



## **Rosh Hashanah Remarks 5772/2011**

Barry Holt, President

Shana Tovah. I am so pleased to be here on Rosh Hashanah, standing among you. I would like to share some thoughts on three topics today. I will begin with my personal gratitude for the many blessings in my life. Next, I will talk about the pride and delight we can all take in the state of our congregation today. And I will finish by describing my hope for sustaining our vibrancy for the future.

Allow me now to express my deep thanks and appreciation for arriving at this Shehechyanu moment. I am immensely grateful for my family – for our good health and the happiness we share and for the loving memories we hold of those who are not here. I truly appreciate the opportunity to serve as your President, and for the opportunity to work with the dedicated clergy, staff, and volunteers whose energy and enthusiasm make this place all that it is. I am grateful to those who laid the foundation for this congregation so many years ago; to those who worked so hard to bring us to where we are today; and for everyone in the congregation who makes ours such a vibrant, caring, and generous community. Thank you, to everyone.

All of this leads me to say that, today, Temple Rodef Shalom is a healthy congregation. We are meeting our current financial obligations. We are enriching the lives of more than 1500 households (more than 5,000 individuals) through spiritual, educational and community experiences. 900 students experience Jewish learning in our religious school. 200 children come bouncing into our preschool every day. 300 children choose to spend the summer at Temple Rodef Shalom, at our camp. We celebrate weddings, baby-namings, b'nai mitzvah and consecrations. And in our more somber times, we are helping those in crisis, we offer Mishabeirach prayers for those in need of healing , and we comfort our mourners. Day in and day out, Temple Rodef Shalom is bustling with activity, helping our congregants and members of the larger community lead fuller, richer and more meaningful Jewish lives.

This year, we are celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Many of you helped jump-start our celebration with our special Shabbat dinner and service, which provided a meaningful context for our 50-year history, and for our future. This celebration is continuing all year. Every month, there will be new opportunities for members of all ages and interests to participate in events and activities that will Honor our Past, Celebrate our Community and Secure our Future. Take advantage of these opportunities. Engage. Stand together and strengthen our connections with one another and Rodef Shalom.

Which brings us to my final topic: sustaining this community for the future.

We have a tradition at Temple Rodef Shalom. The President stands before the congregation on Rosh Hashanah, and does not make an annual appeal for contributions. Today, you will not find envelopes on your chairs. We will not call for public pledges. We will not "sell" the premium seats. Presidents at other temples are doing this, right now. But not here at Temple Rodef Shalom. Our tradition is good. I would like to continue keeping separate the reflective spirit of the High Holy Days from the financial and operational issues of the Temple. I also embrace two of our core principles: 1) congregants pay dues according to ability, and 2) our individual giving is unrelated to access, control, or involvement, and not a general topic of public discussion. This is what makes Temple Rodef Shalom our "Temple Rodef Shalom."

We have many members who are about 50 years old. We have some who have gracefully passed that milestone. And, we even have congregants who are planning, sooner or later, to turn 50. What does 50 years old mean to an individual? It is, in part, the time to ensure future financial security. It is the time to make decisions about how to provide for the next generation. It is a time to reflect, take stock of our lives, and make choices about one's future and one's legacy.

Things are not so different for Temple Rodef Shalom at 50. We seek to make capital improvements to fulfill our growing needs and maintain our

facilities. We aim to be mortgage free. A chapel and parenting center would serve us well. We want to ensure that all of our children have a great Jewish education and meaningful Jewish experiences, and to make them more affordable, through subsidies, scholarships, and endowed programs. We strive to do more for the larger community and to offer more help and support to those in need. We must ensure that we have sufficient clergy to fulfill our growing needs, and allow them the opportunity for their own renewal so that they can continue to inspire us. We must make sure that this congregation stays vibrant.

We are inspired to achieve lofty, aspirational goals. However, we continue to fund our financial needs incrementally, in steps too small to achieve our greatest hopes.

How do we resolve this dilemma – that dues and fees alone are not enough to meet the pragmatic requirements for long-term sustainability, let alone our aspirations? If we do not want the answer to be a direct annual appeal from the Bema on the High Holy Days, then we need to think about the Temple a bit differently. Let's not view the temple as a fee-for-service membership organization, dependent on dues, user fees, and annual appeals. Last year I asked everyone to imagine our future and consider what we stand for. I offer part of that vision now: *This institution is a critical cornerstone of continuity across generations for the Jewish Community. Temple Rodef Shalom is a worthy philanthropic cause. A worthy charitable priority.*

So today, on these High Holy Days, I am not asking you to reach into your wallets. I am asking you to reach into your hearts and minds, to find the real meaning of what this Temple represents, beyond the individual activities from which we each benefit. When you have the opportunity and the ability to help ensure the future of this worthy institution, please know that your current gifts and future bequests can make an important difference. As I have said in the past -- we can view the future of Temple Rodef Shalom as our opportunity or as our obligation. Either way, it will be our legacy.

Julie and I wish everyone a sweet New Year, filled with love, good health, peace and involvement in this wonderful community we call Temple Rodef Shalom. Thank you, and L' shana Tovah.