

Tishrei 5769
October 2008 Article for Kol HaLev Happenings
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This month of Tishrei, with its overflowing list of holy days, is often seen as a microcosm of the entire Jewish calendar. Within a single month, we encounter a wide range of themes; everything from renewal at Rosh Hashannah to harvest at Sukkot.

This year, our community has a very clear and natural connection to each of these themes by way of our recent move to our new home at the Lillian and Betty Ratner School. This shift for us has a strong and obvious resonance with a sense of community renewal, but it also connects with the Sukkot theme of harvest in that the choice to move represents that harvest of conversations and thinking that date back at least four or five years.

There is another aspect to the turning of this particular year that is for myself on a personal level, strongly resonant with the themes of this month, which is the arrival of some sabbatical time, which was built into the contract I signed with Kol HaLev three years ago and which I will begin to use immediately following the conclusion of the Tishrei holidays at the end of October. I will be entering a Master's program in Positive Organizational Development offered through the Weatherhead School at Case Western Reserve University. The program is structured to accommodate people who have full time positions and want to continue to work even as they take classes towards earning this degree.

I am very much looking forward to this learning experience because I think it will significantly enrich my own understanding in general of how organizations can develop in positive ways and it will provide me with a much broader set of tools that I can use to support the strengthening of our Kol HaLev community as we move into the future. I also anticipate that simply being present in a learning environment such as this will, in and of itself, engender a general sense of renewal. This is a program whose reputation attracts people from around the world and across many different disciplines and I suspect that the range of perspectives and experiences represented will be challenging, stimulating and inspiring.

I have been working with an ad-hoc committee for the past twelve months in order to make sure that the community's rabbinic needs will be handled during each of the six mini-Sabbaticals I'll be taking over the next eighteen months. There will be a calendar and an information sheet with all of these details that will be mailed out to every Kol HaLev household by the end of October. As we have talked through and planned the various logistical and programmatic adjustments that will be needed, it has become clear to me that there is also an opportunity for growth and renewal for our community embedded within this initiative, and so on many levels it feels to me like the coming year is full of potential for all of us. May we all be inscribed for a good and a sweet 5769.

Rabbi Steve