

A Message of Gratitude for a Wonderful Congregation

Dearest Friends,

What, I have asked myself over the last twenty four hours, is the essence of Purim?

The answer, like so much else in our endlessly deep and intricate faith, lies in the simple truths to be found in the siddur. The place where we alter our liturgy for Purim is in the *gratitude* section of the Amidah prayer, in which we add the *al ha-nissim* prayer, in recognition of the guiding hand of Providence.

Though His name is obscured from the entire text of the megillah, we are called upon to recognize His goodness, in bringing Esther into the position from which, through her own remarkable exercise of free will, she is able to serve as a Divine agent and save the Jewish people from annihilation. And, with this in mind, we add the *al ha-nissim* into our amidah, and we do our very best to express our gratitude for that which He wrought.

By its very nature, gratitude is an expansive emotion. When one starts to reflect on one particular debt, it is almost impossible not to realize that one has so many other debts of gratitude which must be expressed. And it is precisely in this spirit which I write to you, in reflection on a most remarkable week at the shul.

Thank you to all those who helped plan our exceptional Purim carnival. To our youth chair, Alysa Cohen, and our wonderful youth directors, Rav Yishai and Yiskah Klein, all of whom will be moving (back) to Israel, with God's help, over the summer, and all of those who assisted in putting together such a wonderful program for the hundreds of children and parents and grandparents who attended, we express our gratitude. To see hundreds of children of all ages enjoying Purim, forming joyous memories and positive associations with their heritage that will hopefully catalyze their own spiritual development years and decades from now, is a deep source of personal meaning for me.

Thank you to all of the women of the Sisterhood, who so efficiently planned the exceptionally beautiful Mishloach Manot, so considerably enhancing this mitzvah for all of us, and to its leader, Ginnine Fried, for putting so much time, effort, and energy into the execution of this project.

Thank you to all those who took time delivering the Mishloach Manot on Purim day, creating a sense of true unity and fraternity in the community. And, thank you to all those who contributed financially to make this wonderful tradition possible.

Thank you to our unrivaled office manager, Elanna Reiss, who worked so diligently in every aspect of the logistical planning, and to Allen Ezrapour, our treasurer, who made sure that every cent made it to the right account for all of the different contributions.

Thank you to all those who took time during this very busy week to attend the community wide rally in tribute to the fifty men, women, and children who were taken from the face of the Earth even as they reached for the heavens. Our own congregation, which was so strongly represented at the rally, made a profound *kiddush Hashem*, in demonstrating that the notion that 'beloved is humanity, for it has been created in the image of the Divine' is not merely a rabbinic teaching but something by which we live. It reinforced the basic principle that we refuse to raise our children and grandchildren in a world in which hatred, terrorism, and desecration of houses of worship can be tolerated.

Thank you to all those who led the numerous Megillah readings which we had, both on Purim night and during the morning, for all of your hard work and preparation. Thank you to Sigl Laster, Reb Yitz, Dr. Steve Myers, and Effie Love, for making sure that all of our minyanim ran so smoothly.

Thank you to Dr. Ben Cooper and all of the security volunteers who made sure that we were all safe, and, as always, thank you to the members of the Teaneck Police Department for all of their ongoing work on our behalf.

Finally, *acharon acharon chaviv*, the last one is indeed the most beloved, I want to thank each and every one of you from the bottom of my heart for your generous contributions to *matanot l'evyonim*, to help us take care of those members of our community who are managing stormy waters.

As Rambam taught us, the greatest joy of Purim is bring joy to those in distress, and, thanks to your incredible generosity, we more than doubled, and nearly tripled, our contributions this year, relative to to last year. I do not have words to describe what a humbling feeling it is to be your messenger in ensuring that these contributions reach the appropriate destinations. For this, perhaps above all, I am so deeply grateful.

Shabbat Shalom.

Daniel Fridman
Rabbi, Jewish Center of Teaneck