

Fitting Judaism Into A Joyful Place

I know that many of you love the extra spiritual focus of the High Holiday season, and I am looking forward to celebrating with you.

I also know many of you come to the High Holiday services because of tradition, or to honor your loved ones – but that the imagery and the length of the services are so off-putting that they leave you turned off from attending at any other point during the year.

I get it. The traditional Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur imagery of a God or universe that weighs, judges and punishes can be frightening or alienating as much as it can inspire humility or awe.

These holidays fulfill a very particular function of the year cycle. They are the time of year for sorting through cosmic anxiety, self-reflection, repentance, forgiveness: work. But that's only one part of the Jewish year.

That being the case, I want to make a radical proposition: If you really hate Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur, try another holiday. Come on Sukkot or Simchat Torah instead. Or rather, come to part of the High Holiday services, leave once it feels “too much” – and *then* come on Sukkot or Simchat Torah.

I know that this may sound sacrilegious but bear with me. We all make choices about what we fit into our lives. As your rabbi, I would love for Judaism to pervade your life on a weekly and even daily basis. But if that is not a realistic relationship with Jewish practice for you, **I encourage you to fit Judaism into a joyful place, instead of a place that leaves you associating Judaism with misery all year.**

Try sitting in a Sukkah under the stars, waving lulav and etrog, singing the psalms of Hallel and connecting with the sky and the earth, Jewishly. Or come dance with the Torah, see it unfurled, and feel yourself part of a history of transmission of Torah as you watch children dancing.

And for those of you who do choose the soul journey of the High Holidays, I look forward to sharing that journey with you.