

President's Remarks 5781

Rhonda Regan, President, Temple Beth El of Northern Westchester

It is really a great honor to address you during the High Holy days and welcome in the year 5781 as president of our congregation, even if it is done virtually instead of in person. I have long felt proud and lucky to be part of our temple community. That feeling has only increased during the pandemic as our synagogue has adapted to the current climate.

As you can imagine, this year's speech was challenging to write. This would usually be the place where I speak of all of TBE's accomplishments thus far, and the activities that occurred over the past year, of which there were many before the building closed down in March. But, I want to be respectful of your time as you have already been sitting in front of a screen for some time now. I am also cognizant of all the losses that congregants may have encountered these past months – loss of loved ones to illness, or due to the financial or emotional toll of COVID-19.

So, I will try to be brief and instead focus on our sense of community at Temple Beth El. Community is a central concept in Judaism – defined by our love and regard for each other in both joyous and troubling times. As part of the Temple Beth El community during this time:

- You have a congregation that is always here for you.
- You are part of a larger community of Jewish people.
- You have a space to process things that may be upsetting or confusing in the world at large.
- If you are looking to make the world a little bit of a better place, but don't know where to start, we are here for you. This can range from, among other things:
 - Donating food in our food drive
 - Participating in a book club on How to Be an Anti-Racist, or
 - Attending a Friday Night Service in the aftermath of a troubling week

As part of Temple Beth El, you teach future generations that having a synagogue in our community matters. Through our synagogue, the connections of community fortify us and create a better life for us all. For that, we can be very thankful.

Despite the limitations of the current situation, there is still much at Temple Beth El to look forward to this coming year.

Our religious school has opened for a new school year. We are absolutely committed to keeping our children and teachers safe, and providing a meaningful Jewish education. It is our hope and expectation to be able to offer a hybrid model of in-person and on-line instruction, guided by conditions in the area and guidance from experts and state and local authorities. For those of you who don't have children in the religious school, if you drive by the Temple you will see that our side parking lot has become a tent city, an oasis for outdoor learning. Different times call for creative and innovative solutions, and we are doing just that. We also offer a comprehensive online program for those who choose to participate remotely.

We will also be offering opportunities to celebrate Sukkot and Simchat Torah, to participate in Adult Education including a timely series on Societal Injustice, as well as social activities for adults. The lay leaders, Clergy and Staff are constantly thinking of ways to keep us connected. It is very rare that someone comes up with a suggestion or idea and are told it is not possible, so if there is a way that you would like to connect with others through Temple Beth El, please reach out to me and we will work to make it happen.

During this time of transition and uncertainty, it is an absolute necessity to support our organization. It is in the toughest and most uncertain times that we need to come together – spiritually, as a community, and yes – financially. We ask that all of us step up and give what you can at whatever level that may be. Any amount at all is greatly appreciated. It is precisely because of the challenges we all face that I hope you will donate to our future. At the same time we are caring for ourselves, our loved ones and our country, we should continue to keep an eye out for when we will gather,

worship and socialize in a less challenging time. Contributing to Temple Beth El's future is an act of hope. If we are to continue to thrive, those of who are able must consider more philanthropic levels of giving.

But finally and most importantly, we want to say "Thank You". Please trust me and the Board of Trustees when I say that regardless of the amount of time or money that you are able to give, we are grateful for your support. You are sending a signal, through your membership, that Temple Beth El matters – that the supportive community we have built and have nurtured will be here in the times to come.

I want to conclude with thank yous to all who have made these services possible and meaningful. To our Executive Director Genn Kelly and all of the people who work behind the scenes, and to Rabbi Jaffe, Rabbi Linzer and Cantor Sternlieb, who support, teach, inspire and guide us every day.

As a community, we are hopeful that year ahead will be better. I hope that within our Temple Beth El community, we strengthen existing connections and form new ones. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I wish you all L'Shana Tovah. May this new year be filled with health, happiness and sweet moments for you and your family.