about this at home and have a pen and paper, I invite you now to make a list with two columns– what are the things you want to change this year? What are the things you want to keep doing, that you want



to repeat. Pick things in both columns that feel manageable, attainable, reasonable.

If you're here at services, identify just one item from each column and think about. What conditions or support do you need to ensure you can achieve your goal this year? Who can you ask to help keep you accountable?

When you're ready, you can make your way to one of the 4 stations set up in the room – each station has a large bowl of water, tissue paper coffee filters, and markers. Write down one item you want to change or repeat – or an intention you have for this Rosh HaShanah.

Once you've written it down, place it in the water and let it dissolve. As it dissolves, take a deep breath and let the intention flow, and may it be so.