

Barbara Aloni
December, 2020

In a session we attended for the SPARK Fellowship to Ignite Innovation, Rabbi Elan Babchuck reminded us that after the Jews left Egypt and crossed the Red Sea, Miriam pulled out her tambourine and led them in song and dance. The lesson? Always pack your tambourine.

(You can watch Elan's talk [here](#).)

I have been thinking a lot about that lesson. These past months have been difficult, and as the days grow shorter and winter approaches, we face challenging months ahead. Yet throughout this, I am uplifted by our BAS community because we packed our tambourine for this COVID journey. We have not yet reached the other side to sing and rejoice, but our metaphorical tambourine brings us inspiration and hope. It's a keepsake that reminds us of who we are and where we came from as we cross the sea in this virtual world without our physical building to ground us. As we learn and grow on this journey, perhaps we will add a new song to enhance our celebration when we arrive to the other side. I see this inspiration, grounding and learning in so much of what we have done and continue to do throughout this pandemic.

Our virtual High Holy Days services were inspired by our in-person services, maintaining familiarity in a time of change. That moment of standing under the tent together for the final shofar during Ne'ilah simply can't be recreated in Zoom. However, we learned that over Zoom we all have a front row seat to clearly see who is leading us in prayer, chanting Torah and Haftarah or delivering the D'var Torah, creating a more focused and meaningful experience for some.

Our Virtual Craft Show maintained the essence of what has made our physical show unique while innovating and expanding its scope and reach. I am amazed by how our dedicated and creative group of congregants went from an idea several months ago to launching an e-commerce website with virtual live events. I have attended the physical Craft Show for many years, browsing the booths and admiring the work of the artists who are participating in our virtual show. The virtual show gave me the opportunity to visit with the artists, creating a new connection and a greater understanding and appreciation of their work. One artist shared that the virtual show will complement the physical show. My neighbor who visited the online show said, "we all need some inspiration now."

Our Social Action and Tikkun Olam Chevras have merged, forming the Tikkun Olam/Social Action Chevra. They will continue to pursue activities in three important ways -- education, advocacy and hands-on service. They inspire us and challenge us to repair the world by focusing on immigration and social justice issues and by making it possible for us to serve our larger community in this time of tremendous need. When we couldn't hand out bags for food donations in our tent, they collected food as part of our High Holy Days gift and giving event. When we couldn't donate food to the homeless shelter for Thanksgiving, they arranged for us to donate food to Calvary Baptist Church. For Christmas, rather than food donations, they organized a toy drive for the families at the Coachman. Our value of helping those in need remains, and we forged new connections.

As we face this winter, let's remember how wonderful it will be when we reach the other side. Don't forget - we packed our tambourine.