

RABBI'S MESSAGE

L'Dor Va'Dor: Creating Legacies

As we transition from March to April – and Adar to Nissan on the Hebrew calendar, Temple Beth Torah is experiencing a new surge of blending the past into the future. The Purim weekend, featuring the YedidYAH family band, was a dynamic experience for all who attended, either in person or on Zoom. It wasn't just listening to performers; it was intergenerational participation in prayer and in spirit. Elders and children, young adults and teens, a newborn baby and even a dog sang, danced, prayed, ate and spent time with each other. During the Saturday evening Havdallah song session, 11-year-old Lia Pilman partnered with California guest, 16-year-old Olivia Yedidia playing *Olam Chesed Yibaneh (We Will Build this World with Love)*, as the two young girls played beautiful flute together. Bruce Pollard, who with his wife, Susan, has raised three adult children at TBT and often inspired our congregation over the years with his own music and creativity, led three participatory songs of his own. Lia represents the enthusiasm of our religious school students. Bruce leads another generation of adults by facilitating the weekly "Cup of Wisdom" group. Children and adults, from those kindergartners to people in their 70's, made their own drums with Italiano's metal cans and duct tape, and enjoyed jamming in an amazing drum circle.

How were we able to create such a weekend, with a band of four out-of-town performers/educators, including a guest rabbi? In part, because Dale Vine, of blessed memory, connected deeply to Temple Beth Torah as his spiritual home and family. He had experienced years of illness prior to joining the temple, and when he passed away in August, 2022, he left a monetary "Legacy Gift" to Temple Beth Torah. He loved Jewish music in general, and the YedidYAH band in particular. So, the TBT Board thought this educational/musical weekend would be a good way to honor his memory and create lasting memories for the temple. Whenever children and adults have a great time together, it leaves a lasting impression.

And the Legacy spirit doesn't stop with a weekend program. That same week in March, a new memorial board was mounted in the sanctuary, dedicated in honor of the Kaufman family, thanks to funds left by past president Jeff Kaufman when he sadly passed away in May 2023. The end of March also brings us a "legacy" bar mitzvah. 13-year-old Adam Grayson, who currently lives with his family in the DC area, chose to have his bar mitzvah at Temple Beth Torah because this is where his grandmother, Ellen Grayson, is a member, and his *great grandparents*, Bernard and Hanna Lewis were longtime members. Bernard used to bring Adam's mother and father, Matt and Marina Grayson, to TBT for High Holidays. Adam's "Legacy Bar Mitzvah" is another link of blending generation to generation (*L'Dor VaDor*).

As I inch closer to thirty years with TBT (2027 will be my 30th Rosh Hashana), I think about the many legacies that have been created here. We have students who have become doctors, scientists, engineers, educators, therapists and military personnel. We have adults who have learned about leadership from dedicated volunteerism. We have helped countless Jewish

people, geographically removed from the heart of the Jewish community, strengthen their Jewish learning and Jewish identifies. We have helped over two dozen people find their path to choose Judaism through formal conversion, and had others reaffirm their faith with an adult bar or bat mitzvah or renewal of wedding vows.

A legacy is all about making a difference for the future. About 40 Temple Beth Torah members have signed up with our Legacy program by pledging a portion of their future estate to the temple. Jeff Kaufman and Dale Vine were kind enough to have the foresight to formalize their gifts ahead of time to prevent any complications for their surviving loved ones. If you have made this kind of pledge, but not yet formalized it, now is a good time. If you might still consider putting TBT in your plans to help ensure our future, let us know, and we'll help you facilitate it. We have received much guidance from the Houston Jewish Community Foundation regarding these kinds of gifts.

Whether your legacy is about financial support for the future, or spiritual participation in the present, each one of you makes a difference. It begins with our collective spirit that makes this community special.

L'shalom,

Rabbi Dan Gordon