

The Beth El Ritual Committee, along with many others within the Beth El community, has been busy preparing for the High Holidays in order to make the services as meaningful and welcoming as possible to all who join us. At this time, we would like to share important information with the congregation concerning two aspects of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services: honors and seating.

**1. High Holiday Honors**

We would like to offer honors (ark openings, aliyot, etc.) to as many people as possible. However, for a growing congregation, this means that people who previously received honors may not necessarily be offered one every year. An exception is for certain types of honors that require specific skills and preparation, such as chanting a haftarah, where it makes sense for people to have the same honor for consecutive years. We appreciate your understanding and participation in Beth El services -- whether from the bimah or from your seat in the sanctuary.

**2. Reserving Seats**

One of the wonderful aspects of High Holiday services at Beth El is that, unlike many other synagogues, congregants do not need to reserve seats. This means that you can arrive at any time during a service and sit in any available seat. However, we realize that there has been an evolving informal tradition at Beth El of reserving seats and that congregants have been coming earlier and earlier prior to services to do so. This practice leads to clusters of seats that are unoccupied but unavailable and unintentionally creates an unwelcoming atmosphere. If you do want to set aside a small number of seats, please do so no earlier than 45 minutes prior to the start of a service.

In addition, seats will be reserved in advance for service leaders/facilitators and their families, and people waiting their turn to go up to the bimah for an honor (there will be four seats in the front row on the left side of the sanctuary for this purpose).

**3. People with Disabilities or Other Special Needs**

We do recognize that some people need to pre-reserve seats in advance for specific reasons. To accommodate these needs we are establishing the following guidelines:

- 1) People with restricted mobility or other disability can reserve two seats (one for themselves and one for a companion).
- 2) Seats can be reserved for: first day Rosh Hashanah morning, Kol Nidre, and Yom Kippur morning.
- 3) Seats reserved for first day Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur morning will be held only until 10:30 a.m. Seats reserved for Kol Nidre will be held only until the service starts at 6:15 p.m.
- 4) Anyone needing to reserve seats should contact the Beth El office (phone: (919) 682-1238, email: [info@betheldurham.org](mailto:info@betheldurham.org)) no later than Monday September 11th.

We hope you will be respectful of these guidelines as we come together as a community in just a few weeks.

May the coming New Year be one of sweetness and peace for you and your loved ones.

L'Shalom,

Randi Smith  
Ritual Committee Co-Chair

Meg Anderson  
Ritual Committee Co-Chair

Noah Pickus  
President