

High Holiday Appeal Speech  
Peter Seresky, President  
First Day of Rosh Hashanah, 5768 (2007)

Thank you Rabbi and Shana Tova to all.

Ever since Debbie and I joined Temple Aliyah over 18 years ago, I have always wanted to do two things. I think you may be able to figure out the first but the second is to begin a Holiday Appeal from the back of our Bait Tefilla. Why the back? Well it is certainly different and is bound to get people's attention. I also have the ability to make sure that everyone is awake during my speech. But more importantly, speaking and standing together, united as a *kehillah* is an important goal as we embark on what I feel is a defining time in the history of Temple Aliyah. As we begin to change the landscape of Temple Aliyah, it is crucial that we come together as a community. One person standing on the *bimah* can't accomplish our dreams. We will only truly succeed when we are all united and are a part of the process. Together we can do great things. Together we will have strength.

Any student of political science knows that a new president inherits many parts of their agenda from the previous administration. For this I am forever grateful and humbled by my predecessor and good friend Glenn Levine. But the hard work and dreams of our previous leaders can only be fulfilled with commitment, dedication and vision of each and every one of us.

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Let me take a few moments to explore the many exciting initiatives and events that will beautify our landscape at Temple Aliyah.

We have already embarked on our Temple Aliyah Legacy Torah Project. We are writing our own Torah!! The Torah, the connection to all of us as a people. The foundation of our beliefs and our identity. The most important cornerstone of us as a Jewish people. Our scribe Rabbi Gustavo Surazski (no relation) has been commissioned and has begun the task of writing a Torah for our *kehillah*. Rabbi Surazski will be joining us for a week of study and celebration starting October 26th. He will be in the classroom with our youth. He will be with our teens. He will spend Shabbat with us. He will lead us in workshops and study. It is our expectation that every member of our Temple Aliyah family and extended family members as well will share in carrying out the 613th mitzvah which instructs us that all Jews in their lifetime write a Torah Scroll. I can think of no better way to bring us together as a community in celebration and learning as we together contribute to our valued legacy while building out endowment for future generations.

The Celebration of Torah will permeate all of our activities and planning this year at Temple Aliyah. This will all culminate when Rabbi Surazski returns next Simhat Torah (2008) to complete the final verses of our Torah followed by a community wide

celebration. It is my hope that each and every one of you will connect with and be a part of our year long celebration of Torah. This is truly a once in a lifetime experience for our *kehillah*.

Last the spring, we began our formal search for a new full time cantor. The search committee under the direction of Peter Krupp has conducted informal get togethers and also sent out a survey to poll our congregation about what role music will have in our *kehillah*. This summer, the committee met and formulated an application to be submitted to the Cantorial Assembly. Our hope is to have guest cantorial soloists join us during the fall to lead our services. By doing this, we as a congregation will be able to experience different cantorial styles. Our hope is to begin to audition candidates sometime in the winter. I encourage all to watch for future dates and make it a priority to come and listen. This will prove to be a very exciting time as we begin to formulate the voice that will lead us for the future.

And speaking about voices, please save the date in March of 2008, when we as a community will honor our own Cantor Emeritus-Cantor Gelman with a gala celebration of his contributions to Temple Aliyah. His influence and inspiration has touched so many. We also wish him the best as he celebrates these High Holidays with his family in New Hampshire.

Our connection to Israel has never been stronger. As you will hear next week from our Keshet and Israel Bond Appeal, Temple Aliyah remains strongly committed to Eretz Israel. As an extension of our unwavering support and strong interest, we have planned not one but two trips to Israel in 2008. This is truly unbelievable! The first will take place next February 13-24<sup>th</sup> (during Feb school vacation) and will be lead by Rabbi Perkins. I have looked at the itinerary and it very exciting. The second is planned for December vacation, 2008. I encourage all of you to consider a trip with our *kehillah*. Those that have gone in the past, have come back captivated with today's Israel. If you have interest in attending the February trip, please, please, seek out Beth Moskowitz sooner than later for more information.

Jewish Continuity continues to be a priority and a focus at Temple Aliyah. We must be active partners in transmitting our heritage to the next generation done thru acts of education, community and reaching out to our youth. Our youth are our future as a people. In today's over scheduled society, our Youth have many choices. Connecting Jewishly at Temple Aliyah needs to be pushed forward as a viable option for our Youth. We need to make sure that when our children leave the nest, they are educated and comfortable as Jews in today's world. My philosophy has always been to connect early and connect often.

Some may have noticed that we have two tents for our teen services this year. Under the vision of Joey Baron, Amy Lassman and our Youth Committee, we have put together two parallel creative youth services that will hopefully make the High Holiday experience more inspiring and meaningful for our teens. This out of the box (or out of the tent) type of thinking is what we need here. Please refer to the pamphlets in the lobby to see all of the exciting youth activities planned during the fall.

The recent hiring of Rabbi Jethro Berkman-a young energetic rabbinic graduate as our Director of Community Education and also the hiring of a dynamic rabbinic intern-Sonia Saltzman are two positive steps in the direction of reaching out to our *kehillah*. Please be reminded that Sonia will be a leading a program this afternoon at 4:00 pm before *Tashlich* entitled *Encountering the Holidays*. This is open to our community at large and no tickets are required. We encourage you to bring your families and friends. This should prove to be a truly unique and powerful experience. I encourage all to introduce yourselves and connect with these two vibrant new additions to our professional staff. Both will be directly involved in our exciting programming for the upcoming coming year.

As adults we not only need to be role models for our children but also we should strive to be a community of learners. In addition to our wonderful adult education offerings , we will also be embarking on a new Me'ah Cycle. For those of you that are not familiar, Me'ah is a two year weekly class that is co-sponsored with Temple Beth Shalom. What is special about this upcoming semester is that the first part will be taught by a renowned bible translator Everett Fox. This fits nicely in with our year long celebration of Torah. If you are interested please contact the Temple office to enroll.

As a *kehillah*, we have our challenges. Specifically, our congregation's demographic is aging. We need ways to attract young families to Temple Aliyah. We will be reviewing and re-introducing our Gan Aliyah Program. Gan Aliyah is a Jewish enrichment program for kindergarteners. The goals of the program are to provide a rich Jewish educational experience including Hebrew immersion, music and holiday celebrations. In addition, we are ready to begin construction of our new playground donated in loving memory of Irving and Anne Fried. The dedication and concert will take place on Sunday September 30th. I hope you all can attend.

I do believe it is time to review a Pre-School program at Temple Aliyah. Many young families are choosing synagogue based Pre-School programs. These programs become the funnel for Temple membership as young families begin to develop their new social circles at the synagogue where their children attend pre-school. We are missing a very important starting point for young families. A committee will be formed to explore what options we have and what changes we will need to do to our physical space.

Our in-reach programs needs to be a constant focus for us at Temple Aliyah as we need to do a better job with connecting with our members. Every program and every event here at the Shul should have some in- reach component so that every person feels welcome and respected. A better understanding as to the needs and wants of our membership is imperative. Based on this information, we need to gear our programs and worship options. We have a diverse congregation that are at various life cycle stages and need differing levels of support. The formation of the *kehillah* committee has got us off to a great start. With the recent appointment of Nancy Rashap as our new committee chair, we will be taking a fresh look at how we connect with our members and how we can accomplish our goal to be more inclusive.

As a congregation we need to acknowledge our leaders and train them for success.

Starting with the October Shofar, we will begin to feature bios of our Board members. I hope you take the time to read about our volunteer lay leadership. They are a very dynamic group and each have dedicated themselves to the ideals of our *kehillah*. These people take time out of their work days and family time to make Temple Aliyah a better place.

With the help of Jeff Liberman, we will be starting a series workshops to better train our leaders to understand the responsibilities they have accepted.

I believe that our former leaders deserve a voice as well . With the help of Harvey Greenberg, I hope to organize a series of informal get-togethers with our past leaders to shares ideas on direction and utilize their past experiences to make our *kehillah* as inclusive as possible.

So now that I have shared with you the many seeds that have been and will be planted at Temple Aliyah, we must consider the nuts and bolts of what it takes to make all of this happen. In the Temple budget, which was passed at the Congregational meeting in June, the budgeted amount for fundraising is \$137,000. Of the amount, most of it is to be raised during this annual High Holiday appeal. The amount is an increase from last year. It is imperative that we reach our fundraising goals during the High Holiday appeal to alleviate the pressure of other fundraising initiatives throughout the year.

So I ask you to please take out your pledge cards and review the amounts on the tabs. You can press down multiple tabs if you like. For those of you that have not given before, please consider a meaningful amount. For those that have contributed in the past, I ask that you contemplate your contribution last year and consider increasing your gift. As has been customary, I have addressed our Board of Trustees during our recent board meeting. I have asked for and have received a commitment for 100 percent participation from our dedicated group of leaders. I have also asked that each of them consider a increase in their pledge as sign of support and solidarity for all that we do here at Temple Aliyah.

As mentioned from the sanctuary floor, we at Temple Aliyah are at a true defining moment in our history. Yet, to accomplish all that we desire and all that we dream, we need support and participation from all. We need to stand united. We need to stand together. I am asking you today to make a contribution for our dreams of today and into the future. Our Synagogue depends on the continued generosity of our members, so I ask each of you to respond to the level you can afford. I know if we work together from strength that we will achieve new heights for our beloved *kehillah*.

On behalf of the board of trustees and my family-Debbie, Todd, Margo and Robyn, I wish you all *Shanah Tovah Umtukah!* A good and sweet New year for you and your loved ones.

Thank you again for your support of Temple Aliyah. The ushers now will be passing through the aisle to collect the pledge cards.