

High Holiday Appeal

There is a scene that will be repeating itself at family gatherings all over the country tonight, at it does at family gatherings at any time. Extended families will come together—grandparents and grandchildren, aunts and uncles, and cousins. And there will always be someone, an aunt it usually seems to be, who shortly after she arrives corners one of the children, smiles, reaches out her stubby right hand, and applies a hard pinch to the left cheek, while blurting out her favorite observation, those immortal four words: “My, how you’ve grown!”

And as it is with growing children, so it is with growing institutions. Look at us here at Temple Aliyah—my, how *we*’ve grown!

From an original 30 families, to 180 when we joined 20 years ago, to 430 now, we’ve grown tremendously. From renting space at the Presbyterian church, to purchasing the old farmhouse here on Central Avenue, to this beautiful building in 1993, which today is nearly bursting at the seams, we’ve grown.

But we know, growth is not an end in and of itself, it’s what you grow to become. For a child, we wonder, is he kind and caring? Does she look at the world and people outside herself? Does he have interests, even passions? And as the child grows into a teenager and young adult, what, we want to know, are her goals? His aspirations? Her dreams?

The same is true of institutions. We grow. We need to define our *own* goals and aspirations, our own dreams. And we need the means and a plan to realize them.

Before becoming co-Presidents, Margie and I were invited to a breakfast meeting with Barry Shrage, the director of CJP. One of his first questions for us was, “What are your dreams for Temple Aliyah? Dreams!? We weren’t sure we had any! We just wanted to be sure as co-Presidents we didn’t mess up too badly.

But this set us to thinking. He was right. We *do* need dreams for Temple Aliyah.

There’s a song from the Broadway show South Pacific called “Happy Talk.” It’s a cute, sweet song, *so* cute and *so* sweet in fact that it’s easy to overlook how insightful its lyrics are:

“Talk about things you like to do.

You’ve got to have a dream,

If you don’t have a dream—

How you gonna have a dream come true?”

We really do need dreams, for ourselves as individuals, and for our synagogue, because we all want to *keep* growing.

Milton Goodman is a former president of Temple Aliyah. Back in 1988, Milton stood on the bimah, over there, in what is now the Chapel and the Religious School, and delivered what those of us who remember that Rosh Hashanah refer to as “Milton’s I-Have-a Dream” speech. He referred to the dreams of the original, founding members of Temple Aliyah, and he enumerated his own new ones. Here are some of the things he dreamed for 13 years ago:

A new building, to replace the old farmhouse.

A full-time staff of Rabbi, Cantor, and Educational Director.

And, a membership roster of 400 families.

Many of us who sat there in the Congregation that year thought to ourselves: “well, we really do need a new building, but it’ll probably too expensive, and that’s a lot of full-time staff, and 400 members?! Yeah, right, Milton!”

But look at where we are today. Look at what we’ve done under the leadership of the past five presidents: Sue Kams, Alan Greenfield, Carol Flashner, Barry Charton, and Beth Moskowitz. The

building we now occupy was dedicated in 1993, it has already been expanded once, and is again overcrowded and in need of expansion. Our full-time staff includes not only Rabbi, Cantor, and Director of Education, but also Family Educator, Youth Director, and three office staff. And we now have 430 member families.

My, how we've grown!

And more importantly, look what we've done in this facility, with that staff, with this membership—with us! To list the programs we have available to members and their families of all ages would take far too long to fit in this appeal. Just look at this booklet of Adult Ed, Family Ed, and Social Action programs this year, which we have mailed to everyone—it would take an additional 15 minutes just to read this brochure out loud. We encourage each and every one of you to take the time to read it yourselves and to take part in the programs and activities that interest you.

So it's time for a *new* set of dreams. We can't rest on having fulfilled the old ones. We've grown—my, how we've grown!—but we must continue to grow toward the fulfillment of a new set of goals.

So here are some of our dreams for Temple Aliyah:

A vibrant, exciting Adult Education program, not just on paper in a booklet, but in reality of its attendance, so that Me'ah, which means 100 in Hebrew, refers not only to 100 hours of study but *also* to 100 people enrolled in it in a given year.

A full-time Temple Administrator, to attend to the many day-to-day details of taking care of the Temple, so that the lay leadership can spend their time concentrating on our goals and programming, rather than on time-consuming details.

Up-to-date technology throughout our system, including not just our new web site but an effective e-mail system to strengthen and facilitate communication between the Temple and its members.

For our children, a religious school so effective that every one of our post-Bar and Bat Mitzvah children continues on with his or her Jewish education at Prozdor.

Also in our school, a fully funded special education program, which we have just begun this year with a generous contribution of seed money.

Every one of our kids enrolled in the Passport to Israel program, so that they may travel to and experience our homeland and strengthen their attachment to the land and to the Jewish people. And on the subject of Israel, we should follow up the success of the inaugural Congregational trip of 2000 have a regular congregational Israel trip—at least every other year—and every one of our member families should go at least once.

And we dream that some day soon, at the beginning of each Temple annual meeting, the Treasurer will be able to report to the Congregation not the size of the remaining mortgage and how much we've paid off in the past year, but rather the size of the Endowment, and how much it has increased that year.

You might be intimidated by this list. After all, let's face it, some of you here today may not have been here very much since this same time last year. That okay—it *really* is—the fact that you're here today is a sign that you *do* care about your Jewish connection and your membership. Synagogue membership is kind of like a physical fitness program. You've got to build up your conditioning. You can't just expect to dive in to services, social action, adult ed, and other programs, any more than someone out of shape can just one day decide to jump on a treadmill and run 8 miles in an hour. But we *do* hope you'll consider at least *starting* a program

of Jewish fitness as well as physical fitness. Hey, you've already joined *this* gym—come in and start flexing your spiritual muscles.

It has been said that our generation has been one of seekers, trying to attain abstract values—spirituality, connectedness, friendship, wisdom, love—rather than just material acquisitions. But we can't strive for these values in their abstraction. Judaism has taught us for centuries, and we as a society have come only recently to relearn it, that in order to attain these abstractions, you need to engage in concrete activities. This is what this synagogue can provide for you. If you want to be spiritual, come and join us in prayer. If you're looking for wisdom, come study great texts with us. If you want to nurture friendship, get involved with the many social activities offered by the Temple, Sisterhood, Men's Club, and 45-and-Counting. And if you seek justice and love, get involved with our social action programs, doing deeds of tzedakah and hesed.

There comes a time at the annual family gathering when the former little kid now towers over his sweet aunt, yet she still reaches up, still pinches the cheek, and still says, "My, how you've grown!" but then she asks, "Nu, so what are you studying? What are you going to *do* with your life, Bubbele?"

We as a congregation have reached that point, our college-age years if you will, and we need to ask ourselves as a Congregation, "Nu, so what are *we* going to do with our lives?"

As we dream our new congregational dreams, make our long-term plans, we need a lot of resources. We have an abundance of talent and energy, but we also need money. And lots of it. Like the college kid at a top-ranked school, our tuition is steep. We need more funds to support the fine programs we already have, to develop and sustain new, important ones, to find those things that might bring you—*all* of you in some way—to join in with us.

This past week has been terrible for all of us. In the wake of the horror we felt in New York City and Washington, and throughout our country, it is very hard for us to stand up here and ask you to give us money. It seems so petty. Yet maybe the best way for each of us as individuals to deal with the evil and hate in the world is to strengthen our own institutions which promote Judaism and all the positive things it has to offer a world in crisis, beginning with our own Temple Aliyah.

When we went on the Synagogue Council Unity Mission to New York last year, we had the privilege of visiting the rare books library at the Jewish Theological Seminary, and one of the items we saw was a letter written by Moses Maimonides, the Rambam, a leading 12th century physician and philosopher, and probably the greatest Rabbi ever! And what was the letter we saw? A medical consultation? A portion of a commentary on the Torah or Talmud? No, it was a letter to the Jews of Egypt, asking them for funds to support the community in a time of crisis.

So—please take your pledge cards now, and fold down the tab to make the most generous gift you possibly can.

My, how we've grown! And how truly wonderful it's been to fulfill our original congregational dreams, to replace them with new ones, to fulfill those also, and now to dream yet even new dreams. Please join us in helping make our new dreams come true.

The ushers will go along the aisles to collect the pledge cards from you. And we promise—they've given us their word—they won't pinch your cheek.

Shanah tovah.