

**Annual Report**  
**Rabbi Ira L. Korinow**  
**May 7, 2017 • 11 Iyar 5777**

Each year, this Annual Meeting gives me the time to reflect on how I have used my rabbinate to fulfill my goals of bringing Judaism into the lives of everyone in our congregation. I often end with my what I hope to accomplish in the coming year. But this year is different - it is my final annual report to the membership of this beloved congregation which has been home to and which nurtured me and my family for 36 years.

With the help of the committee chairs and other tireless members of the congregation, together we strive to make Temple Emanu-El a strong congregation in the three traditional roles of the synagogue: as a *beit tefilah*, a house of prayer, a *beit midrash*, a house of study and a *beit knesset*, a house of gathering. The year 5777 has once again been a year of strengthening our commitment to Judaism.

As a *beit tefilah*, a house of prayer, Temple Emanu-El strives to meet the spiritual needs of its members of diverse Jewish backgrounds. This year has seen our community begin a new relationship in hiring Vera Broekhuysen as our new cantor. Receiving ordination last June from Hebrew College (and I was privileged to attend her ordination), Cantor Vera has brought the professionalism of the Cantorate to our temple. Her expertise in Jewish music has already benefitted the congregation from our youngest in Religious School, singing with her every Sunday morning, to the B'nai Mitzvah students preparing for their new responsibilities as Jewish adults, to everyone who has attended the many services at which she has either co-officiated with me or at which she officiated alone. Cantor Vera has also officiated alone at some funerals when I have been out of town as she received formal training as part of the Hebrew College curriculum to do so. There was concern when Mindy Harris, our cantorial soloist, decided to spend all her energy in the internet marketing business which she had been involved with on a part-time basis. But Cantor Vera quickly assuaged any concerns that I or anyone had. Our Martin Luther King celebration continues to be lively and engaging with some new additions and our Yom Ha-Shoah service has been enhanced by Cantor Vera with some new compositions sung by the Makheila, our temple choir.

There is no hiding the fact that our community is changing. Members of our community came forward and asked if we can introduce a more liberal Shabbat morning service which has been tried once a month for five months now and with great success. The success of this service will be something that the temple leadership and the Religious Practices Committee should address in the coming year, with the challenge of meeting the religious needs of all its members.

In addition to leading the once a month liberal Shabbat Morning Service, Cantor Vera has aptly lead about half the services since I have slipped into semi-retirement.

A few years ago, we amended our religious practice of having services on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of *yom tov*, that is days on which work is traditionally prohibited. While the Temple Office would remain closed, we decided to no longer hold religious services on those days on which the majority of Diaspora Jewry consider to be *yom tov*. Specifically, I am speaking about the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of Sukkot, the day of Simchat Torah and the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of Passover. Last year, I reported that the status of religious services on the first day of *yom tov*; specifically, the 1<sup>st</sup> day of Sukkot, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> days of Passover and the 1<sup>st</sup> day of Shavuot have been called into question – not by a committee but by the lack of attendance. I made the decision to have services on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of Sukkot. If we hadn't had services that day, then some people for whom the tradition is important, would not have had the opportunity to shake the Lulav and Etrog during a service. I am happy to say that we had a *minyan* that day. We did not have a service on either the first day or the second day of Passover. Nobody really wants to come for a service after a late night at the seder the evening before. We did have a service on the eighth day of Passover, on which *Yizkor*, the traditional

memorial prayers are recited for loved ones, is recited. Likewise, there will be a service on the second day of Shavuot - on Thursday, June 1st at 9:30 am when *Yizkor* will be recited again.

Changing the religious practice of our congregation to observing Passover for only seven days with *Yizkor* recited on the seventh day and Shavuot to a one day holiday on which *Yizkor* is recited again might be something that the congregational leadership may want to explore. These holidays are observed in Israel as only one day of *yom tov*. I should point out that Rosh Hashanah is observed for two days in Israel and since ARZA, the Association of Reform Zionists of America was founded, the vast majority, if not all, Reform congregations in the Diaspora observe Rosh Hashanah for two days.

As a *beit midrash*, Temple Emanu-El offered its members many opportunities to study this year. From the Sunday morning adult education lectures (with breakfast), to the reintroduced Basic Judaism Class and the Shabbat Shiur during which participants enjoy studying *Parashat Ha-Shavua*, the weekly Torah portion, often on subjects raised in the weekly Shavuon which I send to everyone in the community whose e-mail address I have. Once a month, the Shabbat Shiur becomes the Israel Chavurah during which we discuss issues concerning Israel and the Middle East and on which we often have heated discussions as everyone who feels passionately about the issue at hand shows why he or she should be Prime Minister of the State of Israel! The next Israel Chavurah is scheduled for Saturday, May 20<sup>th</sup>.

This year's Adult Education Committee was again chaired by Karen Newborn and she and the committee put together a full year of programming which drew anywhere from 60-120 attendees. Under the guidance of our Librarian, Paula Breger, we enjoyed a four-part Authors' Series in the Fall which brought Linda K. Wertheimer, Larry Tye, Susan Harris and Anita Diamant to Temple Emanu-El. In January, we had a panel discussion on why Jews by Choice choose Judaism which was combined with the PTO Kugel Cook-Off. In March Fred Feldman spoke on From Darkness To Hope: A Holocaust Survival Story. In addition, the Temple Emanu-El Book Club, facilitated by Paula Breger, met several times to discuss books that the group chooses and which naturally leads to an enthusiastic and engaging conversation.

Once again, adult members of the congregation were invited to attend the Family Education adult classes for parents in Grades 3 & 4 taught by me through the end of 2016 and then by Cantor Vera since January. The topics of these classes are announced in the weekly Shavuon and everyone in our community is invited to attend.

If you are interested in helping to plan next year's Adult Education programs, consider coming to the committee's next meeting this Wednesday, May 10th at 4:45 pm.

Finally, as a *beit knesset*, a house of gathering, Temple Emanu-El is a place where Jewish identity and Jewish values are expressed by the many opportunities to become involved. This year again we had our annual Yom Kippur Break-Fast and Chanukah party. In addition, under the leadership of Eunice and Kevin Miller, the third annual Craft Fair which helped add a beneficial monetary contribution to our Temple Budget was held.

On June 4th, in just 4 weeks, from 12 noon until 4:00 pm, we will have the return of the Temple Emanu-El picnic sponsored by the Membership and Social Committees. The picnic will take place at Camp Tel Noar in Hampstead, New Hampshire. While the Temple will provide hot dogs and hamburgers, rolls, condiments, plates and utensils, everyone is asked to bring salads, drinks, *pareve* (non-dairy) chips, pickles, fruit and *pareve* desserts.

The Chesed Committee, chaired by Sharyn Russell has successfully helped Temple members in time of need through its sacred work. The Chesed Committee has successfully helped many home-bound members of Temple Emanu-El feel a part of our sacred, caring community. The Chesed Committee this year once again helped the PTO to make *latkes* on Chanukah and *hamantaschen* on Purim. They then delivered the *latkes* and *mishloach manot* to home-bound members of the Temple. The Chesed Committee stands ready to help members, individuals or families, in their time of need. It has currently been organizing Temple members to provide meals

and transportation to the Bouchard-Shalek family while Lisa has been undergoing cancer treatment. Our page on Lotsa Helping Hands helps to coordinate this help. Again, I urge you - if you have not yet signed up for Lotsa Helping Hands, please do so. Nancy, Sharyn Russell, Fred Feldman or I will be happy to guide you on how to sign up. There is no obligation once you do sign up but the rewards are great if and when you volunteer. If you are interested in helping the Chesed Committee in its sacred work, call the Temple Office or Sharyn Russell directly. The Chesed Committee truly helps to make Temple Emanu-El a *Kehillah Kedosha*, a sacred community.

Finally, I want to thank the staff of Temple Emanu-El for being the team players that they are and that make our congregation quite unique and a sacred place. Nancy LaFleur works tremendously hard in her position as Executive Director. As Religious School Principal, Debbi Levasseur works timelessly and tirelessly to make sure that our Religious School children have a quality Jewish education in a fun and caring environment. Both Nancy and Debbi work hard in their positions. I appreciate all that they do to help me, even as I appreciate all the hard work that Cheryl Hill, our Religious School Administrative Assistant, and the work of Sheila Brown, our Temple Bookkeeper.

We are truly blessed to have such a staff. As we all know, meeting the financial obligations of our temple is always a challenge with which the Board of Directors grapples all the time. Temple Emanu-El remains a beacon for both a viable and thriving Jewish life in the Merrimack Valley and southern New Hampshire

As we all know, the Bradford Christian Academy High School has been renting much of our building during this, its first year of a two-year contract which may very well be extended. I can assure the membership of our community that our relationship with BCA is excellent and our being in the building together reflects an excellent relationship based upon mutual respect for each other's needs. The Bradford Christian Academy fully respects the educational, programmatic and spiritual needs of our congregation. I have been asked to speak to their Bible classes twice and was asked to speak to the entire school body twice during their "Chapel" hour each Friday morning which takes place in the Winer Auditorium.

As you know, the Annual Meeting each year falls during Sefirat Ha-Omer, the period of "Counting the Omer." In Biblical days, the counting of the Omer meant praying for a successful year agriculturally while also counting the blessings of the past year. It is appropriate then to wind down my report with the ritual of reciting the blessing for counting the *omer*, as we traditionally do during these 7 weeks between Passover and Shavuot. In reciting it, we do so counting the many blessings that we have as a community of committed Jews to the survival of our people.

(Please rise.)

**ברוך אתה ייְ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְשָׁנוּ בְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ וַצְוָנוּ עַל סְפִירַת הָעֵמֶר.**  
*Baruch Ata Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha-olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav, v'tzivanu al sefirat ha-omer.*

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who has sanctified us through commandments and commanded us to count the Omer.

**הַיּוֹם שְׁשָׁה וְעִשְׁרִים יוֹם שְׁהָם שְׁלֹשָׁה שְׁבֻעוֹת וְחַמִשָּׁה יָמִים לְעֵמֶר.**  
*Hayom shisha v'esrim yom she-haym shelosha shavuot v'chamisha yamim la-omer.*  
 Today is the 26<sup>th</sup> day, which is 3 weeks and 5 days of the Omer.

(Please be seated.)

Two last requests that I have for our community: First, while we have only one Confirmation student this year and one high school graduate (brother and sister, by the way!), I ask that you all come to make the service meaningful for our young people and for our community. That evening, Sherry and Larry Cann will be receiving the Jerome Rosengard Memorial Award given to an adult or adults in recognition of their contribution to Jewish education. Specifically, Sherry and Larry have created the Gavriel Levi Essay and Art Award to students in the Religious School who write or create a piece of art on the Holocaust. This year, the Gavriel Levi Award was opened up to the students of the Bradford Christian Academy as well and, consequently, more than several of them attended the Yom Ha-Shoah Service just over a week ago.

Second, on Friday evening, June 9th, we will have our annual Membership Recognition Service and Board Installation. That evening, the new Board members elected today will be installed by me and the Volunteer of the Year Award will be presented to Larry Cowan. Larry has been Treasurer for more than a couple of decades now but he has done many things for our temple beyond his elected position. Please be with us when we appropriately honor Larry as our Volunteer of the Year.

Finally, as I mentioned at the beginning of my report, this is my last annual report to Temple Emanu-El, our sacred congregation. I am looking forward to the Retirement Gala on May 21st at the Haverhill Country Club to celebrate the journey that we've had together for the past 36 years. I will, naturally, say more on May 21st but let me say now that it is difficult to imagine my not being here almost every day as I have for 36 years. I want to thank the officers of our congregation: Larry Cann, Loren Goldstein, Judd Nathan, Fred Feldman, Larry Cowan, Kevin Miller, David Belsky, Stuart Mandell and all the officers of past years, who have been a pleasure to work with. My thanks also to the Board of Directors this year and those who served on the Board in past years for helping to stand up for Jewish values and have shown tremendous leadership guiding our congregation every step of the way. Thank you all!

Using an analogy appropriate to the City of Haverhill, like a good shoe, the rabbi must be the right fit for the congregation and the congregation must be the right fit for the rabbi. I believe that we both found the right fit for each other.

I thank you for all the support and I wish the Temple Leadership, the officers and members of the Board along with Interim Rabbi Ilene Bogosian and eventually the new settled or permanent rabbi much success in the future. May Temple Emanu-El go *mei-chayil el chayil*, from strength to strength!