

A Rabbinic Perspective *By Rabbi Seymour Rosenbloom*

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Firsts and Lasts



A new Jewish year is about to begin: 5774. For me, personally, and for the congregation, it will be one of special, transformational significance. It will be a year of firsts and lasts; beginnings and endings; excitement and anxiety.

The year begins with a highlight in my family's life. On Sunday, September 1, our son **Adam** will be married to the love of his life, **Megan Gallagher**. **Cindy** and I, and Adam's mother and stepfather, Beth and David Galinsky, are looking forward to this special occasion with great joy and delight. Adam and Megan have known each other since their freshman year at The George Washington University, and were engaged on Valentine's Day in 2012. It is hard to believe that the wedding is right around the corner!

Adam and Megan will be called to the Torah for an *ufruf aliyah* on Shabbat morning, August 31, and members of our family will be reading Torah. I will be chanting the *Haftarah* on this final Shabbat of the old year. This is the last of the seven "Haftarot of Consolation" that are chanted between Tisha B'Av and Rosh HaShanah. Taken from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, it opens with the statement, "I greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God, for God has clothed me with garments of triumph, wrapped me in a robe of victory, like a bridegroom adorned with a turban, like a bride bedecked with her finery." Could this be more appropriate for the occasion?

We invite you to join us in our joy. Following the service, Beth and David, and Cindy and I are sponsoring an extended kiddush luncheon for the congregation.

And then, a few days after the wedding, I will begin my final year as rabbi of Congregation Adath Jeshurun. It is hard to believe that this will be my thirty-sixth High Holy Day observance at AJ. I came as the new, young rabbi. I was just 33 years old at the time.

It seems so long ago.

And it seems like yesterday.

I look back on these years with much joy, fulfillment, and gratitude. There are so many moments that will remain highlights etched in my memory. And there are inevitable moments of sadness, especially when I remember dear friends I made during this time who have died, some prematurely, and others in good time, but all a part of what made AJ special, and all notable for their absence.

And there are new people who continually join us, bringing the richness of their spirit and dedication to the sacred history of a unique and venerable Philadelphia congregation.

During Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, I will have a chance to reflect on my years in the rabbinate at Adath Jeshurun, remembering some of the highlights that we have shared together. And I will also be able to ruminate on the challenges we face, some of which are faced by all Conservative Jewish congregations, and others unique to us.

I am grateful to **Mitch Russell**, our immediate past president, and **Joseph M. Yohlin**, chair of the Board of Trustees, for their guidance and leadership as we began this period of transition. I look forward to working with our new president **Anne Fassler**, the fifteenth president with whom I have served the congregation, whose presidency marks a transition to a new generation of leadership in the congregation, and who, along with **Howard Gershman**, chair of the Rabbinic Search Committee will help AJ make one of the most important decisions it will have had to make in several generations.

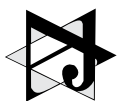
AJ is remarkable in that we have had only three rabbis in the last 103 years. That is a testament to our grounded stability and sense of mission. It is my prayer that the search process itself will bring us closer together as a community with renewed commitment to the future of Congregation Adath Jeshurun as a leader in our region, and that the choice of my successor will yield a long tenure that will continue our storied rabbinic tradition. I look forward to a meaningful relationship with him or her long into the future.

I am so grateful to the Honoring Committee chaired by **David Reibstein** and **Skip and Naomi Atkins**, who are planning some wonderful events to celebrate my rabbinate at AJ. I am looking forward to these events with great anticipation and delight.

So a new year begins. Just like any other year. And different from every other year.

May it be a year of uplifting joy and purpose for all of us as individuals, and for us as a sacred Jewish community.

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