

two prominent sages of the early centuries of the common era, and their opinions were almost always at odds with each other. Most famous perhaps is their argument over how the menorah candles should be lit. Shammai, always the literalist, argued for starting with eight candles and taking one away each night, since the oil diminished bit by bit in the original Chanukah story. But Hillel argued for adding a candle each night of the holiday, teaching that “in matters of holiness we increase rather than decrease.” We follow Hillel’s words today but we are also aware of Shammai’s words and his reasoning behind them, because Judaism seeks not to make arguments or disputes the enemy. We strive for something that’s in fact much more difficult: to understand where dissenting opinions may come from. To be able to look each other in the eye and say, “we may disagree but that does not make you less human or me more righteous.” In the words of the prophet Isaiah, “*come... let us reason together.*”

Now, how might we put such a lofty, and yes, thorny aspiration into practice? We begin with how we know we will *not* put it into practice. It will not happen overnight. It will not happen with perfect consistency. We all have the tendency to be hard-headed, stubborn and unwilling to

the holidays. It helps to focus my attention when my energy wanes, or sometimes I find myself reaching to pick it up for a few minutes, especially during the most intense parts of the service. I’m sure you’ve all seen them at stationary stores around town, beautiful little polished stones with a word of blessing or encouragement written on it. These stones sit on my desk for the rest of the year, in an area that has become an altar of sorts, a sacred little space in the midst of the papers and post-its and lists. Here is what I have collected so far:

~Love	~Thankful	~Dream	~Peace
~Kindness	~Remember	~Joy	~Laugh

As 2018 begins I find myself looking at those stones, remembering the soul searching that goes with them. At the High Holidays, I turn inward in a deep process of reflection and teshuvah. When we reach a secular New Year, I don’t engage in that level of soul searching, but I do think a lot about my wishes and intentions for the next year of my life. Looking at that list above, my eye keeps going to the word ‘dream’. With a whole year of possibilities ahead of you, what dreams are calling to you? What visions do you have for yourself that you hope to