

Dear Fellow Congregants:

By now you have read Rabbi Goldin's message to the congregation concerning his decision to retire. His letter made a deep emotional impact on me, leaving me with a profound sense of the passage of time and the transition that we face as individual members and as a community.

Rabbi Goldin has been our spiritual and communal leader in every sense of the word for more than 33 years. He has been an eloquent orator focusing our *kehilla* on Torah values; a Torah scholar and writer who has produced *Unlocking the Torah Text*; a mentor to talented young rabbis; a pastoral counselor who has guided many of us through challenging times; a staunch supporter of Israel who has led our community there when our help was most needed; and a leader in the wider Jewish world through his service and leadership in numerous local, national and international organizations. Through it all, Rabbi Goldin has carried himself with grace and dignity. His skills and achievements have played an invaluable role in the growth of our community, as we have grown from 300 to more than 750 families during his tenure and now share a unique home that is a testament to our diversity and unity.

And now, we must look forward and ask: Who will be our next rabbinic leader? What can we expect during the next 18-month rabbinic transition period? What will be Rabbi Goldin's role within the Ahavath Torah family following his retirement?

To answer these questions, we need to engage in a process in which our entire community is involved. We have taken the first step in this process: the formation of a Transition Committee. This committee, through discussion, focus groups and surveys, will identify the issues with which we are most concerned and will challenge us to define our community going forward. This committee's work will provide us with guidance that will shape the development of Ahavath Torah and the selection of our next spiritual leader. I am pleased to announce that this committee is chaired by Jeremy Fingerman (Vice President for Finance), Debra Hirsch (Trustee) and Lee Lasher (immediate Past President), and includes the following appointed members: Yehuda Blinder, Kenny Eckstein, Deborah Feuer, Irene Gottesman, Stu Halpern, Michael Harary, Leon Kozak, Jen Lifschitz, Sam Moed, David Muschel, Deena Ottensoser, Drew Parker, Kenny Prager, Harry Reidler, Chana Schwartz, Marc Setton, Shevy Solomon, and Aaron Stein. While each of them contributes significant skill and experience, each is also available to hear your suggestions and concerns.

To assist the Transition Committee in performing its work, we have retained Rabbi Ronald Schwarzberg, Director of The Morris and Gertrude Bienenfeld Department of Jewish Career Development and Placement at Yeshiva University. Rabbi Schwarzberg is a skilled and experienced professional whose biography can be accessed at <http://www.yu.edu/cjf/about/senior-staff/>

Finally, as we enter into this transition period that, while challenging, will also be stimulating and revealing, let us always remember to accord Rabbi Goldin, Rabbi Poupko and Rabbi Kuessous the respect and consideration they deserve during a process that will impact them in a very direct and personal way.

With Hashem's help, we will emerge from this process with an increased understanding and appreciation of our past as well as a guide to our future. May we go from strength to strength in our efforts.

Wishing a *chag kasher v'sameach* to all,

Bruce Brafman

President, Congregation Ahavath Torah