

RH eve:

The day is short, the task is great, the workers are lazy, the wages are rewarding and the Head of the House is pressing

Rabbi Tarfon's message from nearly 2000 years ago is clear and simple – let's get to work! He tells us just what we may be better at telling others than listening to ourselves: skip the excuses and live life the way that God has intended. But of course, the struggle is to know which task to tackle first, how best to use our time, and how to maintain our enthusiasm and energy. Finding a sense of mission, meaning for our lives is no small challenge. The Holy Days provide us the privilege of assessment – what are and should be the focus of our lives and how do we keep ourselves on track so that we may fulfill the blessings that are ours alone to contribute. But it need not always be so difficult – right here in our synagogue, right now before, during, and after services, we have the opportunity to begin. Throughout the Holy Day season you will notice that our foyer is tremendously crowded – and not just with people trying to get seats in the good chairs! Instead it is crowded with invitations to be engaged in our community, to choose right here, right now a new or another way to fulfill our congregational mission. It is my prayer that every person attending worship here will

demonstrate that prayer is more than mere words, it is action. The volunteer opportunities that are listed on these boards provide us with ways to be more fully engaged in our community. So, as NIKE says: just do it – sign up in front of your children and teach them by your good example, sign up in front of your friends and help them find the inspiration to make a new commitment, sign up in this holy place with a sense of God’s presence right alongside you. Do it because you feel a sense of guilt or obligation or joy or renewal – it doesn’t truly matter the reason that you begin. It matters that you do it. Our congregational expectation is one new commitment for every congregant – so we will ensure that our words become deeds. Signing up to serve the congregation is a way of saying thank you to God for this new year and an immediate way to begin the New Year with meaning.

Do you remember when you were first motivated to sign up for something? A moment in your life when the path was so very clear, that you knew exactly the next step to take? It may have given you direction for a day or for years of your life. Or maybe you have not felt such a moment. And that is why we are here each year – to remember those encounters, to search for new direction, to recognize the Divine invitation to become engaged in life.

Each of us as clergy found that experience of engagement in the Jewish world through our own such moments. For me, I remember watching as my father built the Sisterhood gift shop at the congregation of my childhood. I spent weekends with him as he fashioned the shelves and the cupboards and put up the paneling for the walls. And yes, he worked on Shabbat afternoon because he saw no difference between sharing with the congregation through his talents in wood and sharing with the congregation his presence in prayer. And then, after he had lovingly given of his time and his resources to build the gift shop, the chair of the religious school committee realized that he was there and that he still had some wood left and so he was recruited, lassoed, engaged to build the shelves in several of the school classrooms as well. And I saw clearly – without a prayerbook, without Hebrew, without a formal lesson, that Torah says to give of oneself to the community – from the best that one has with the greatest joy that one has. And I understood that it was my job to find a way to be builder in the Jewish community as well.