

RABBI'S MESSAGE

What's New? – 2022!

When the clock turns from 11:59 to midnight on December 31, what changes? We get used to writing a different date, and it is a “New Year;” but what is really different from one minute to the next? A whole year doesn't change in a minute, just how we've counted it.

Most changes are gradual. You're not a whole year older the day after your birthday; you're one day older. When a 12- or 13-year-old becomes bar or bat mitzvah, they have not automatically transformed; they've combined years of learning into a ceremonial celebration. High school and college graduates are not more intelligent after graduation day just because they have a diploma in hand; their years of learning blend into another step in their educational and professional development. Each of these changes involves a gradual growing into the NOW: that present moment that will be a bit different very soon.

Some sudden events require actions that force us to facilitate new ways of living. Hurricane Harvey was a good example. People had to react to an unexpected event and make immediate changes. But after the event, they put together plans to make the next step manageable. When the Holy Temple was destroyed in Jerusalem, the next generations figured out new ways to worship. Hundreds of years later, Judaism is still evolving, as we continue to find meaningful ways to worship.

While change may often be slowly incremental, the ways we acknowledge those changes are significant. Calendar dates and ceremonies are important to remind us that another year has passed, we've achieved another accomplishment and, hopefully, our connections to people, community, and our own sense of wellbeing, are constantly deepening. This year, we'll all have another birthday, another Rosh Hashana, another Pesach. Some of us will see milestones for ourselves or our loved ones, like weddings, graduations, job changes or retirement. And of course, with all the celebrations, some of us will experience difficult times, and will need the caring support of a loving community.

As we approach another New Year, let's look at where we've been and where we're going. We'll embrace some of the changes, and resist others, as we continue to learn, grow and love together.

L'shalom,

Rabbi Dan Gordon