



**Annual Meeting // June 7, 2017**

**David Good, Incoming President (2017-2019)**

**Shalom!** A week ago, we celebrated Shavuot and the ritual of *bikkurim*, or first fruits. This is the ritual where farmers would take a portion of the harvest and bring them to Jerusalem to be presented to the priests. The basic idea – and this is the Cliff Notes version! – is that before the Israelites could enjoy their harvest from the land of Canaan, they needed to acknowledge the painful journey from slavery to freedom.

Why do I bring this up today? In reading some commentary on this practice from Rabbi Joshua Rabin, Director of Innovation for the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, he points out to two reasons why this ritual is important:

First, the Talmud says “it is forbidden to enjoy anything in this world without a blessing.”

Second, that this ritual is symbolic of the gratitude we must show for success of any kind.

Fundamentally, this ritual is about demonstrating appreciation. It is about saying “thank you.”

I don't think synagogues can survive without lots of appreciation and thanks! It is, in my mind, a most basic expression of connection and community.

So, let me start by saying “thank you.”

Thank you to the nominating committee – and by extension, the congregation as a whole – for your confidence and trust in asking me to be President of this synagogue, which is the center of my family's Jewish life. I hope I continue to earn your trust and appreciation.

Thank you to our departing board members for your service and, of course, to our incoming trustees and officers for your commitment. I am eager to serve with you on behalf of the congregation.

Thank you to our past presidents. I look forward to your continued wisdom and guidance.

Thank you in advance to my family...please be sure to wave when we pass each other in the hallways!

And, thank you to Andrea Hirschfeld for your service and dedication over the past three plus years as President of our congregation. Just a few words on your tenure.

**There are the things we can TOUCH that you helped turn into a reality:**

- our comfortable pews
- our insulated and clean synagogue windows
- our shiny railings near Aron Kodesh
- our safe railings on walkway leading to lobby
- our pothole-free parking lot
- *I'll take responsibility for the small stand with plastic bags for wet umbrellas.*

**There are the things we HEARD that you helped bring to our shul:**

- the year-long 90th Anniversary Celebration...which was the impetus for bringing in Chancellor Arnold Eisen, Rabbi Brad Hirschfeld and Josh Warshawsky
- This year's Celebration of Learning with Rabbi Amichau Lau-Lavie

**There are the things that we can neither see or hear or touch...but are a reality because of your leadership and foresight:**

- the launch of our Legacy Circle...which is an investment in our synagogue and community for future generations
- our closer relationship with USCJ, the Conservative movement's umbrella organization, to benefit from their knowledge and services
- the implementation of Sulam for Emerging Leaders with Rabbi Bayar...which has become a pipeline of new leaders for our committees and board

May you enjoy the most coveted title in synagogue leadership...Past President!

**Now...looking ahead!**

I hope by now, all of you have all seen and read and, perhaps, taken a few minutes to think about the revised, updated, new and improved mission statement that the Board of Trustees worked on and adapted this past year. (Quite honestly, it is somewhat of a hybrid mission AND vision statement.) This mission statement drives what we do. It is a reflection of our values, our goals, our priorities.

The new board – officers and trustees – will be working through just how we turn our mission statement into action as part of a USCJ program called Sulam for Current Leaders. Congregation B'nai Israel was selected to participate along with a select number of synagogues across the United States! Sulam for Current Leaders is a learning and action program that will enrich us as leaders, helping us to understand and act upon our responsibilities and opportunities.

Why is this important?

As a board we want to focus on ensuring CBI is a relevant and vibrant community. If our mission statement is the “glamorous” manifestation of who we want to be as a community, then we need to be just as invested in the “unglamorous” work of partnering, communicating, and

building trust – both individually and communally. In this manner we can truly be representatives of the congregation.

Besides Board members, we will ultimately engage our Committee Chairs and Committees – the backbone of synagogue life – in this learning.

I am humbled and grateful for the leadership of our committees and to all those who volunteer their time and effort as committee members or coordinate so many of our programs and events. I can tell you, having recently spent a fair amount of time with incoming Presidents at other shuls, that this is not the case everywhere. CBI is blessed with a uniquely active and dedicated membership.

That is not to say that we don't have open spots! We have big dreams and wonderful programs and important work to be done. We know there are many talented individuals of our synagogue who can add to the richness and diversity of our CBI community. I'd like to highlight a few areas:

- We hope to continue our relationship with the Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) hosting program.
- We will be reviving our Family Enrichment committee, to work with Rabbi Sharon and Rochelle Baron.
- We want to expand the reach and good deeds of our Caring Community Committee.
- The digital face of CBI – our website, emails and Facebook – could use freshening.
- And, if you are interested or concerned about sustaining our financial well-being, there are strategic and operational ways you can help. Plus, you can join our growing number of Synagogue Sustainers.
- And, in 2018 we will bring the CBI Gala back to CBI. I am thrilled to announce our Gala Co-Chairs: Micole Richter, Sydra Miller and Elizabeth Cohen. They will be looking for a large and enthusiastic committee to celebrate CBI...and wonderful honorees.

### **One last topic to touch upon...the search for our new spiritual leader upon the retirement of Rabbi Bayar in summer of 2019.**

The Rabbi Search process is an endeavor that will kick off before the end of this year and will continue for approximately 12 to 16 months. Yes, it is a long process...that involves introspection, reflection, communication and hard work.

It goes without saying that that a Rabbi Search is not just a search for another synagogue employee. It is not another business task. For a synagogue is a *kehillah kedosha* – a sacred community. At times, as we move forward on this journey together, the work of the rabbinic search committee may appear secular and mundane. But understanding at all times that we are a sacred community will guide us in the task before us...that its ultimate purpose is to engage a religious leader to guide the membership and lay leadership on the path to grow as a sacred community.

Let me be clear...The Search Committee will be a committee with 900 members. Every individual of this congregation will have multiple ways to be involved and heard...in open meetings, discussion groups, online surveys, individual contact. When candidates are invited to CBI for a weekend visit, congregants will be able to observe individuals in the sanctuary, in social gatherings, in the classroom.

Guiding this effort will be a Rabbi Search Committee comprised of nine to 12 members. The Search Committee are servants of the congregation to serve the community...stewards of the process. The committee is not so much "selecting" the new rabbi as narrowing down the choices...collecting feedback...making final recommendation to the Board of Trustees on which candidate will best serve the needs of the synagogue.

Briefly, in terms of a general timeline:

- By the end of October, Chairs of the Search Committee will be selected.
- By November-December, members of the Search Committee will be selected.
- From December 2017 through August 2018, the very important groundwork will take place by the committee. Call this the grunt work...establish actual schedule; review best practices; set up communication vehicles; conduct surveys, open meetings and one-on-one interviews; determine needs/skills...basically a working profile; benchmark compensation; complete posting or questionnaire. The Rabbinic Assembly, the international association of Conservative Rabbi's, has a Joint Placement Commission that can help with the process, if we so choose. In any event, the Rabbinic Assembly has tremendous resources on how to conduct a search.
- From September 2018 through January or February 2019 is the search itself...finding the best match for our needs. Review resumes; conduct preliminary interviews; hold in-depth and in-person follow-up interviews; conduct Shabbat weekend visits and solicit congregation feedback. This is likely a rolling process with candidates at different steps in the process...all the while checking references and speaking to sources.
- January through March 2019 is selection time...with recommendation of the committee, the endorsement of the Board of Trustees, the negotiating of an agreement (handled by a separate Contract Committee).

Please keep in mind, this is a general outline. In my discussions with leaders of searches at other synagogues, each year has its own personality, depending on the number of candidates looking for a pulpit, the number of synagogues looking for a rabbi, the timing of the high holidays, etc. Sometimes Shabbat visits take place in February and March...other times as early as December.

The search for a new spiritual leader will not only result in a new Rabbi...but the search will also bring our congregation closer together as we focus on what is important to us as a community, a sacred community.

**Finally...I leave you with one last thought...actually, a request.**

You are here tonight, if you are like me, because you love this synagogue, you cherish this community, you are inspired by Judaism. You are invested in this congregation as your Jewish home...for yourselves, for your children and for future generations.

**Be an ambassador. Be an advocate.**

Encourage your friends and neighbors who are members of CBI to join you at Shabbat services...an educational event...a Shabbat dinner...a family program. Better yet, offer them a ride! For those Jewish friends and neighbors who are not members, ask them to join you at Shabbat services...a musical event...a social gathering...a youth group event. Tell them about our religious school...our preschool...our full complement of clergy and educators.

Demonstrate your passion and appreciation for our Jewish home...and together we will harvest the blessings of our community...and I will be sure to say, "Thank You!"