

# TEMPLE SINAI

## Kol Sinai: Sinai Speaks

June 2019



**You Are My Family and I Love You**

**Rabbi Stuart Gershon**

*(These are excerpts from Rabbi Gershon's address to the congregation at the Shabbat service in his honor on Friday evening, May 31.)*

Dear friends, I am beyond blessed. I so want to greet and thank all of you personally. But if you are unable to hang around until midnight, consider this a virtual hug and kiss.

Thank you so much for choosing to be here tonight. Thank you—Mitch, Amanda, Reverend Scalet, Rob, Jordan, Brandon, David, and Cantor -- for all your incredibly kind words and good wishes. With the naming of the Rabbi Stuart Gershon Hebrew High School you have bestowed upon me an honor that is beyond my wildest dreams. I

am beyond blessed to have shared 25 years of my life with Temple Sinai and you.

I have been told that I am all heart. Tonight you have touched mine. There is so much gratitude in my heart for all of you and for Temple Sinai. Thank you for taking a chance on me 25 years ago. Thank you for all the joys and the simchas we've shared. Thank you for letting me hold your hands. Thank you for welcoming me into your families. You are my family and I love you all.

Dear friends, I want you to know that I will dearly miss you. I will continue to hold you in my heart. I have loved, loved serving as your rabbi. As rabbi emeritus, I will surely be back from time to time to preach or teach. So it's not really shalom but lihitraot – see you soon.

Yes, change is challenging. Your dedicated officers and trustees and your professional staff will be here to provide stability and continuity. Change is also exciting. Let's get excited about the potential for our congregation and all the new possibilities under

the leadership of interim Rabbi Dennis Ross and the next new rabbi of Temple Sinai. Who knows what gifts the next new rabbi will bring?

There is no such thing as the perfect rabbi. You have taught me how to be a better one, year after year. I hope you will forgive me for any time I let you down or acted small. I truly hope you feel I was there for you when you needed me most.

I will always be a rabbi. Ever since my ordination thirty years ago, I have given my all to live up to my calling, to live up to the purpose of my life, to live up to these words penned by Rabbi Jack Rudin:

"You keep the Torah near and you teach its eternal truths. You look to the far horizon and bring a big world to all those who see only a little one. You give lassitude no peace. You light a candle, however small, against the darkness, however great. You go forward when others say 'stand still.' You speak when others say 'keep silent.' You trust the ever-present God."

Thank you all.



**Opportunity in Our Year Ahead**

**Rabbi Dennis Ross**

Each July 1 in the United States and Canada, a good number of Reform congregations open the year with an Intentional Interim Rabbi. The title "Intentional Interim Rabbi," is relatively new and unfamiliar, so let's take a moment to explain.

An Intentional Interim Rabbi is first of all a "Rabbi" who does all the things that any rabbi serving a congregation does – caring for Bat and Bar Mitzvah students and families, teaching Confirmation, adult study, religious school,

and early childhood classes, leading services, supporting congregants in their time of need, and much more. "Intentional" points to the specific focus of the "Interim" period, which begins by "fitting in" to a synagogue's successful ways, programs and practices – of which Temple Sinai has many. Out of this relationship, we identify and call attention to a congregation's strengths as part of preparing for the arrival of the next rabbi. Once that rabbi is selected, the focus becomes a smooth transition and a strong start.

Across the Reform movement, and across many faiths, it has been found that when clergy follow an interim religious leader, that new religious leader and congregation are much more likely to enjoy a longer and more productive and enriching relationship.

Yet the word, "Interim" also offers an opportunity for a spiritual conversation.

Every now and then, people legitimately question the significance of an intentionally time-limited relationship, especially when they and their previous rabbi enjoyed and benefited from a long, successful and fulfilling tenure. Yet, we also know of many meaningful relationships that are meaningful regardless of how long the relationship lasts.

For example, I am thinking of that schoolteacher or college professor who, during that year or semester, taught you an abiding lesson about the world or yourself. I'm remembering an emergency room doctor and nurse who saw me briefly and only once their compassionate care helped me then and keeps me healthy today. **Continued On Following Page**

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### Celebrating Our Success, Building Our Future

#### Ian Singer, President

We are all familiar with the saying "may you live in interesting times." And we most certainly are, in so many facets of our daily lives, particularly as American Reform Jews. Temple Sinai, both as an institution and a community, is also living in interesting times with the retirement of Rabbi Gershon on the tail of our so far very successful merger integration with Temple Emanu-El while also addressing the rising tide of anti-Semitism. Yet there is no doubt that Sinai has very bright future ahead. A future built upon the strong foundation that generations of Sinai and former Temple Emanu-El members have created for us. As such, and in accordance with some of our most deep-seated values, it is our obligation to live into our legacy and work together to ensure that Sinai remains a vibrant community and a place of Reform Jewish worship for generations to come. We will do this by celebrating our success while building our future.

- Over the past year, 25 Sinai families celebrated B'nei Mitvot, and 12 celebrated confirmation;
- Our membership remains vibrant, with over 480 membership-units;
- The opening of our Temple Emanu-El Holocaust Remembrance Center;

- We became an ARZA congregation;
- Endowment funds analysis and integration (ongoing merger efforts);
- Successfully retaining Rabbi Dennis Ross to serve as our Interim Rabbi; and
- Providing Rabbi Stuart Gershon with a farewell appropriate to all that he has done for Sinai as a congregation and each of us over the last 25 years.

Of course, there are many, many more successes that are not mentioned, and I encourage you to take a moment right now to reflect on some of your own personal, happier experiences at Sinai over the last year. For me, I would like to take a moment to thank everyone who volunteers their time at Sinai for the benefit of us all: To our Religious School teachers, to the members of our Choir - Shir Libeinu.

To the leadership and members of our highly engaging (and engaged) auxiliary groups and committees. To the members of the Rabbi Search Committee. And to the members of our Board of Trustees, a special note of gratitude.

With these successes in mind, it is equally important (and human nature) to identify opportunities from some of our harder life-lessons and experiences. We did not find our next permanent Rabbi; however, during the search process we learned a lot about who we are as a congregation and where we want to go in the future with our next Rabbi. We did not settle for expediency's sake, and now we have a wonderful Rabbi to help us better prepare for our next search that will begin over the summer. **Continued on P. 7**

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### Opportunity in Our Year Ahead

#### Rabbi Dennis Ross

And then there was that youth leader, cantor or rabbi from decades ago who you lost touch with, even as your life is still blessed by what they taught you and their contribution toward setting your life direction.

I've done a great deal of reading, teaching and writing about one of the greatest 20<sup>th</sup> century Jewish thinkers, Martin Buber, known for his landmark book *I and Thou*, and the spirituality between people he called the *I-Thou* relationship.

Buber wants us to know that *I-Thou* makes a difference, no matter how long it lasts. When we relate fully, openly, warmly and with trust in *I-Thou*, our time together influences and endures in spiritual dimensions we cannot see. With Buber's teachings in mind, you and I begin a relationship that, I pray, will bring abiding blessing to all of us, including your next rabbi. Opportunity awaits us!

I have begun working closely with Rabbi Gershon, outgoing President David Hoodis and incoming President Ian Singer, Cantor Shemesh, your Temple leaders, and the Temple staff – their commitment, capabilities and devotion raise my spirits with promise for our time together. As I arrive and get settled after July 1, I look forward to getting to know the Congregation at Shabbat services and Torah study through the summer and at Temple events. And I look forward to meeting you individually, but please don't wait for me to take the first step-- email me at [RabbiRoss@TempleSinaiNJ.org](mailto:RabbiRoss@TempleSinaiNJ.org) to pick out a time to sit down and get acquainted.

I join you in anticipating a year of learning, growth, enrichment and fulfillment.



**Tradition...  
Tradition, is now  
Transition...**

**David Hoodis,  
Immediate Past  
President**

My Friends,

I write my final message in Kol Sinai as President. These notes are always bitter-sweet as it really has been a great honor to serve in this capacity these past two years. And what a two years it has been. While a lot has changed, much has stayed and will remain the same. The new norm for the world and Temple Sinai is truly about Transition. The world is changing so rapidly we must continue to stay out front, to progress, to grow, and to Transition. What will never change is Temple Sinai's spirit, our core values as a community and congregation, your spiritual home.

In these last two years we welcomed our

newest members from Temple Emanu-El and other new members and have seen increased participation and programming. We opened the Temple Emanu-El Holocaust Resource Center, a beacon for the area that is needed now more than ever. It helps with our obligation to tell the story of the holocaust and of hate in trying to make sure that history is not repeated. We have spent a year celebrating as we get ready to say *lehitraot* to our beloved Rabbi Gershon who has served Temple Sinai for these past 25 years. His legacy at Temple Sinai, the countless congregants, the general community at large is immeasurable.

I hope you were able to join us at the celebratory Shabbat on May 31st as it was a beautiful service and beautiful tribute from the community.

As we embark in a Transition year with Rabbi Ross, I am confident that he will enhance our Temple Sinai. He comes with a lot of energy and ideas, as well as, the experience needed to guide us as we

search and hire our next permanent rabbi. The dedicated search committee will lead us through this process and help us with this Transition.

I can't say thank you enough to the talented, committed and dedicated lay leadership including our board of trustees, the countless volunteers, and congregants that help make Temple Sinai so special. Additionally, our wonderful staff that do so much behind the scenes and make it look effortless. I am forever grateful to all of these people for what they have done for Temple Sinai and in assisting me.

Lastly, the slate of officers and board that we put forth continues in our tradition of having the most talented and committed group of volunteer leaders. I know that they will make Temple Sinai even stronger on our Transitions and journey.

I look forward to seeing you soon.

B'Shalom, David



**Being Green - The  
Time is Now!**

**Cantor Marina  
Shemesh**

As this year comes to a close and we say farewell to our beloved

Rabbi Stuart Gershon, we recall all the wonderful projects and programs he undertook over the years with immense passion and creativity. Just last year he made sure that after the merger with Temple Emanu-El, their Holocaust Resource Center was successfully transferred to Temple Sinai. Rabbi Gershon worked tirelessly to give the HRC a new life and enrich the exhibition for our members and the wider Summit community.

I too have a project in mind, and I would like to focus on it for the next year or several years. I am really passionate about the environment and I would like our Temple to become a green Temple. Jewish tradition teaches us to care for our planet in order to preserve that which God has created.

Psalm 24 notes, "The Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof," a dramatic assertion of God's ownership of the land. Judaism emphasizes our need to preserve our natural resources and generate new ones for future generations. The Talmud tells the story of the sage Choni, who was walking along a road when he saw a man planting a carob tree. Choni asked, "How long will it take for this tree to bear fruit?" "Seventy years," the man replied. Choni then asked, "Are you so healthy that you expect to live that length of time and eat its fruit?" The man answered, "I found a fruitful world because my ancestors planted it for me. Likewise, I am planting for my children."

We are encouraged *l'vadah ul'shamrah*, "to till and to tend," to become the Earth's stewards. In Isaiah 41:17-18, God promises, "I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places and fountains in the midst of valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water and the dry land springs of water." In other words, we were given our planet as a

loan from God, and we should work to preserve it. There is no question in my mind that Temple Sinai should be environmentally responsible, as it is a big part of Tikkun Olam, and Tikkun Olam is the core of our Reform Jewish values.

What does it mean to be a "Green Temple," and what would be the first steps in such an undertaking? Luckily, here in Summit we have an organization called Green Faith Circle of Summit Area. Several houses of worship are members of this organization including Ohr Shalom, (Summit JCC) and Congregation Beth Hatikavah. As a progressive Reform Jewish congregation in Summit, I think it is very important for us to join the cohort of other congregations in addressing environmental issues, and to commit ourselves to being responsible for the wellbeing and sustainability of our home, planet Earth. Green Faith Circle is a one-stop shop for the resources and tools religious institutions need to engage in environmental issues and become religious-environmental leaders.

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## Board Transitions

### Audrey Napchen, Executive Director

This is the time when we look back and celebrate the accomplishments of the year that has passed and begin preparations for the year to come.

Much has been achieved and the foundation has been set for the exciting changes ahead. With achievement comes strong leadership. Here at Temple Sinai we are blessed with leaders who have their hearts, minds and energies fully committed to our community.

### We thank and honor the 2018-19 Board Trustees!

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### We wish the 2019-20 Board of Trustees the very best of luck

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#### Immediate Past President

**2019-2021**  
David Hoodis



## TSRS/TSHS IS HONORED!

### Our Own Israeli Shaliach to Bring Israel to Our Children, Teens, Adults

#### Patti Kahn, Director of Education

Each school year since 2012 Temple Sinai's K-12 students have had the benefit of interacting with a talented, enthusiastic Israeli teen each Sunday. These teen emissaries are part of the Rishonim Program of Greater MetroWest. For the year following their graduation from High School and before entering the Israel Defense Force, nine Rishonim (Rishon means "First, or Top-notch") are assigned to local synagogue schools and Jewish day schools to forge connections to Israel. Each Rishon (male) and Rishonah (female) is specially skilled to facilitate particularly fun learning activities and to build great relationships with our children and teens. Over the years our students' curiosity about, knowledge of and interest in Israel has increased exponentially, forming a strong love for and commitment to Israel.

For the upcoming school year, Greater MetroWest's Israel Program Dept. is honoring our school by assigning Ohad Po-

rat, an older (29), more experienced and especially gifted Shaliach (meaning one who "brings") to TSRS/TSHS and even to the adult groups of Temple Sinai. The difference between hosting a Rishon/Rishonah and hosting a Shaliach is that our emissary will be able to teach about Israel on a deeper level, having already been in the IDF; having taught diverse age groups; having been a Shaliakh and group leader in Israel. Ohad has worked multiple summers (including this summer) as an informal Israel educator at Camp Ramah in the Berkshires.

It is rare for an experienced Shaliakh to be assigned to a school/synagogue. Ohad is being placed at Temple Sinai because of our schools' strong Israel education program and excellent weave of former Rishonim into each grades' experience, with logistical regularity. The Temple is also recognized for its strong commitment to Israel, thus affording Ohad the opportunity to work with our adults as well as our children/teens.

Ohad loves to encourage critical thinking when he teaches. He is a musician (guitar) and is graduating this spring from BPM College, Tel Aviv, with a degree in music. He loves sports, especially basketball and American football. Ohad is able to work with diverse audiences, bringing Israeli culture, games, fun activities and Israeli music to our community this year. We welcome Ohad Porat with open arms!

**Families with Young Children (FwYC) – L'dor v'dor -- Teen Role Models for our Youngest Children**

Temple Sinai's teens have been role models for the Religious School students for years. They serve as madrichim, run the booths at the Purim Carnival, host their donut sales, and

more. What you may not know, though, is that they are also role models for the youngest children at Temple Sinai.

For several years, Temple Sinai teens have been volunteering at our Tot Shabbat, High Holy Days, and Rabbi Roundtable programs. They help the children with the activities while their parents are enjoying dinner during Tot Shabbat, attending HHD services, or learning with the Rabbi. Regardless of what the activities are (art, building, social action), the under-five crowd is drawn to the teens. In fact, when the teens are not present, the Tot Shabbaters ask, "Where are the big kids who play with us? Why aren't they here?"

This summer, the teens will be adding their impact to the ECEP Summer Camp program. The majority of our "assistant teachers" this summer are current or

*The majority of our "assistant teachers" this summer are current or former Temple Sinai Religious School and High School students.*

former Temple Sinai Religious School and High School students. Their presence will add energy and excitement. The teens will see a new side of their temple, and the younger kids will build relationships with teens who have grown up in the same classrooms. And who knows?! Maybe today's preschoolers will be the next madrichim, camp assistant teachers, and Tot Shabbat volunteers. L'dor v'dor!



Samantha Eichert and Teens  
At Teens & Tot Shabbat



**The Cycle of the ECEP: Good-byes and Hellos**

**Amy Damast, Director of the Early**

**Childhood Education Program**

When you work with young children, your days are filled with strings of small achievements. They are filled with moments of learning to share and take turns, moments of learning to run and climb, moments of learning to write and cut. Sometimes, in the midst of all those moments, something big occurs. But usually, it's only when you look back at the end of the school year that you can see the combination of all the small moments which make up the big achievements.

As June approaches, we are nearing the end of the ECEP's SIXTH year! We are preparing for our All-School Theme Day – our last theme day found most of the school

(including the teachers) in pajamas at school! We are preparing for our End of School Picnic (which has never needed a rain date). And we are preparing for the 4s End-of-Year Family Celebration on Shavuot.

We are also preparing to say some good-byes – to families who are moving away and to children who will be moving on to Kindergarten or to other school programs. These good-byes are so very difficult because, during all those small moments for all those years, the children and their families settle into our hearts. They become our "shared" children for the years they are in our building. And the ECEP community becomes the village that it takes to raise a child.

However, instead of looking backward, we focus on looking forward. The children and their families have great adventures ahead. They will continue to collect the small moments that make the big achievements. And often, Temple Sinai remains a part of those moments. We have a wall of "first day of Kindergarten"



pictures outside the ECEP office. We receive emails and cards to keep the connections going. We see the children and their families at the K-2 Academy on Sundays, at High Holy Days programming and Sukkot's Pizza in the Hut Bubble party. We watch our Tot Shabbat "regulars" move on to Shabbat B'Yachad and Shabbat services.

And when September comes, we start the cycle over again, with some students returning and new students joining the community and settling deep in our hearts!



**Samantha Eichert**  
**Director of Youth Engagement**

This has been an incredible year for me at Temple Sinai. I have enjoyed getting to know our kids, tweens, and teens at Religious School, High School, and of course, Youth Group. We've jumped, gaga'd, searched and solved mysteries, gorged ourselves on endless chocolate, candies, and pizza, and celebrated our Judaism together week after week. I am grateful for each experience shared together.

While I will not be at Temple Sinai next year, there has been a lot of groundwork laid for the next person to continue building Temple Sinai's Youth Programs. Already, a calendar of Youth Group events is in the works- stay tuned on where each group will go and what they'll do next! Our High School teachers are excited for another great year. 10th-grade Confirmation with Rabbi Ross is going to reflect everything we love about Confirmation, and add his personal touch to the curriculum. 11th and 12th grade who will enjoy an expanded community as they will have each other and Mrs. Z for two years. I am so excited for all that lies ahead for our kids & teens, and I am excited for the next Director of Youth Engagement at Temple Sinai. Just as I did, they will bring their own unique perspective, creativity, and vision. I know it will be one which continues to bring connection and Jewish learning to our youth at every stage.

B'Shalom, Samantha

# CELEBRATIONS



Rabbi Gershon is about to cut the ribbon for the newly named Rabbi Stuart Gershon Hebrew High School



Adult B'nei Mitzvah, left to right- Cantor Marina Shemesh, Mica Sylvester, Roberta Nooger, Kim Kaplan, Beth Cohen, Lyn Eisenthal, Amy Hull, Norrie Kurtz, Ari Magedoff, and Rabbi Stuart Gershon

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### **Celebrating Our Success, Building Our Future**

**Ian Singer, President**

We will certainly make the most of this tremendous opportunity, and I am confident that we will have our next permanent Rabbi in place next year. It is worth noting that all but one of our Rabbi Search committee are committed to continuing the search efforts on our behalf. This will lead to more transition in the future, to be sure, but securing our next Rabbi is one of the most, if not the most, critical tasks ahead of us this year and we are very well positioned to succeed. Individually and as a community, we are faced with increasing acceptance and incidents of anti-Semitism. As American Reform Jews such hatred is not only unacceptable, but it is often also hard to understand even though our history warns us otherwise. Temple Sinai's response to such hatred is completely aligned with our highest values. We have created the Temple Emanu-El Holocaust Remembrance Center (the "TEHRC"): a unique, physical institution to help us, and others, "never forget." We have invited members of our broader, secular community to Temple Sinai to enable their voices to be heard along with ours when we gathered to protest hatred. We have created educational programs designed to help us better under-

stand how to address bigotry in all forms. Through this darkness, Temple Sinai will continue to shine. Will we continue our efforts to respond to anti-Semitism, perhaps importantly by leveraging the TEHRC even more to engage with and provide educational opportunities with regional, secular educational institutions.

I'd like to conclude by paraphrasing a passage from Rabbi Alvin Fine – Senior Rabbi, San Francisco's Congregation Emanu-El, 1948-1964 – that I read during the High Holidays in our prayer book: "life is a journey. A going, a growing from stage to stage . . . from defeat to defeat to defeat, until, looking backward or ahead: we see that victory lies not at some high place along the way, but in having made the journey, stage by stage, a sacred pilgrimage . . . [T]o life everlasting."

When you think of Temple Sinai's journey, and you and your family's place in it, I encourage you to continue to treasure the time we have together as a community. I encourage you to consider coming to perhaps one more Shabbat service or volunteering some time to one of the many causes Sinai supports that means the most to you. I encourage you to consider creating a legacy gift. In so doing, when you look back you will feel that much more gratified that your efforts helped to ensure Temple Sinai's future for generations to come – a future that I am confident has only better days ahead.

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### **Being Green - The Time is Now! Cantor Marina Shemesh**

To become a Green Temple and join the Green Faith community, we would need to go through several improvements of our aging building, including, but not limited to installing "smart" thermostats, promoting active recycling, better insulation, improved water use and integrating pest management. It is not a one year project, but we need to start somewhere, and in my opinion, the time is now. This is a multi-year guided journey that will require commitment and a lot of work!

We the clergy would need to teach from the pulpit about why we are commanded to care for the environment; we could have guest speakers, and engaging environmental programming for kids and adults. We might partner with Moms Help-

ing Moms, a local organization that addresses diaper and other infant/child needs through collections of diaper, wipes, specific baby equipment as well as gently used infant and children's clothing for children from birth to age 5. Or we might consider joining Bags to Benches program, collecting plastic bags for a company that makes benches out of them... There are so many steps, initiatives, and programs with which we could engage. Green Faith Circle helps and guides congregations through those steps and initiatives. It is obvious that I cannot do it alone. So my plea to you is to join me in this journey. I am looking for people who are, like me, passionate about the environment and the future of our planet. Please let me know if you, or someone you know, would be interested in getting involved, and we will start together "letaken et haolam" (repair the world).

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Temple Sinai's Shabbat Under the Stars!

Join us on...

FRIDAY, JULY 26 & AUGUST 16 AT 7 PM

Enjoy the music, breezy vibe and of course  
the starry starry night!

Please check out the Temple calendar at [www.templestinainj.org/calendar](http://www.templestinainj.org/calendar)