

## **Rosh Hashanah Remarks**

**Emily Bessey**

Lately I have been thinking a lot about the idea of community and how our personal spheres can create a sort of safety net around us. It was interesting that at the same time I've been contemplating this, Rabbi Asch wrote about this exact same thing in the latest Temple Beth El Newsletter. She was describing how she appreciates that there are different communities within our larger TBE Community- those who are regulars at Torah Study, and those who are a consistent presence at Fiber Arts or post carding parties or those who attend services, dare I say, religiously. And while there is plenty of overlap between the mini communities, nothing brings the larger TBE community together like the High Holidays. She mentioned that this is what she especially loves about this time of year- seeing our community come together.

My family moved to Maine in 2012 from Austin, Texas. My husband grew up in Waterville and when we were trying to decide which town to move to, I had some requirements. If I was going to move all the way up to the frozen North, there had to be a decent sushi restaurant, a yoga studio, and a synagogue. I was happy to discover Hallowell, and it checked all the boxes. When I stipulated that we needed to be near a synagogue, it wasn't because I am particularly religious. It was because I knew, from past experiences, that a synagogue would be a hub of good people, meaningful gatherings, and of course, good food. All of which has proven to be true. But those factors aside, as it turned out, having TBE close by provided so much more. In 2012, our family learned that life is unpredictable and sometimes quite hard. Sometimes we need a community to rally around us. To lift us up. To provide a warm meal or even just a loving hug. Soon after we moved to Maine, we found ourselves needing the acts of loving kindness that a community provides. And having served on the board for somewhere close to 10 years, I have seen again and again the power of our little (but growing) community provide those loving acts to other members of our community. Because that is the thing about being in relationship with others- life is unpredictable and we all know that there are highs and lows. Sometimes everything seems manageable and is going along fine, and we have the capacity to show up for others. Other times, we are the ones in need of the extra support.

Being part of a community is an important thing. Community members show up for each other. We notice when someone has been gone for a bit and can use a check in. Communities can provide wraparound care when life hits you hard, or even just a

recommendation for a good auto repair shop. I have thought on more than one occasion- what would I do without the TBE community? It has grown to be a place where my children have developed their identities as Jews. Where I can stretch my social justice legs and where my non-Jewish husband can feel comfortable celebrating holidays with his Jewish family. I have met people who have shown up time and time again with loving gestures and over the years you all have started to feel like family. TBE provides a sense of community beyond what I was hoping for back in 2012 when I thought it just checked a box. I look forward to celebrating the High Holidays with my community over the next few weeks. L'Shana Tovah.