

Dear Temple Sinai Family,

For many years before our daughter, Ayalah, was born, I was an avid runner and even taught exercise classes to help pay the bills as I went through cantorial school. I loved exercising because it made me feel strong and healthy, it was empowering, and I felt it was a sort of embodied spiritual practice a regular routine that became another sacred ritual for me. However, when I became pregnant, I took a “break” from exercise and never looked back. Somehow, what had once been a sacred priority had simply fallen by the wayside. My own physical health and wellbeing took a back seat as I dove into motherhood and focused on caring for my growing family.

So, after taking more than a decade off from regular exercise (with the myriad valid excuses of working, raising children and running a household) I had been wanting to get back into shape for some time, but didn’t quite know how to start again. I can no longer run, due to some hip issues, and doing workout videos at home in my living room just wasn’t going to cut it. My criteria for exercise were simple (read the sarcasm between the lines here): it had to be convenient, it had to fit into my schedule without interfering with family and work, it had to be close to home, and it had to be enjoyable. An exercise routine like that shouldn’t be hard to find, right?

Nevertheless, this past September, while walking to my neighborhood grocery store on an errand, I passed a tiny little gym called the Bronx Barbell Club. I ventured in and inquired about the classes offered. I was told that this was a Crossfit and weightlifting gym. Then the coach asked me if I wanted to give the class a try. I had never heard of Crossfit and I had certainly never lifted weights, but I decided to give it a go. After nearly an hour of strength training, gymnastics skills practice and cardio, I was literally crawling out the door - it was one of the most intense workouts I had ever tried. But, the whole way through, I felt I was in a safe and fun environment, surrounded by supportive and encouraging coaches and fellow gym members. I loved it. And now I’m hooked.

I have been attending Crossfit classes regularly for more than six months now and I can’t imagine my life without my tiny gym, the awesome workouts, and all the friends I’ve made. I have found an exercise routine that is exciting and challenging, I’ve found another *k’hillah kedosha* (a sacred community) in the members and coaches there, and I’m thrilled I’ve been able to make fitness a part of my daily life once again. I have more energy, more confidence and, overall, I feel calmer and happier. I’ve realized that when I take my own health and wellbeing seriously, I am better able to care for my family and all those who rely on me for support.

So, while I know Crossfit might not be the workout for everyone, I hope you take some time each day to care for your body. Maybe you have a regular yoga practice; perhaps you swim, dance, play tennis, or workout at the JCC. Or maybe you’re ready to resume our Friday 1:00pm walks at Irwin Park this month (I know I am!). Whatever physical activity you engage in, consider it a sacred priority because you deserve it, and those for whom you care will benefit from it too. And, while you exercise, do your best to surround yourself with supportive friends and a safe, nurturing environment. We at Temple Sinai place gathering to pray and to learn – our spiritual and intellectual “workouts” – at the center of our sacred community. We exercise our heart, mind, and soul daily. So too, I invite you to prioritize caring for your physical being and developing an embodied spiritual practice.

B’Shira, in song,

*Cantor Micah Morgovsky*