

Summer is such a glorious time in our region. The hot, late sunsets beckon us to picnics at rivers and reservoirs. My children go almost feral with the wealth of fruit available for the picking in the alleys. There is an abundance: of fresh produce, of sunshine, of hours of daylight.

Increasingly, summer is also a time of anxiety, a time when we are aware that fire might destroy everything. We wonder whether shifts in the wind will cause wildfires to rip through and destroy places we love, or even just to cause smoke to hang heavy over this valley, choking us and forcing us indoors.

Our ancestors were no strangers to this combination of anxiety and abundance. Living in a land of mountains and valleys, near a western coast facing the Mediterranean Sea, they too were subject to seasonal rainfall. They too understood both the potential danger and the potential blessing of the dry months. The prayer of the High Priest every Yom Kippur included request that the coming year be both hot and rainy.

In our cosmic year cycle, summer brings the Three Weeks, a time in which the mourning for most of the famous Biblical and Rabbinic calamities that befell our people are condensed into an intensive period of mourning, bookended by two fast days. With the close of the second of those days, Tisha B'Av, we celebrate the waxing moon and the potential for rebirth, and embrace the joy that comes when we are willing to fully face our fear and sadness. Tisha B'Av is followed, less than a week later, by Tu B'Av, an ancient holiday associated with love and joy, of which the Talmud says, "There were no more joyful days in Israel than Yom Kippur and Tu b'Av." This quote hints that the both the mourning and the celebration point us toward the ultimate renewal that is possible in the season of *teshuvah*, when we release the wounds of the past year and cleanse ourselves to greet whatever is coming.

This season in our community, we have opportunities to learn and grieve, as well as to sing and celebrate together. As you enjoy the abundance of summer and try to stay safe, I invite you make a little time for Torah, for lamenting, and for joyful song and gathering together.