

Greetings for the New Year

Rosh HaShanah, the Jewish New Year, is a time dedicated to two themes: rejoicing at the creation of the universe, on the one hand, and on the other hand, serious reflection on how we may have missed the mark and gone astray from our own highest vision of who we really are. The Jewish liturgy asks us to imagine the entire world united in one union, and the purpose of that grand union is to work together to create the kind of loving, just, and peaceful world that God calls for.

In order to be able to make this a better world we need to focus on where we have gone astray. The Jewish tradition tells us to dedicate ten full days to working through, exploring, and figuring out ways to change all the ways that we've strayed.

The self-examination is not meant to be only personal--it is also meant to be a moment for serious critique of all our social, economic and political institutions. Nothing should be taken for granted, and nothing should be seen as fixed. The central message of High Holidays is that the world and every aspect of it can be radically healed and transformed. At this moment many people feel rather depressed - they see the world filled with violence and too many people accepting that violence as "necessary" or "the best path". We are surrounded by people not caring enough to really find out what is happening, allowing themselves to be manipulated by half-truths that the media conveys without critical reflection.

The message of Rosh Hashanah is a message of hope--we can change ourselves and our world, history is not over, people can go very far away from their own highest truths, and still return to their highest self. In fact, the word that gets translated as "repentance" in English is the word "teshuva" which comes from the Hebrew root that means returning. This hope is not just an illusion--it is a continual and permanent possibility, and it can become a reality.

Greetings for a wonderful New Year! May this year 5769 be for all of us a year in which the world moves closer to peace, justice, ecological sanity, and generosity. May you be blessed with joy, fulfillment, health and success on both the material and in the spiritual plane.

L'Shana Tova Tikatevu Ve Techatemoo
May we be inscribed in the book of good life

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rabbi Debora Kohn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Rabbi" written in a smaller, more upright script than the last name "Kohn".

Rabbi Debora Kohn