



## Torah for Turbulent Times

### "Home for the Holidays"

It's where the heart is. There's no place like it. And, we've been here for so long. We already feel at home, which is exactly where we're also meant to be spiritually during the week between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. This "in-between" Shabbat takes its special name, "*Shabbat Shuva*," from the idea that this week we are in the process of returning home. *T'shuva*, translated in many ways as "change, repentance, or return," leads us back to one place. The return is great when we fund this important investment with our spiritual capital.

How do we get there? We're already here, but the internal road map guides us closer to becoming the people we want to be, to our loved ones, to the Universe and the Holy One. The GPS points us in the direction of narrowing the gap between who we've been, who we are, and who we want to be. Of course, this is often easier said than done. It takes work. It's not necessarily linear or quick, so it demands patience as well. And, like any good journey there are often some obstacles along the way. Jewish tradition has many nicknames for G-d, one of them being, "*Hamakom*." It can refer to a physical location like "the place." It can also refer to "*The Place*," that is, "The Ultimate Place," or G-d. Where is the Ultimate Place for us this year? How do we know if we've arrived? It can be with family, community over Zoom services, or a friend. Perhaps it's found by being alone, in the woods, on the water, or at home. In Hebrew our home is also called a "*mikdash m'at*," a mini-sanctuary. This expression certainly rings true during this holiday season!

I look forward to seeing everyone "at shul" Sunday night for Kol Nidre and Yom Kippur. Meanwhile, I share this short and sweet story about returning home. There was once a King who had an only child, the apple of his eye. The King wanted his child to master different fields of knowledge and to experience various cultures. He sent the

child off into the world to do some traveling, supplied with a generous quantity of silver and gold. Far far away from home, the child squandered all the money until nothing was left. In distress the child resolved *to return* to his Father's home and after much difficulty managed to arrive at the gate of the courtyard of the palace. Given the passage of time he had forgotten the language of the native country and was unable to identify himself to the guards. In utter despair the child cried out in a loud voice. Though much time had passed the King still recognized his voice. He left the throne to be reunited with his dear one. Bringing his child back home, he held onto him tightly, hugging and kissing him with all of his heart. Tears of reunion and happiness streamed from their eyes, as the King whispered, "Welcome home my child. Welcome home." ("Cry of the Prince" by the Baal Shem Tov)

-Rabbi Mark