This year, the 1st of the month of Elul, the Hebrew month before Rosh Hashanah, coincides with Sept. 1st. This is the beginning of the season of *teshuvah*, repentance. Yom Kippur is the day when we are forgiven; the spiritual work to get there begins 40 days earlier.

Traditional practices for Elul include sounding the shofar every weekday and saying Psalm 27 (we sing selections from this psalm in our own services). Most important, we focus on personal *teshuvah*.

This is hard work! Maimonides’ medieval code, the *Mishneh Torah,* has an entire book on how to do *teshuvah*. It involves acknowledging how one has caused hurt, changing behavior, asking for forgiveness, forgiving each other and judging each other in a more charitable light. All of these things take work, and all of these things are necessary for healthy community.

Now, at the beginning of Elul, I would like to do *teshuvah* with you, my community. As your rabbi, I often struggle to balance the big picture needs of the community and my obligations to each individual among you. My attention is sometimes divided. As much as I try to be here for each and everyone of you, I know there are sometimes lapses.

For my lapses in attention; when I didn’t notice you were there, when I have failed to acknowledge your presence; I apologize and ask your forgiveness. For my lapses in compassion; when I spoke to you brusquely when you just needed to be heard; I apologize and ask your forgiveness. For my lapses in appreciation; when I have failed to express gratitude for your contributions, I apologize and ask your forgiveness. For any ways I don’t know that I have hurt you; I ask you to tell me so that I can do the work of *teshuvah* and earn your forgiveness.

I am grateful for the compassion you have shown me as I have been on partial leave, and especially for your understanding of the additional new demands on my attention! Please know that being your rabbi is a privilege for which I express gratitude daily. (Really, when my family shares gratitudes before bedtime each evening, I always talk about this amazingly supportive community). I appreciate the contributions each of you make, and I look forward to connecting with you and continuing to build community with you in this season and beyond.