

From the Rabbi's Desk

March 2019

Chaverim,

On the day I am writing this bulletin article, it is mid-February, a little cold and a little rainy. On our windowsill in the kitchen are two plastic cups filled with dirt. One says Nava, the other, Ilan. I thought perhaps they were filled only with dirt. When Nava and Ilan brought them home from their preschool program with Monica Goldstein, the report from Polly was that the dirt had spilled out and maybe the parsley seeds didn't make it back into the cup. Terry Goldsmith did this project a couple of years ago with her class. It was very special at Passover to eat the greens we had planted around Tu b'Shevat. I had a bit of faith in the project. So I watered the soil and checked them every day to see if anything was sprouting. Yesterday, I looked and still nothing. I mentioned to Polly that perhaps she was right; all we had were cups of dirt. But this morning...behold! Green sprouts were coming up in both cups.

The day before this horticultural miracle, I had the honor of doing a baby naming. Nicole and John Arruda added a third child to their growing family. Now Emma and Gwenyth have a baby brother, Harrison Howard. A small group of family and friends came together to welcome Harrison and give him the name he will now be known by among the Jewish people, Ari. Harrison is a beautiful, healthy baby, and we welcomed him into a loving community. Harrison's is the third baby naming I've had the honor of officiating in for our congregation in about a year. He falls in behind Ophelia Williams, daughter of Amanda and Dylan Williams, and Ella, daughter of Samantha and Andrew Venooker. It is often too easy, especially in the darkness of winter, to be a little down. The national and international news often fuels my despair. But small events like the little sprouts on the windowsill, and big, amazing events like the naming of new little people in our community help remind me that there is hope for a bright future.

I am reminded of the story from the Babylonian Talmud of Honi the Circle Drawer. Honi's story has many facets but I'll give you just one small part. Honi was traveling and saw a man planting a carob tree. Honi asks, "How long does it take for this tree to bear fruit?" The man replies, "About 70 years." Honi asks, "Are you certain you will live that long?" The man replies, "I see all around me the trees my ancestors planted for me, so I plant these trees for my children."

Sometimes everyday activities might seem bereft of meaning. Life is complicated. We often do things simply for immediate reward rather than thinking about the long run. But, there are opportunities each day to do something more lasting.

We can plant all kinds of seeds: seeds of peace, justice, righteousness, compassion, and loving-kindness; seeds taking care of the sick, the poor, and the stranger. I choose to plant seeds I may never see sprout. But Harrison, Ophelia, and Ella, sprout with such great fanfare that I am reminded of our purpose. I am one small part of helping them grow. We need you to be planting seeds too—seeds that help our school educate our children in Jewish values that will heal and sustain our world; seeds that will help our congregation spread our light to the nations; seeds that will give comfort, nourishment, and shelter to those in need; seeds that will make our house a house of prayer for all people. By the grace of God, may the seeds we plant today bear fruit for our children tomorrow.

L'Shalom,
Rabbi Marc