

## DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

Since March, I have been working from home, which seems to be the norm for most people I know. I was really getting used to it: no traffic getting to my desk, I could be at a meeting at a moment's notice — just click on Zoom and voilà, you are there.

But this past month, I have had the “pleasure” to be back in my new office at the temple overseeing the installation of a brand-new gas boiler\* in our school wing. This was not an easy process, as we were converting the building's heating source from oil to gas. Who knew what was behind that thermostat on the wall that just caused heat to come out of the radiators?

But was it really a pleasure? Our building still remains mostly empty; the classrooms are not being used by our religious school families. Our sanctuary is still empty on Friday nights.

I began to think,

“Can Judaism survive without a temple?” Then every week, I am amazed to see that YES, it can. Our building might be empty but our services are full; our sanctuary is quiet, but our hearts are overflowing; our homes are filled with the light of Shabbat candles and song as I watch those little boxes on Zoom each week. We are still all together...even though we are apart. Judaism has proven over and over again that we do not need a central physical address to pray and gather.

Throughout Jewish history, there have been great Jewish leaders such as Rabbi Yochanan ben-Zakkai who, in challenging times, created new models for Jewish learning and continuity. More than any other figure of the post-Second Temple period, he is credited with developing a model of Judaism that could endure without a Temple, without sacrifices, and without a state, no matter where Jews lived in the world.

While our building might not currently be the physical gathering space for which it is intended, Temple Sinai as a congregation is still very much alive, creating new ways to stay connected. But I still can't help feeling the emptiness of our building. It is almost like our sanctuary and classrooms are begging for voices to once again fill these spaces. So even while we are physically absent, I continue to maintain our building as a gesture of hope for the future. Just like Rabbi Yohanan ben-Zakkai, who established a new center of Jewish learning to keep Judaism alive in the face of physical devastation, I will continue to maintain our spiritual home at 458 Lakeside Drive, in the very same way we have, with the faith that we will all be together once again in person as soon as it is safe.

\*I would like to give a shout out to Sharon Goldstein and Jeff Pardo for their endless hours on the boiler project, I could not have done this without their assistance.

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