

ROSH HASHANAH REMARKS

BY LARRY PACHTER

As the President of Beth El and the leader of the Board of Directors, I have the privilege of providing a few remarks about the state of the synagogue. With the rise in antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment both here and around the world, and the divisiveness found in politics both here and in Israel, it would be easy to be a pessimist. However, we also know that the American Jewish community is still living under some of the best diaspora conditions ever recorded in Jewish history. Our Beth El community is in a good place by almost any measure - the past year can easily be labeled a “good year”. Further, we have every reason to believe that this positive condition will continue into the New Year we are entering today.

Compared to recent years, maybe 5786 is most noteworthy in our synagogue for the lack of crises – internal or external. Inside Beth El, we have an experienced clergy team who work together well, compliment one another and know us a Congregation and as individuals.

We celebrated Simchas and other milestones together; we comforted each other when we lost loved ones or struggled with health issues. We are a community, and as a community, we proudly stand with Israel.

While our staff team hasn’t been working together as long as our clergy team, we benefit from how well the new members and veteran members have come together to serve us. Much of their work throughout the year is behind the scenes, but on these high holidays, we all appreciate that seats are set up and assigned, Highland Park High School Auditorium is transformed into a sanctuary, children and family services are planned, supplied and executed.

We come together for big events and ordinary ones. We enjoyed concerts and lectures, classes and daily minyan, formal and informal educations, at our Steinburg Pre-School, Cohen Religious School, Sokol Hebrew High School or one of our community's Jewish Day Schools.

Perhaps the highlight of this past year was the completion of our new Synagogue entry and its dedication as the Benjamin and Bernice Cohen Pavillion. This new entry increases our security while enhancing our ability to be a welcoming place and a welcoming community. We appreciate all of the donors to our Mitzvah 613 Campaign which made the addition to our building a reality.

Our current strength benefits from our clergy and staff, but is equally supported by our lay leaders, in particular the Officers and Board of Directors. The Board of Directors has 2 primary tasks: first, to provide overall guidance determining policy and budget, which are then carried out by our professionals, and to do what is necessary to make sure we have the funds to execute our plans. While our staff makes sure the day to day events happen, I encourage our Board to always be looking out into the future when making decisions.

As we move into the New Year, I can report the focus of the Board will be to build a budget model which allows us to keep the stability of our clergy and staff teams and to build a reserve of funds to maintain our physical plant.

Our physical plant consists of 4 single family homes as well as our synagogue building, parts of which are over 100 years old. We want to establish within Beth El a capital reserve to be able to meet the ordinary physical replacement that will be needed over the next 20-30 years. This fall we will conduct a professional review of our current systems and receive an estimate of the useful lives of the major components of each structure. Based on that, we can establish a

budget for annual deposits needed to accumulate so that we can be ready to make expenditures as they come up.

We are a generous community. In addition to dues and school tuition, our members contribute the funds to pay for the cost of operating our synagogue and its programs. A special thanks to all of our Bonim families and to each of you who support our Kol Niche Appeal.

As we look to the future I do not foresee another major capital campaign for Beth El in the coming years. Rather, our focus will shift to adding more commitments for legacy gifts to Beth El. Each of you can support Beth El by becoming a member at the New Tamid Society. Each member of the New Tamid Society has declared their intent to make a gift to Beth El as part of their estate plan. Our legacy giving directly supports our endowment, which at over \$11 million, now provides about 10% of our budget annually. If you aren't yet a member of the New Tamid Society, I hope that you take the steps to become a member this year – it is appropriate for Beth El members of all ages.

While none of us can predict the future, I know that Beth El has built a foundation to continue to experience good years well into the future.

On behalf of my wife, Sandy Starkman, my sons Uri and Avram, and the entire Board of Directors and Board of Trustees, I want to again wish you and your families, a Happy, healthy sweet 5787. Shana Tovah.