

I can hardly believe what we accomplished over the course of the past twelve months! In November we reviewed our first thirteen years at our Bar Mitzvah celebration. Two months later we enjoyed one of our most inspiring Scholar in Residence weekends with Yitz Greenberg. A week later we co-hosted the Jewish Educators Association conference, bringing Jewish educators from across the country to Dallas, Texas. In April we introduced our Spring Fair, coinciding with a deeply meaningful and very successful Mitzvah Day. Our Yom Yerushalayim concert was off the charts, as attested by everyone present, and quickly segued into a busy and meaningful Shavuot program. These were some of the focal points along the way.

The real distinguishing characteristics defining our shul occur every day. Our dedicated Hesed Committee, led by Liz Cooper reminds us all how to care for each other. Regardless of the need someone from the committee is always ready to do an act of hesed, to lend a caring shoulder, to prepare a meal with love. Our dedicated minyan captains continue to rally the congregation toward our goal of a dependable minyan twice a day throughout the week. We have made extraordinary progress but the going is still a bit rugged at times. Among the unsung heroes of every shul are the members of the Hevra Kadisha, by definition, unidentified and willingly caring for our loved ones before they are returned to their final resting place. Farzin Bakhshian truly is our shining jewel, serving as our distinguished Gabbai. He might not know it but we have secretly anointed him Gabbai for life! I don't know if we have ever had such a successful year of programming by our three auxiliaries. Hazak, Sisterhood and Men's Club consistently offered interesting, and thought provoking programming, always providing outstanding social networking opportunities.

While caring for our members and preparing for special events we maintained a busy Bar Mitzvah schedule, added some special baby namings and brises along the way, and we spiced up our lives with the largest number of weddings in our short history. As an acknowledgement to the number of years I have spent in the rabbinate I had the honor a few weeks ago of officiating at the bris for Jaclyn Gardner and Ben Austein's baby boy- after I had officiated at Jaclyn's own baby naming, her Bat Mitzvah, her Confirmation, and her wedding...truly the joy of being in a community for 29 years. This weekend I have the honor of officiating at another wedding- Brittany Kenter- at whose baby naming I officiated more than a few years ago.

While navigating this busy schedule, and appreciating another year of significant growth at Anshai Torah we found the time and energy to focus our attention on the search for a second rabbi. Led by a wonderful committee we were so excited to announce our find! We eagerly await the arrival of Talya, Rabbi Michael, and Nadav Kushnick in the middle of July.

I couldn't be more excited. The ability to lower the ratio of families served per rabbi will translate into higher quality experiences. Higher quality experiences will mean stronger relationships between congregant and rabbi, between congregant and shul. This will strengthen us while enhancing the way in which we see ourselves. As I said during the interview process, we will have the capacity to strengthen our in-reach to our congregants, deepening the quality of our congregants' relationship to the shul they call home.

I turn to you to assist me in integrating Rabbi Kushnick into the fabric of our community. I will try to make this transition happen as organically as is possible. I may need your insight, wisdom, and patience to help move us forward as he finds his place in the rabbinate of our congregation.

Rabbi Kushnick will carry the title of rabbi. I will strive to never refer to him as an assistant rabbi or associate rabbi. He is my colleague. He is your rabbi just as I am honored to be your rabbi. While our constitution requires some proper language when referring to rabbinic positions at our congregation I hope that Rabbi Kushnick will earn your respect over time and simply be viewed as rabbi-that way I won't have to be viewed as "Senior Rabbi!"

Beginning with the re-institution of our Upstairs Minyan, and extending to an enhanced rabbinic presence throughout our school, we have the opportunity to make a very special difference during the course of this next year. I thank you for your support and confidence as we add a second rabbi to our staff.

As we move into the summer months we also do so with a new Preschool Head. Alyse Eisenberg has led our school over the course of the past two years. She has brought a love for Judaism to our program, a deep commitment to educational philosophy, and a very special desire to develop individual relationships. Everyone associated with our school has been touched by her strengths.

At the same time, Alyse felt she could better impact our community through different channels. Now, ready to work side by side with our new Preschool Director, Rachel Nicholas, we are exceedingly excited about the prospects for our school. Led by two outstanding educators our students, parents, and teachers are in for a real special ride. I believe everyone will see, feel and experience the product created by these two talented women. We are so excited to welcome Rachel to our staff, someone who has a wealth of experience working with young children, while preparing them for entry into Elementary School.

We continue to be blessed with the continuity experienced among our staff. From Harvey to Helaine, Kay and our dedicated education staff, we have so many people associated with our shul who simply are ready to assist when called upon.

Finally, I say thank you to you. You continue to help us reach higher. We are blessed with a dedicated Executive Committee and Board of Directors. We are so fortunate to have volunteers of every category who give of their time to make a difference in this world. We continue to be a shul that is respected in the greater Jewish community for the value we place in supporting our greater Jewish community. In fact, was anyone surprised when 7 of the recent 20 participants chosen for the first Wexner Leadership cohort were identified as our members?

We are making great things happen, every day at Anshai Torah. Thanks for your support. Thanks for your trust. And, thanks for your confidence. It is an honor to serve as your rabbi every day.

*Rabbi Stefan J. Weinberg*