



You Turn Me Right Round

By Pam Morris, Early Learning Center director

I begin with a public service announcement that I make with glee. I found kosher pizza dough at Trader Joes. No royalties are received for the product placement!

Last year, I spoke with a colleague about Mercury being in retrograde. She said it was a time when the planets almost seem to stop and allow for reflection. I am not well versed in astrology or the planets. I know that at one time I was a Gemini, which seemed to fit my personality as I have the uncanny ability to see both sides of an argument at the same time. Often this makes me appear wishy-washy; not able to settle on an opinion. However, I truly believe that it is a benefit because while I may not agree with the argument being put forward, I do understand where the deliverer is coming from.

But she also said this is a time to reflect. To stop and make plans. And that did resonate with me as this period between Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur is known as the 10 days of repentance. It is a time for reflection. To ask for forgiveness from those we have wronged. It is a time to truly look at what you have done over the past year and see where you made a misstep and ultimately where you can strive to do better in the future.

Do you remember that song with the lyrics, “You spin me right round, baby... like a record”? No need to listen to the lyrics. It just popped into my head when I was thinking about *teshuva*, return.

This time of the year in Judaism is all about turning it around; returning and creating a clean slate. I spent a little of the morning with the ELC, talking about the “oopses,” the mistakes that we make and how we can move forward from these missteps.

We did *Tashlich*, the service where we cast our mistakes into a body of water with fish and say we are sorry for what we have done. As the children and I observed, there is no body of water with fish in it at the JCC. We didn't take a field trip but we did use an idea from PJLibrary.org. The children drew pictures using chalk on the pavers on the playground. Then we washed them away with a little water. Voila! A clean slate. This was a nice, visual way for the children to see how you can turn around your actions, return to making good choices. I encourage you all to try it at home. Many of the children began to grasp the concept of this clean slate and what can we do better.

As part of Rosh Hashanah, adults also say *Tashlich* enumerating the missteps that were made. As I mentioned, it is traditional to go to a body of water where there are living fish and take bread crumbs and throw a piece in for each thing you regret. I am sorry for not being as patient with my children. I am sorry for being too judgmental of my spouse. I am sorry for the parents I wasn't able to accommodate. I am sorry for not being as supportive of my teachers. My family and I did this on Sunday afternoon. We have lakes in our community so it was a short walk to make amends. Let me just say, I had a lot of pieces of bread thrown into the lake!

And as I threw in each piece, recognizing my shortcomings, I thought about how I can make it better in the new year. How can I be a better listener? What can I do to be more supportive of those around me? While listing each "oops" is important, it really is the focus on the fixing of those "oopses" that matter most.

Because, I know that I will have missteps this year. And I can forgive myself for that. But where I cast my focus is on how I can make a few less, catch them sooner so I can fix them sooner, listen more, talk less, support more often, just in general be a better me.

The big sounds of the shofar wake us up. They are telling us now is the time to focus on how we can be a better version of ourselves. Not be like the person next to us. That isn't the point. It's incumbent upon us to reach deep down, focus on who we are and how we can let ourselves be better. This is the time to turn it around, to return to the way we should do things. To begin with a clean slate.

Wishing you all a *gmar chatima tova*: According to Chabad.org, it translates as, "a good final sealing," in the Book of Life, in which we are inscribed on Rosh Hashanah and sealed on Yom Kippur. It is written in Hebrew as גמר חתימה טובה.