

“And you shall love the Lord your G-d with all your heart, with all your might, and with all your soul....”

The Ritual Committee is proposing a new practice for all members of Congregation Har Shalom to help us grow in our Judaism. We invite each member to annually make a sacred vow to G-d about the actions s/he commits to take in any of the areas the Rabbis taught that the world rests on: **Torah** (study/learning), **Avodah** (worship and prayer), and **Gemilut Chasadim** (mitzvot).

We will suggest options in a list that will be sent out at membership renewal time, along with a reminder of what the vow is about. We are not concerned with what each member's vow is, will not ask the content of the vow, and we will NOT monitor the completion of the vow, which is between the member and HaShem. At Kol Nidre, members can take stock of how they have done in completing their vows and decide what action to take in the coming year.

This idea is guided by Rabbi Michael's Goldberg's book titled Why Should Jews Survive? Rabbi Goldberg states that the CONVENANT between G-d and the People of Israel made at Sinai is what makes us different from other people. *“Now therefore if ye will harken unto My voice indeed and keep my covenant, then ye shall be Mine own treasure from among all peoples: for all the earth is Mine and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of Priests and a holy nation.”* (Exodus 19:4). The people of Israel are to be a “light unto the nations and a blessing to all humanity.”

Our purpose is to stand witness to the existence of G-d, to G-d's presence in the world, and to G-d's faithfulness in upholding the Covenant. The sacred vow is an opportunity for the members of Har Shalom to do just that: ask themselves how they can best serve G-d, be part of the light unto the nations, and be a blessing to humanity.

Suggestions for the sacred vow

This list is by no means exhaustive; just a starting point to generate ideas.

Torah:

- ❖ study parsha either at home or in a group;
- ❖ study other writings/teachings;
- ❖ attend Torah study group;
- ❖ teach your children – or be part of teaching other children – about Jewish practice, history, literature, culture;
- ❖ become part on an ongoing study group, either here or on-line;
- ❖ volunteer to help teach adults in the community.

Avodah:

- ❖ attend services ____ number of times per year;
- ❖ choose one, or several, prayers to study, learn, and practice;
- ❖ attend meditation group, or start individual meditation/contemplative practice;
- ❖ take on a Shabbat practice – light candles, change relationship to work and/or money handling on Shabbat;
- ❖ lead a service, or a part of a service;
- ❖ commit to some aspect of keeping kosher;
- ❖ commit to reciting the Shema morning and evening.

Mitzvot:

- ❖ volunteer for a committee at Har Shalom;
- ❖ perform some other work for the congregation on a regular basis: calling people, providing oneg, creating and/or editing the newsletter, etc.;
- ❖ commit to giving tzedakah regularly;
- ❖ affix a mezuzah on the doorposts of your house;
- ❖ buy or make a tallit;
- ❖ create and/or help others create other Jewish ritual items (spice boxes, candles, etc.);
- ❖ perform some service to the larger community – and consider making that opportunity available for Har Shalom members to join you;
- ❖ help create a burial society or a loan society within Har Shalom.