

A message from the Rabbi (November 2016)

As you know this High Holy Day season presented unexpected challenges to many of us just as we were trying to get ready to welcome 5777. As the period of *Aseret Yemei Teshuva* (the 10 Days of Repentance) was drawing to a close and Yom Kippur was right around the corner, we lost power at the synagogue and many of us lost power in our own houses.

We were not immune. Everyone was on our toes, even my husband who was nursing a bad knee injury. I always appreciated a light gentle rain, especially after living in England for many years. But the recent storm had the snarl of a heavyweight contender. Our house was battered and flooded by the heavy rains and strong winds that accompanied Hurricane Matthew. Then lights out for everyone in the area.

Thankfully we were in one piece, unfortunately the house wasn't. The rains had punctured the roof in several areas. We attempted to put a little order where there wasn't any and tried to get on with our daily activities as if nothing had happened, even though our ceiling had collapsed and parts of the house were uninhabitable. We gathered our bedding and huddled in one of the least vulnerable rooms in our home.

Throughout those challenging times, the congregation was very supportive. Many of you reached out to us with much care and concern. Some even offered their house. Your support was so heartwarming. We cannot thank you enough for all your invaluable care and concern.

Tragically, areas such as Haiti, Florida and the Carolinas, were really roughed up by the hurricane. Many people's homes and lives were destroyed. Our hearts go out to all those who lost loved ones to this natural catastrophe. Let us help the victims to the best of our abilities. That is what community is all about.

As Thanksgiving is drawing near, those of us who have been spared from Matthew have so much to be thankful for – a roof over our heads, the warmth in our lives and a very special congregation whose friendship we are blessed with. We may not have any control over the weather, but we can support one another and make our bond a strong and everlasting refuge. As we proclaim in our Shabbat worship, *'Let there be love and understanding among us. Let peace and friendship be our shelter from life's storms.'*

With gratitude and best wishes to you all for a Happy Thanksgiving,  
Rabbi Séverine Sokol

