

January 2010 Message From Rabbi Bob Mark

It's been about two months since I started my position at Beth Tikvah and during that time I have come to recognize that in many ways we are a lucky congregation. Although we are small in numbers, we have a greater abundance of talent and menschlachkeit than some congregations many times our size. We have several competent Torah Readers (Baale Kriah), some who can read regularly and some less so. One of our neighboring congregations about four times our size cannot – even from that great number – account for even one person capable of reading the Torah on a regular basis. Dr. Ken Schulman is of course a regular and quite the professional. For Parshat (weekly portion) Vayeshev, we were treated to an excellent reading by Lana Brach; and as I understand it, there are several others waiting in the wings to do their share.

Each week we have talented and capable members who lead the services both on Shabbat and at the Sunday morning Talit and Tefillin minyan. People have taken upon themselves the responsibilities affiliated with arranging a Kiddush and cleaning up afterward. Perhaps these are not formal responsibilities but they nevertheless are important ones and it is encouraging just to see how people jump in to do the job. Be assured that there are congregations that do not have such people amongst their members.

People such as Linda Duboff stand out for their dedication in providing tens of hours of their professional expertise as a contribution to Beth Tikvah. And as I understand it, others have done the same at other times. How often will you see a successful attorney such as Arthur Abrams get down on his hands and knees and fix a torn carpet (among the countless other things he does) or have one member such as Bob Grodsky pick up another member each and every week so that she can get to shul. Rebecca and Amitai Sela have helped out with computer matters several times since I have been here and Louis Fallon has done a great job with our web site and takes the lead in making sure things are neatened up after our Tallit and Tefillin Club breakfast on Sunday mornings.

Howie Cohn, Arnie Brown, Dr. Keith Springer, Paul Duboff, Ralph Gerber, Gerry Simmons, Sandy and Bob Nesoff, Abe Altman all have their individual responsibilities. And let's not forget our tzedakah collector, Bert Toron. If you think it is easy to stick out your hand with a pushka every Sunday, try that job on for size. I have no doubt left someone out and I apologize to you in advance. My purpose in bringing these people to the attention of the congregation is not for their individual accomplishments, but because they all have something in common. All of them are active and attend one or more of our services each week. Therefore, the question is: Are these people active because they attend services or do they

attend services because they are active? Either way, it is a beautiful thing. What we need is for more people to experiment with attending services. If you then become active, that's even better. And, if you are active, but not attending services why not try to expand your horizons. You may find that you enjoy them more than you could have imagined. And, if you just want to come to services and enjoy them without adding other responsibilities to the package, you are certainly welcome, we have regulars who do just that as well.

Have a question, don't understand something, wonder why we do or don't do something, need help with following or understanding the prayers? Please, ask me! Want to participate in leading the services? Do you need some help to get ready? Don't be shy! I want to help and do what I can to fill the seats in our sanctuary. A well-attended service is a better service in general. If you are not coming to services regularly, can you commit to once a month to start? You'll even find that we have a little better kiddish after services. At least you won't go home hungry!

My personal thanks to everyone that worked so hard to put together a beautiful installation dinner.

One last comment: I have had opportunity to visit with Gertrude Hecht as she recovers from a broken hip. Rather than me inspire her, I have found her to be an inspiration. Where others would be down and depressed, Gertrude is a fountain of optimism with a perpetual smile and a happy disposition. If only I could clone that spirit and bottle it for sale, oh what a happy world it would be!