

Shanah Tovah, Good Evening and Welcome to 5782,

I cannot start without acknowledging what a strange and difficult year this has been for us all. I thank you for your patience and understanding and your words of encouragement and gratitude for my part in guiding us through the year. I did not and could not do it alone. The COVID Task Force, the members of the board, Rabbi Breindel, Lorel and Beth have all been key members of the decision-making process and I thank them for that.

During this busy year things have happened! Those of you who are fortunate enough to be in the building today or have been very recently, will appreciate the work which has gone into making the place look fresh, clean and beautiful inside and out. Thanks to the efforts of the Beautification Committee, the walls and trim have new paint, the carpets thoroughly cleaned, the walls covered in artwork, done by fellow congregants. The photos you were all so used to seeing as you walked down the hallway are being digitized and will reappear in good time. I promise you that they are not lost, they are a part of our heritage.

*Congregation Beth El is joyful, participatory Judaism.
We sing, learn, laugh, and pray together, and
celebrate our varied backgrounds, identities, and experiences.
We connect with Jewish values and traditions as we
strive to create a more just future for ourselves, our children, and our
world.*

This recently created Vision Statement is our compass for how we will look ahead.

Yes, it tells us something about our past, but it is our past on which we will build, it is however an important statement about our future. You will no doubt all have read the email that went out this morning, outlining the tremendous work done by the Vision Alignment Committee and the hundreds of hours put into creating a foundation for the Strategic Planning Group to work from.

This vision statement has been approved by the Board of Directors as it has been passed on, as Fern Chertok told us, like a baton in a relay race, first from the Vision

Alignment Committee to The Board, then to a new Strategic Planning Group, who will create a roadmap for the future of Beth El and pass back to The Board for approval and then along to you the congregation. It will then be our job to bring that map to life.

Our future is bright. It is of course tinged with more than a little sadness in Lorel's departure, but with that comes the energy and hope which goes with a new clergy partner, who will bring a new voice, new melodies, new teachings and new ideas and will partner with the rabbi and our education leadership to help our school grow and flourish.

This search process has begun and will take time, hopefully bringing in at least one candidate to Beth El early next year. You will be given the opportunity to meet the candidates and see them lead services. When the time comes, we will greet this new member of our community with open arms and give them the room to grow, for as we know, no-one comes fully developed into the leader they will become. They will have some large shoes to fill and we must give them the time and room to do so.

Meanwhile, we will have a period of transition. Nine months during which we will have our very own lay leaders bring us through our Friday night and Saturday morning Shabbat services with Rabbi Breindel. The Transition Committee has worked hard to allow us to have a guest shabbat leader one weekend a month, between November and April. This person will bring us something new or maybe familiar, again working in partnership with the rabbi. We hope to be able to give you a taste of what is out there, a way to test the waters without jumping right in. We will have seasoned cantors, one of which is returning to Beth El, one recently graduated and one current cantorial student. We believe you will be happy with the guests who have agreed to join us. They will bring a different energy and experience each month.

Beth El is a congregation and a community which brings us all pride in how we help repair the world. Our Tikkun Olam committees cover so many values we hold dear. For example, the Antiracism Action Committee is a group which is taking

action, in helping women make transitions from prison by supplying needed goods and furniture to Kimya's House, a residential reentry home for women. They are working on prison reform, which as we know disproportionately affects people of color.

I couldn't possibly go into all that is covered by Tikkun Olam, you should read the monthly reports, which you can find by going to the new Beth El Website.

Speaking of the Website, Wow, what a great job. We even have a members only section which I hope will give us the opportunity to have a photo directory. How many of you have thought I know the name, but for the life of me I can't put a face to it? Those photos of Chanicat Banim and Siyyum will be available for you to see, hopefully with a search option, so you can jump right to your choice.

Life transitions are happening all the time. In this transition period we are unfortunately saying goodbye to some long standing members and some more recent. I am pleased to announce that we are also seeing new members join or rejoin our community, with young families. I encourage you to reach out to your friends and have them come visit Beth El and see if this could be a home for them. The more young families we have join us, the more young families will want to join us. We will see a transition over the next year to family oriented services, we will hopefully see the return of kids in the sanctuary, maybe drawing or playing a game, but nevertheless, quietly being there and unknowingly taking it all in. Just last weekend we had an Uf ruff for Jeremy Harper, one of **our** kids and his fiancée. It brings me such joy to see **our** kids grow up through high school, Siyyum and beyond and to come back and share their joy with us.

Beth El has been a community of leadership and innovation for many years and I know we can continue to do so.

The survey sent out to you by the Vision Alignment Committee found that 89% of the respondents agree that they are proud to be members of Beth El.

- 71% say they feel responsible to help Beth El achieve success.
- 47% feel like Beth El makes good use of their skills and talents.
- Apparently, to a lay person, that means 53% of respondents feel that we could make better use of your talents, we just need to know what they are.

To be leaders we need everyone, we need you! If you have the time to step up and join a group like the School committee, Adult Ed, or the membership committee, or maybe you have an idea for a group Beth El does not yet have, be a leader, show us the path forward. We would love to make use of your talents. When I joined Beth El I remember wondering if they would ever ask me to be on a committee. Trust me, they will ask and we need you to say yes! If it's all you have, your 15 minutes a week might make a difference, making a phone call, just reaching out and saying we are here, we care. Maybe you are a good editor, a photographer, a good organizer. I promise you, you have a skill and we have a need. Reach out to me and let me know what you are good at and I'll find the person who needs you. We need young families and we also need the seasoned citizens who do have the time, maybe retired or working less.

As I said earlier, we have a transition period of nine months coming up. Lorel officially leaves us as of September 25th, when God willing, we will have a wonderful in-person social event to say thank you and L'Hitraot, we'll see you soon.

Shirley Hui, Marjorie Raskin, Beth Birnbaum and Steve Breit have done an amazing job making Lorel's last year a special time under very difficult circumstances. Others are working hard to make a gala event happen with a shifting adversary called COVID. Details will follow soon.

Thank You's...

I cannot thank everyone who has been a valuable member of any of the myriad of committees we have here at Beth El. I will ask Beth and Svetlana, (our new secretary, who you should stop in and say hi to), to send out a list of committees and who is on them. Some have repeat names and some have few members, but I promise you that each committee would love to have you join their ranks.

Thank You to the Vision Alignment Committee:

The Strategic Planning Committee, the Clergy Search Committee, the Website Development Committee

Thanks to the Zoom hosts and technology team throughout the year for keeping us connected.

To the members of the Board and Executive Committee and all the other committees which help Beth El function and grow, we cannot do it without any of you.

I wish you all a sweet, healthy and happy new year.

Shana Tova U'metucha