

**The Shofar**

Newsletter of Kol Hadash  
Humanistic Congregation

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*If you would like to contribute materials to the Shofar, please contact Editor Mark Friedman (shofar@KolHadash.com). The Shofar is mailed to Kol Hadash members and is posted on our website (www.KolHadash.com) during the last week of each calendar month. You can always find our events calendar on our website as well.*

*Kol Hadash members also receive a weekly e-mail with details of upcoming events and other Kol Hadash news. If you are not receiving the weekly e-mail and would like to be added to the list, please contact us at info@KolHadash.com.*

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**Shalom from Rabbi Chalom**

**Much Better Than Nothing**

*by Rabbi Adam Chalom  
(rabbichalom@KolHadash.com)*

As I mentioned at Yom Kippur, too many rabbis spend the High Holidays railing at those in attendance about those who are not there. Or they complain that those in attendance are ONLY there that time of year and no other. In

other words, they complain about people not showing up, then they complain when people DO show up about not showing up MORE.

We need to consider things in the opposite direction—we are thrilled that people join us to celebrate the High Holidays, and we find it far more effective and appropriate to encourage them to return rather than to berate them. Because they didn't have to be with us and pay for the privilege—they could easily have been nowhere. So you start by thanking the people who ARE there for choosing to be there.

Over the course of our five adult services (Rosh Hashana evening and morning, Yom Kippur evening, morning and memorial), we “serve” some 1,100 participants, or an average of more than 200 per event. (Thank you to David Hirsch for our attendance figures—a choir seat is a good counting perch!) I suspect that many of our attendees would not be celebrating if not for us. Some may grudgingly concede that attending Humanistic High Holidays is better than nothing. Our job is to convince those who have ALREADY chosen nothing that we are *much better than nothing*.

“None of the above” is an option in American Judaism, as it always has been. Some make that an active choice, creating their own intentional community around family Jewish activities and a circle of close friends, educating children and celebrating holidays without synagogue membership. Many more have drifted into “nothing,” leaving behind rituals and practices in which they find little personal meaning but not looking for anything else. Perhaps they have not found an appropriate Judaism for their family (with both spouses providing input), or perhaps it's just not high on their priority list.

Our Marketing and Membership Committees have been considering the submissions to our recent “Can you say Kol Hadash

in 10 words or less” contest, but I will confess that one of my favorites is my own: “Kol Hadash is better than nothing.” Better than nothing? Who advertises themselves in this way? When you consider that “nothing” is an option, we are so much better, so much more rewarding and satisfying and meaningful than choosing nothing and sitting home alone.

As another member suggested amending my slogan, “Kol Hadash: Better than nothing? Better than anything!”