



## Upcoming Events

**9/9 7:00 Saturday Dessert  
Potluck Social followed  
by Selichot Services at  
our Chavurah House**

**See High Holidays flyer  
for specific details:  
9/15 & 9/16  
Rosh HaShanah Services  
9/24 & 9/25  
Yom Kippur Services  
with Rabbi Michael Lotker  
on the Patio of our  
Chavurah House**

**10/1 9:00 AM Sukkah  
Building followed by  
Potluck Brunch Social  
on the patio of our  
Chavurah House**

**10/6 7:00 PM Friday Night  
Simchat Torah Services  
on the patio of our  
Chavurah House**

**10/20 6:30 Potluck  
7:30 Kabbalat Shabbat  
Services at our  
Chavura House**

CONGREGATION ETZ CHAIM

P O BOX 3752 MERCED CA 95344

SEPTEMBER 2023



# The Maggid

## Asking for Forgiveness

*By Rabbi Michael Lotker*

If you've been to any Yom Kippur service, you've heard the words over and over again. The words are from the Mishnah, the core of our sacred Talmud. "For transgressions against God, the Day of Atonement atones; but for transgressions of one human being against another, the Day of Atonement does not atone until they have made peace with one another." In this way, we are taught that God can (and we believe does) forgive sins against God (such as ritual violations) when sincerely asked on Yom Kippur. But it is stressed that even God cannot forgive sins or offences of one person against another until the offender has sincerely asked for forgiveness, made all possible attempts to right the wrong, and then actually received forgiveness. Thus certain sins are, by definition, unforgivable (such as murder), and many, many others are never forgiven by God since we never made the effort to ask forgiveness from the person we offended.

Here, it's important that Judaism doesn't consider sin to be a state of being. Unlike other religions, we don't believe that you live or die in a "state of sin" and then are automatically punished accordingly. For Judaism, a sin is something that you've done (one Hebrew word for sin is "chet," coming from archery it means "to miss the mark"); now the question is, can you and do you erase it off "your books." We each die with many sins and good deeds to our credit and Judaism teaches that God is both just and merciful and will tilt the scales in our favor in our final judgment.

Back to Yom Kippur and these days leading up to Yom Kippur. I think that asking for forgiveness is the most difficult thing that Judaism demands of us and therefore may be the most important. First it places you (the asker) in a perilous position. You may have assumed that what you did wasn't so bad in the first place ("everybody make cracks like that") or, even more hopefully that your spouse, parent, child, sibling or friend may not have even noticed the offence and even if they did, they have surely forgotten it by now. Why dredge up old stuff anyway? Perhaps scariest of all is that moment of emotional free-fall between the asking for forgiveness and receiving it.

Let me make this even more difficult. A blanket request ("honey, if there's anything I've done in the past year to hurt your feelings, please forgive me") is not sufficient. You've got to remember and name the sin or at least an example of it ("remember the time you had your heart set on a romantic anniversary, and I thought a night with lots of friends would have been much more fun? – I'm sorry that I didn't listen to you more carefully!"). This specificity is especially difficult with one's children. But as difficult is the task is the power of the healing that results. I have seen this in my own life and in the lives of people around me. If you want to take this a level deeper, in asking for forgiveness, go further and ask what you can do to right the wrong, and do it this year, which will provide assurance that you will have the ability and opportunity to ask for and receive forgiveness next Yom Kippur.

I know this is scary but I invite you to try it. I'm always intrigued by people who tell me that they get so little out of Judaism as I strongly suspect that they don't really try to put some of our most important teachings to the test. And remember, if you are sincerely asked for forgiveness, you are required by our tradition to grant it.

If you truly want to grow spiritually during this sacred season, put in the work before another Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur slip away.

**NOTES FROM OUR PRESIDENT**

Happy Holidays Everyone,

I hope you are all doing well as we get ready to begin 5784. This past year was a trial for many of us, but I am hopeful we all are able to review the outcomes in a positive light. I invite you to gather with us for Rosh Hashana to celebrate another beginning, and a continuation of our life cycles.

Our calendar is full of activities these upcoming weeks and I invite you to join us for as many events you are able to include in your own calendar. Please reach out to me if you need a ride to any event. On Sunday, August 26<sup>th</sup> we celebrated the start of the new school year with a potluck brunch for temple members and our Jewish UC students.

We will “get into the groove” for the High Holidays on Saturday September 9<sup>th</sup> with a potluck dessert social followed by Selichot services led by our High Holidays Rabbi, Michael Lotker, from Southern California. I anticipate this will be a fun, educational and introspective evening and I invite you to join us.

Rabbi Lotker will be in Merced to lead us in Erev Rosh Hashana services on Friday evening, September 15<sup>th</sup> & will continue leading us in our celebration of the New Year on Saturday morning. Rabbi Lotker will return the following week to lead us in Kol Nidre & Yom Kippur Services. Please see the attached flyer for our complete schedule or visit the temple website. Please fill out your Yizkor cards and bring them to services before Yizkor services on Monday afternoon (September 25<sup>th</sup>), blank cards will be available at each High Holidays service.

We will build our congregational sukkah on Saturday morning, October 1<sup>st</sup>, followed by a potluck brunch to celebrate Sukkot. We hope you will join our temple Board meeting during the brunch, and we invite you all to attend future Board meetings so you can continue to provide your input to the Board.

We will conclude our holiday festivities with Simchat Torah services on Friday night October 6<sup>th</sup>. Simchat Torah is always a fun and educational service; please come join us as we sing and dance with the Torah and wrap up the holidays.

I really hope you can join us over the upcoming several weeks. We have so much planned, and are excited to meet Rabbi Lotker as he joins us for the High Holidays.

If you have any questions or need a ride to any of our upcoming events, please don’t hesitate to reach out to me or another Board Member.

Finally, if you enjoy our events, we invite you to become a member and help support our congregation so we can continue to keep Judaism alive and well in our community.

Shana Tova,  
Greg Friedman  
President

**Please join us**

**September 9**

**7:00 PM**

**Potluck Desserts Social**

**8:15 PM**

**Selichot Services**

**at our Chavurah House**

**Handouts may be  
found on our website:**

**<https://www.jewishmerced.org/services-4>**

# High Holy Days Services 2023/5784

Congregation Etz Chaim

Chavurah House

on Parsons Ave, Merced

Services will also be transmitted via ZOOM

LED BY RABBI MICHAEL LOTKER

## ROSH HASHANAH

**FRIDAY  
SEPTEMBER 15**

7:00 p.m.      Evening Service

**SATURDAY  
SEPTEMBER 16**

10:00 a.m.      Morning Torah Service  
followed by a Tashlich Service  
on the Bridge at Rahilly Park

## YOM KIPPUR

**SUNDAY  
SEPTEMBER 24**

7:00 p.m.      Kol Nidre Service

**MONDAY  
SEPTEMBER 25**

10:00 a.m.      Morning Torah Service  
1:00 p.m.      Healing Service  
2:00 p.m.      Open Discussion  
4:00 p.m.      Jonah Lesson  
5:30 p.m.      Yizkor (Memorial Service)  
6:30 p.m.      Neilah (Closing Service)  
7:30 p.m.      Havdalah, Kiddush and  
Break-the-Fast Potluck

- It is traditional at this time of year to make donations in memory of loved ones. Please fill out a **Yizkor Card**. You may mail your card and donation to P.O. Box 3752, Merced 95344-3752 or give to Rachel Hadley or Greg Friedman no later than Kol Nidre. Other donations will also be gratefully accepted throughout the High Holy Days.  
\*\* Please contact Greg Friedman for ZOOM link information  
\*\*\* For our Break-the-Fast, please bring a main dish, and either a side dish or dessert - enough to feed your group heartily (these people will be hungry!)
- Tzedakah (food or clothing) for the less privileged in our community is welcome at any service



October 1  
9:00 AM  
**Sukkah Building**  
followed by  
**Potluck Brunch Social**  
at our Chavurah House

*Remembering is  
a message from  
the heart*



**IN MEMORIAM**



PLEASE INCLUDE THE NAME(S) OF MY  
DEPARTED LOVED ONES DURING YIZKOR/MEMORIAL SERVICE

IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
(please print phonetically)

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A YIZKOR/MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTION TO CONGREGATION ETZ CHAIM IS ENCLOSED

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NAME

ADDRESS

PHONE

## Tributes

Anytime you are celebrating a special event, let us share in your joy.  
We welcome tributes in honor or in memory of loved ones, births,  
weddings, Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, and honoring special events.

Send your Tributes to PO Box 3752 Merced CA 95344

Belinda Braunstein - In loving memory of her stepmother Mickey Epstein-Braunstein  
SaraJane Victor - In loving memory of her husband Marty Victor  
Rachel Hadley - In loving memory of her grandfather Fred Moore  
Judy Dake - In loving memory of her mother and sister (April Yarzheit)

*May their memories be a blessing*

*זכרוןם לברכה*

Carol Madruga - In honor of Ann DeAyora's 95th Birthday  
Rachel Hadley - With prayers of healing for Debbie Kleitman

## Other Planned Community Events

September 9 - 7:00 PM Dessert Social and Selichot Services (starting at 8:15)  
September 15 & 16 - Rosh HaShanah Services  
September 24 & 25 - Yom Kippur Services  
October 1 - Annual Sukkot Party  
October 6 - Simchat Torah Services  
December 9 - Chanukah Party  
January 26 - Tu B'Shvat  
March 23 - Purim Party  
April 23 - Community Seder - 2nd Night  
May 26 - Annual Membership Meeting and 2024 / 2025 Board Elections

### **Restarting in October**

**1st Fridays:** 7:00 Formal Lay Led Services with Torah Reading  
**3rd Fridays:** 6:30 Potluck and 7:30 Lay Led Kabbalat Shabbat Services  
at our Chavurah House on Parsons

## **Annual Dues are DUE**

**\$500.00 per Year per Family Unit**

*Please mail your Dues payment to:*

*Congregation Etz Chaim*

*P O Box 3752*

*Merced CA 95344*

# September Yahrtzeits

*Those we remember in the  
year of their passing:  
Diane Amussen 5/19/2023*

Norman Ambrosini  
Henry Bernstein  
Harry Friedberg  
Leon Ginsberg  
Mary Giventer  
Barbara Goldman

Lee Kamson  
Gerald Kaplan  
Judith Goodstein Kleitman  
Mel Kramer  
Alexander Labbok  
Fred Moore  
Morton N. Rosenbaum  
Ann Rotbart  
Samuel Salzberg  
Marty Victor  
Steve Wight

*זכרון לברכה  
May their memories be a blessing*



# September Birthdays

Judith Salzberg Kiriha	9/1
Alicia Ambrosini	9/5
Peggy Shainberg	9/6
Simon Hofmann	9/13
David Gross	9/14
Belinda Braunstein	9/16
Carol Madruga	9/17



John Hofmann and Greg Friedman have donated gallons of blood in the Congregation's name.  
Any Congregant can access blood via the credit accumulated under the Congregation's name.