



Earlier this week I was privileged to be present at the memorial service for my dear friend, teacher and mentor Rabbi Rachel Cowan, z"l. One might not think of a memorial as a privilege. While I would much rather have been sitting with Rachel in her living room with a cup of tea, it was a gift to feel her amazing spirit in a room full to overflowing (standing room only in the Congregation B'nai Jeshurun Sanctuary). The space reverberated with feelings. Rachel's spirit was alive among us - her energy ricocheting off the hearts of everyone who entered to be together in memory, laughter, tears and commitment. As one of her children confided at the service, *Rachel was an extraordinary, ordinary person*. She emanated grace, strength, openness, caring and abundant curiosity.

My deepest learning from Rachel was at the heart of the many messages shared throughout the service. Live your life in depth and fullness. Embrace your choices and make the most of your days. This message is foundational to our holy days which begin this Sunday evening. Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we ask the Holy One to remember and write us individually and as a people - Gd's humanity - into the book of life, filled with blessing, peace and sustenance. It is on us to make that happen.

It is not always easy to embrace the life that belongs to us, the life to which we are called from the depths of our soul. It takes courage, wisdom and humility. It takes *mazal* - luck and a leap of faith. When we open to life with the entirety of our being, with every breath that animates our body and soul, we can find immeasurable love for ourselves and for the world.

May the New Year 5779 offer full heart, full mind, good health and wellbeing for all who walk Gd's earth. May we be blessed with sweetness, peace and love.

*I'Shana Tovah* from my heart and home to yours.

Rabbi Lisa B. Gelber