

Wednesday August 26 2020 / 6 Elul 5780

Dear Agudas Achim Family,

*'Ozi v'zimrat Yah, vayehi lishuah'* – 'Yah [God] is my strength and my song, in God will be my deliverance.' This line from the Song of the Sea (Exodus 15:1-18), turned into a popular liturgical chant, has been sitting with me for these High Holidays.

Before the pandemic, there were already the stirrings of challenging times that invited me to contemplate our strength or power. Questions of power are at the heart of our Jewish self-understanding. It is God's power—according to the wisdom of our tradition—that has redeemed

us from Egyptian slavery. It is our human power that allows us as a society both to perpetuate unspeakable cruelties as well as bring healing and restoration to our aching world. And it is our personal, individual power that exhorts us to turn inwards; to hold ourselves accountable and to return to our truest, kindest, most just selves, in alignment with the Divine. There can be no power without responsibility and the Jewish tradition calls upon us to take it—especially during the High Holiday season.

Then, the pandemic hit and the tectonic shifts were felt in every aspect of our lives. Nothing

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