

1st Day Rosh Hashanah—Tuesday, September 7, 2021

Main Sanctuary

Shana Tova!

I stand here before you humbled and in awe. Humbled by the opportunity to serve as your president again. In awe of our temple and how we have persevered through these past 18 months. Even as recently as last week through the storm and flooding in our temple.

As we welcome the New Year, we pray for health and prosperity. We reflect on the importance and sanctity of these holidays. We ask to be written in the Book of Life for another year as we chant our sacred prayers. And we worship together in person *and* digitally. Make no mistake—we are together.

I have stood here before you on four previous High Holy days as president and have spoken directly to you, the heart and soul of Temple B'nai Abraham—the congregation. Each of my remarks during those years had a theme.

First, I discussed the idea of WE-OUR-US: WE are the beneficiaries of OUR congregation and all its activities. Come join US for services, classes, social action programs, social events. The list goes on but in order for US to succeed, WE need YOU!

The following year I introduced the concept of DEEP BENCH. That means having talented people who can step up when needed. It is about pitching in and doing more than your job. We have had many people who did just that. And still do.

My third year was devoted to discussing the act of being a volunteer and giving back to the congregation. We all receive so much from Temple B'nai Abraham. And it is so easy, and important, to give back.

Finally, I spoke about how a house becomes a home when it is inhabited. When it is lively and full of energy. When it is productive. And by any of those definitions, Temple B'nai Abraham is a home and our congregation is the foundation upon which our home is built.

Amazingly, as those themes were so true just a few years ago, they still hold true today. Perhaps they are even more to the point, significant, and important. But each of my previous themes can be wrapped up into one more central idea-- GIVING THANKS.

Over the past 18 months, we as individuals, families, and a congregation have suffered incredible tragedies and hardships. As hard as it may have seemed at times, as our lives have been turned upside down for so long, and just as we thought we would reach our new stable ground, life remained challenging. Just look at our bimah. It is always filled with congregants on each holiday. This year, out of an abundance of caution, it is just the clergy and me.

Throughout this difficult period, our clergy has been our spiritual buoy. Keeping us afloat during these rough times. Rabbi Vaisberg, Cantor Epstein, Rabbi Edwards--you are our guiding lights. As a team, you keep us together for services—at first just digitally, and more recently, in person. You offer us

guidance and provide us with classes and programs to keep us engaged. You have walked these long months alongside us. Day by day. To you, we give thanks.

To our educators, Debbie Aronson Ziering in The Early School and Melissa Weiner in our Jewish Learning Program—we give thanks. You both are innovative and creative. And you keep our children engaged. We give thanks to you and your staffs. The safety of our children is always your #1 priority and focus and you have waded through complicated waters to keep Jewish education flowing.

Our administrative department deserves tremendous thanks, too. Executive Director Gail Milchman was at the helm at all times during these difficult months. Her staff has worked tirelessly and continues to do so to keep us informed of protocols, schedules, activities, etc. As much as our inboxes are exploding with temple emails, it is the best way to keep in touch and keep everyone involved and aware of what is happening at TBA. As you know, Gail is retiring at the end of this calendar year. We can't begin to thank her enough for her 25+ years at Temple B'nai Abraham. I personally cannot thank her enough for her guidance and wisdom during my years as president. To find her replacement is quite a task but we are well into the search for our new executive director and already have several promising candidates.

We must give thanks to Tracey Bent and his entire maintenance staff. COVID-19 protocols require special care of our building. The attention to detail continues to be faultless and we feel assured that all necessary procedures are accomplished

perfectly. And as recently as last week's storm, Tracey and his staff worked tirelessly. Tracey's new role as our IT guru is constantly being challenged as our digital and technological needs grow.

So now I come to our volunteers. Thank you to all the volunteers who are supporting our temple through these turbulent times. To the Officers and Board of Trustees—we are working through tough meetings together. We have hard decisions to make and we keep the Temple's best interests close to our hearts at all times. To all the committee chairs and their members, thank you to you, too. Your engagement and involvement give us direction and purpose.

Finally, thank you to all of you, the congregation. Your dedication to Temple B'nai Abraham is palpable. Without a doubt, it is because of YOU, that our temple has been able to navigate the rocky seas of the last year and a half.

My family has grown since the last time I spoke publicly to you. So it is with much gratitude that Max, my children, my grandchildren, my pandemic puppy, and I wish you and your families a sweet new year. May it be filled with good health, prosperity, happiness, and peace. In this increasingly volatile and dangerous world, let us wish for peace at home, for the state of Israel, and throughout the world.

FROM MY HOME TO YOURS, L'SHANA TOVA.