

Presidential Message

November 2019

The High Holidays were both physically and emotionally moving for me.

Physically, I had the honor of holding the large Torah during Kol Nidre. I admit that I was apprehensive because when I was last president 8 years ago, it was no easy task holding the Torah through three iterations of Kol Nidre. Well, I was appropriately apprehensive because our service was made even more spiritual by adding readings between the three Kol Nidre iterations. You may not notice some of the behind the scenes communication that goes on on the Bima, but when Mike and Flossie Betten opened the ark, I plead with Mike to stay and spot me because I didn't think I was going to make it. As time passed, I was in my own prayer world, talking to G-d through the heavy Torah, asking for the strength to keep on going. At about 15 minutes, I was delirious. Mike was running an occasional EKG. I started to ask why we can't have a Torah made of polyester and balsa wood.

Well, I made it. My arms wouldn't straighten for ten minutes and my hands were shaped like hooks. And I thought to myself, why not one Torah holder for each iteration of Kol Nidre? Spread the honor! That's now my re-election theme.

Emotionally, I was on the Bima during the high holidays with both my wife and daughter when they read from the Torah. It was a powerful l'dor v'dor moment for me when Amanda wrapped up with a Torah reading on Yom Kippur. I have been blessed indeed with my wife and kids (missed Nathaniel), keeping our traditions going.

Then there was the emotion of learning that Jose Cordero will be moving away from our area. Jose is more than the world's finest shofar maestro. He is the epitome of a gentleman, scholar and musician. I have known Jose, and played in the band with Jose for almost 15 years. My life has been enriched because he is in it. I intend to start a Go Fund Me campaign to fly him back for the High Holidays.

So now we get to the "what's going on" part of my message.

Over the last several weeks, JFEC, Congregation Beth El and our Board have been shown a site map of our property includes a new building to house the Federation, have office space, meeting rooms, social space and whatever we wanted to imagine (no change to our Temple footprint). The building would be behind the sheds that are located across from the back doors of the school rooms. This would be part of a vision of a centralized Jewish campus for SECT. All three Boards supported the idea and would like to pursue the idea even further. Pursuing the idea means that right now, it's just an idea. Nothing else has been done or decided. I will be looking to members of the congregation to get involved in further ideation. I will be reaching out to you to be a participant in creating good ideas that might make this a reality.

If you remember my Rosh Hashanah address, we need to try different things. This could be a great opportunity to truly be different and visionary.

In light of this and other things, the Rabbi and I think that it would be a good idea to have some small meetings at host homes where members of the congregation, Board members and clergy can discuss interesting new opportunities, as well as issues that you'd like addressed. Be on the look out for invitations in the next few months.

And finally, if you didn't see it, we had a goat in the sukkah for Sukkot. Now that's what I am talking about! Trying different things!

Jonathan