

Bob Abrams - Yom Kippur 2012

Good Morning and Good Yontiff. I am delighted to share the Bimah today with Rabbi Golomb and our cantorial soloist Elisa Dugatkin. Once again, I want to welcome you here to observe the High Holy Day with us. A special thank you goes to Perla Kaufman and all of the volunteers who are making the High Holy Days so delightful, with a special thank you to Perla for once again “herding all the cats”, as Rabbi Golomb put it last night. It is a thankless job ensuring that everything runs smoothly on the Bimah and behind the scenes.

On Rosh Hashanah, I spoke with you about our Vassar Temple community and many of the ways in which our Temple remains strong and benefits our Temple members. I spoke of “Hineni”, a term that means ‘Here I am’ in the sense that we are present and making a difference. I also spoke about how we as a community have collectively responded with many instances of “Hineni”. I have witnessed it in our actions as volunteers, donors, teachers, lay leaders, and as Clergy and staff. I have seen it in our children and their parents ... stepping up to the challenge, being present and taking a leadership role at the Temple. We see it with the Hineni Fund campaign, our major fundraiser this year. Our Vassar Temple community provides an environment where our members can be more active and more involved, thus embodying Hineni. Together we are responsible for our strength as a community as we move into the future.

I’m going to ask you for a moment to be creative with me with some specific Temple examples using a car analogy. The Vassar Temple building that we’re in is the frame and body of our vehicle. It needs to be cleaned and cared for properly, or small dents will rust and show signs of wear and tear that do not reflect the overall quality of the machine. We recently refurbished Classroom 4 with the support of several families and refreshed the front of the building by removing the overgrown bushes and giving the Temple sign a fresh look. The Men’s Club purchased a new Sukkah last year, which was erected last Sunday for the holiday. These changes make us feel good about our home. Many ideas for updating and refreshing our building are being considered over the next year, keeping in mind that when we look at the seats or trunk of our vehicle, or the undercarriage, we never know what we will find in need of repair or replacement, and that would take priority over other changes or improvements.

Rabbi Golomb, Cantorial Soloist Elisa Dugatkin, our organist Joe Bertolozzi, our Religious School Director Joel Hoffman, teachers, kitchen, office and custodial staff represent everything under the hood, including the engine. This is what makes us run smoothly. Attention needs to be given to our professional staff; if there is a funny humming sound coming from anything under the hood; we need to take care of it. Regular oil changes are imperative; we cannot neglect what is under the hood or on the body.

Our lay leaders, past presidents, the executive committee, board of directors and general committee members, Men's Club, Sisterhood, and others who volunteer - we are the steering wheel. We work to keep things moving in the right direction. Sometimes the alignment is off and we find ourselves headed into a construction zone of twists, turns and unpleasant bumpy roads. With some re-routing and careful attention, we are soon back on smoother pavement headed in the proper direction. All past Presidents and volunteers have faced these challenges; their thoughtful work over the Temple's 164 year history has helped keep us traveling in generally the right direction. On the Board, we are always examining and reviewing the work done over the years. What has been successful? What still needs to be accomplished? What re-direction is necessary?

You, the congregants, are the wheels that keep us going. Why the wheels and not the fuel tank? The fuel tank would be an easy analogy for this High Holy Day Appeal. What we hope to do as your leadership is rotate the tires ... get you involved in ways that help you set direction for our temple's future.

Today, like dozens of presidents before me, I ask you to help keep this vehicle running smoothly. That may mean volunteering to improve its exterior or its driving abilities. It also means helping to finance its repairs or upgrades. Your financial assistance is needed to help us maintain and expand the valuable elements of our Temple programs and services. I also ask for you to get involved and participate in whatever way helps you become better connected and fulfilled as a member.

This year, the Board of Trustees worked very hard to approve a lean budget that provides offerings for all ages, with no dues or fees increases. However,

dues revenue, fund raising events, and special occasion contributions are simply insufficient to cover even the temple's current austerity budget. Everyone's support of the High Holy Day Appeal is critical to continue to provide worship opportunities, educational programs for all ages, social programming, and support for all of your life cycle events when you want and need them.

Many of you have already sent in a contribution to our High Holy Day appeal. We all thank you and greatly appreciate your generosity and compassion. If you haven't had a chance to send in a contribution, it's not too late. Our members who serve on the board of trustees are willing and eager to volunteer their time and energy in support of the Temple. There is no minimum financial requirement to be a board member. However, 4 weeks ago, during our monthly board meeting, I reminded our board members that we also must show leadership within the congregation. I asked the board for 100% participation in the High Holy Day appeal to whatever level they are comfortable with. Now I am asking you for the same. Please help us reach an all-time high participation level in our High Holy Day Appeal. I encourage you to contribute whatever amount you are comfortable with. Whether you contribute \$18, \$180, or \$1800, I can assure you that the money will be put to good use, supporting the programming which is important to each of you. When you think about your donation, think about the people it will help ... the family that wants to maintain Temple membership but is experiencing financial difficulties; programming that kids and adults, such as yourselves, will be able to enjoy. I thank you in advance for your support of the valuable elements of our Temple programs and services.

Join us to ensure the stability of this wonderful community, our Jewish home.

Please join me in saying Thank You to all of our volunteers, and Rabbi Golomb, Elisa and Joe for their dedication to Vassar Temple and for these beautiful High Holy Day services.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, and my family, I wish you all a Shana Tovah. May you and your loved ones be inscribed in the Book of Life.

Shona Tova and Good Yontiv!

Bob Abrams, President