

MIKDASH ADDRESS

Rosh Hashanah Morning 2014 * 5775

Rabbi Jay Perlman

Jewish tradition provides three names for a temple --- a Beit T'filah...a house of prayer.....a Beit Midrash.....a House of Learning.....and a Beit Knesset....a house of assembly. During our services – most often, our focus is on the prayer and learning aspects of our temple. At this time, however --- given that so many in our community have gathered ---- along with a number of very welcome guests --- I would like, for a moment, to embrace the opportunity for us to see our sanctuary as a place of sacred meeting for our community....and to discuss a matter of communal importance.....

In Torah, soon after the Children of Israel were born as a people on a journey, Gd called to them, saying: “*Asu Li Mikdash.....V'Shachanti B'tocham.*” “Build for me a Mikdash – a ‘sacred home’ – so that my presence might be felt amongst you.

The purpose of the Mikdash of the Israelites was not merely to “hold” or to “house” Gd. Rather, its existence was to somehow serve the people. It would be a place of holy encounter and life affirming vision. It would enable them to focus on their purpose as a journeying people: to bring blessing.

Over ten years ago, Emily and I – with our not-yet-two year old daughter, Liana - joined the journey of the Temple Beth Shalom community. We came here for a few reasons. We came because – during our visits – we had experienced firsthand the warmth of the people. The genuine welcome and thoughtfulness. The bright smiles of the children learning and at play. The dedication and love of the most longstanding members.

We quickly came to realize that this was the nature of the TBS community. A culture and spirit of care made real every day in the lives of our members.

Since that time, I have been blessed to have shared with you in the blossoming of our congregation. As a community – in ways that are heartfelt and personal - we have celebrated the births, B'nei Mitzvah, and weddings of children and grandchildren. We have made meaningful and long-lasting friendships. We have held hands at sick beds....whether in the hospital or at home. We have provided....and we have received.....meals and rides and spiritual support during times of need. We have been there for each other when a loved one has passed. We have inspired the hearts and minds of adults and children with Jewish music, stories, teachings, dance, foods, and prayers. We have sought to repair a corner of our broken world through volunteerism and social advocacy. And we have deepened our relationship to Israel through travel, learning, and outreach.

Temple Beth Shalom is dedicated to goodness.....and healing.....and blessing. No wonder we feel so proud to call this our community. And it is no wonder that our community is bursting at the seams.

True story – one that I shared during our official ‘Mikdash Kickoff’ event a couple of weeks ago.....When I was exploring the possibility of coming to Beth Shalom..... I contacted Rabbi David Wolfman – who, at the time, was the northeast regional director for the Reform Movement. When I asked him to tell me about TBS he told me that this was an amazing congregation. But – he said –“IGNORE THE BUILDING!” At the time - almost 11 years ago – we did.

However, truth be told.....we can no longer afford to “ignore the building.”

For the past three years we have worked together ---- and after hundreds of community parlor meetings, conversations, and consultations with our members and with professionals, we have – at last – arrived at an exciting plan for our new home. Mikdash will more than double our building’s current square footage. And it will provide much needed learning, worship, administrative, and social gathering spaces.

If we wish to continue to live fully as a community – If we wish to most fully teach....share..... learn.....counsel.....comfort....and inspire.....we must work together to make our Mikdash plans a reality! Information has already been sent to every home in our community.

During this coming year, each of us will be invited to consider how – each of us in our own way – can help make this happen. We need you. We need each other.

On this Rosh Hashanah morning – as we look towards 5775 - may all of the works of our hands.....and all of the works of our hearts.....be so inspired as to invite Gd’s presence to dwell amongst us.....and, in doing so, to bring bless to us all.

Amen.