



Congregation Beit Tikvah

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A MESSAGE FROM RABBI HEIFETZ

Dear Beit Tikvah Friends and Guests,

I'm looking forward to celebrating the Jewish New Year of 5782 with you. I'm delighted that we will be able to gather in person again for our services at the Roland Park Community Center, barring any unforeseen changes.

As I write this message, the world seems to be 'opening up' after nearly 1.5 years of severe disruption by the COVID pandemic. I hope this progress continues, and gives each of us the opportunity to resume communal and family gatherings, cultural events, travel, work, school and other activities.

However, the *opportunity* to return to 'life as normal' does not obligate any of us to resume our former activities. Just because we *can* resume our former schedules doesn't mean we *must or should* do so.

I believe this High Holy Day season gives us an important chance to evaluate each part of our pre-pandemic lives, to decide deliberately if and how we will resume. Will we again commute to work as before? Might we perhaps adjust our volunteer and work obligations, our homes, family networks, expenses, and schedules for less stress than before and more fulfillment?

This opportunity to reevaluate and adjust coincides with the start of the *Shmitah*, or the sabbatical year. During the *Shmitah*, which occurs every seventh year, the Torah commanded our biblical Israelite ancestors to cease their usual agricultural work for a whole year, to let the earth rest and to allow for some socio-economic equalization in society. The upcoming *Shmitah* year thus encourages us to slow down and stop, like our biblical ancestors did. We shouldn't rush to mindlessly resume all parts of our pre-pandemic lives, but rather we should patiently and carefully evaluate and adjust our lives as needed.

I look forward to seeing you in person, and to a holiday season of fruitful re-evaluation at this critical juncture.

Best wishes for a sweet New Year of 5782,

Rabbi Doug Heifetz