

## Kol HaRav

There are three words that synagogue goers are very familiar with. These are the words that we sing every Shabbat when we return the Torah to the Aron, *hadesh yameinu k'kedem*.

While I have long been familiar with this phrase, it took on a new meaning for me through an insight of a colleague, Rabbi Robert Scheinberg of Hoboken, New Jersey, son of Kol Shalom member Hal Scheinberg. Rabbi Scheinberg notes that the liturgical decision to recite this passage, the final verse of the book of Lamentations, is significant because it asks God to renew our days "as kedem". It would have been far more sensible, Scheinberg suggests, to ask God to renew our days not "as Kedem", but "as Eden". *Hadesh Yameinu k'eden*, renew *our days as at the very beginning the primordial Gan Eden*, the Garden of Eden, where all was perfect. In fact, when Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden they were sent to *kedem l'gan eden*, translated as "East of Eden".

So why, Rabbi Scheinberg asks, would we ask God to return us to kedem, the place where Adam and Eve were sent after their sin and not to that more pristine, pre-fruit eating place, Eden? Wouldn't we all choose to return to Eden if we could? He answers his question as follows: As Jews, it is not a perfect utopia to which we aspire; perfection is not ours to have. Our hope is to return to that far more accessible and far more inspiring place where Adam and Eve were called on not to befin, but having been caught, castigated, and cast out, to begin again. It is that new beginning, that place of resilience and renewal following a setback, to which we turn for inspiration and ask to be returned.