

Good evening and welcome. What a joy it is to see such an amazing crowd.

All of you here and many who were unable to join in person but are supporting this event with their congratulatory messages and financial contributions demonstrate the significance of VT's milestone achievement. 175 years...Wow!

As early as 1845 five men - Jacob Baker, Issac Heyman, Herman Hart, Aaron Morris, and Solomon Scheldburger - began collaborating with the mission of creating a Jewish home for those in our community; they planted the seeds lovingly nurtured in the years since by all - an uncountable number of individuals - who have supported Vassar Temple, Congregation Brethren of Israel through its evolution.

Our anniversary celebration honors their legacy: their hard work, their vision, and their understanding of the importance of creating a space - a Jewish space - for those wishing to pray, to study, to engage in a shared community where the welfare of others could be supported: where traditional social experiences could have safe haven.

Putting an event such as this together requires the effort of many dedicated people. It was a personal pleasure to work with every one of the committee members whose insights, collective spirit, and patience with me has culminated in this evening's event. Those on the committee and others who also assisted with minimal arm twisting are listed in the comm j; I hope you all have an opportunity to express your personal thanks to them as well.

A few are owed special mention.

To the **temple leadership** and to **Rabbi** whose guidance was invaluable...though I suspect that our president Lisa-Sue might

have dreaded every time she saw my number show up on her phone's screen!

To **Eve Gendron** who was the genius behind our beautiful mailings and who, together with Brittney Weiss designed the decorations for tonight. I am sure you will agree that the room just looks beautiful!

To **Polly Lewis** who made our Bidding for Baskets a success. BTW bidding will close at 8:00 so make sure you join in the fun before then; you do not want to miss out on winning those amazing items.

To **Arlene and Gil Seligman** who were just the first to say "yes, you can count on us" whenever I asked for help.

To **Arnie Serotsky**, our resident wine expert, who was the force behind our Wine Pull; if you haven't checked that out yet make sure you do as there are some incredible bottles of wine that you can acquire at a fraction of their value.

To **Miriam Cohen** who was not only instrumental organizing our guest speaker's presence with us, but spent hours going through the archives trying to identify some of VT's most fascinating historical facts and piece together gaps and discrepancies in that history.

Miriam and I spent quite a few hours going through the documents - interviews provided by Marjorie Katz, of blessed memory, newspaper articles, conversations with current members such as Elaine Lipschutz and Muriel Lampell whose memories are better than mine. But if anyone thinks that this was the work of drudgery, think again. I found stepping back in time simply extraordinary. I met people with fascinating stories: people for

whom our temple was central to their lives and where they made cherished, lifelong friendships... It was also often great fun.

Let me tell you about the time that I read an account by a temple member - probably mid-20th century - who was asked to pick up a catered meal for what sounded like a temple Thanksgiving event. He placed the food in the trunk of his car. Upon arriving back at Temple he realized that a box of clothing which was next to the trays had fallen over and a shoe had - unexpectedly - fallen into the turkey gravy...

Well he did what any one of us might have done as well. He carefully shook off the shoe and served the gravy with the rest of the meal. Furthermore he said, the most compliments received at the conclusion of the dinner was for the very flavorful gravy! I have been assured by the Grandview staff that the delicious food we are enjoying tonight has not been seasoned by any articles of clothing! This is a good time to extend thanks to the terrific Grandview Staff: Brent Caster GM, Ashley to the wait staff - everyone else behind the scenes who helped us with our planning.

And last but absolutely not least, a huge shout out to Karen Clark, the Temple administrator who has been totally incredible. I just do not have enough words of compliment to do her justice. She is efficient, insightful, technically proficient, and consistently cheerful even when under pressure. Karen you are the bomb!

Hopefully, all of you notice the 3D timeline which was created and is a special component of tonight's activities. It was truly impossible to capture all the people and all the special events which together have made Vassar Temple so special over the nearly two centuries. But you might see some pictures you have never seen or read some text with what you are unfamiliar if you view the timeline, however, history doesn't stop, and in order to

add to our archives everyone has been given the opportunity to record a memory. You'll see the stickers on the table, where you're sitting and near the timeline where you can put some sweet memory on the timeline yourself so they can be captured and added to our archives for the next generation. If there is not enough room for you to place your message, just leave these on the table and they will be collected at the end of the evening. These recollections will serve as an awesome addition to our temple history, and looked upon with reverence by those who follow us and wish to understand more about our current Temple family.

I would now like to invite Rabbi Altman to offer a blessing.

Introductions

We are so grateful to have our milestone event recognized by several prominent government officials. Please turn your attention to the screens for a message from United States Senator Charles Schumer.

In our audience we have NYS Senator Rolison who has drafted a proclamation in our honor. He has some congratulatory remarks.

We are so pleased to have Assemblymembers Didi Barrett and Jonathan Jacobson here; in addition to preparing lovely proclamations they too would like to recognize this milestone celebration with some personalized comments.

City of POK Mayor Yvonne Flowers was unable to be with us this evening. A proclamation in honor of our anniversary is on display and, together with the other which we are so proud to have been crafted for this historic milestone, will soon be available for all to see at a post gala special email, as well as at a link at our website.

Unfortunately, due to sudden illness, Vassar Temple's Senior Scholar Rabbi Paul Golomb is unable to be here this evening; Rabbi Altman will offer a prayer.

As you enjoy your meal you will definitely want to watch a terrific slide presentation which captures so much of our past: temple members and events.

Enjoy your dinner.

Bidding for Baskets Winners are now on display on the poster at the rear of the room. Thank you to all who generously contributed to the success of this initiative.

Well what is a birthday celebration without a birthday cake?? I am delighted to have Cantor Goldmann and Lisa-Sue help with the lighting of the candles.

It is hard – at least for me – to bring this evening to a close. I do so with profound thanks on behalf of the Temple leadership to all of you who came: our sponsors a few who are here - Karen Catalano from Locks That Rock, Drs Katz and Krumholtz from Premier Urology and, our baskets contributors, as well as Fadi and Rindala Busaba from M&T Bank - and our advertisers.

And of course our wonderful keynote Speaker Professor Moore.

Thank you. And Good night.