

A Letter For The Beth El Community in this New Year,

January marks six months since I joined you as Spiritual Leader of this absolutely wonderful community. Reflecting back on one year ago, I marvel at what a blessing I was about to receive in coming here to serve you. At the time I had no idea what was in store!

At this point many of you have received an email from me for this or that, and if you have you might have noticed that I always include a quote in Hebrew at the very bottom of the email, below my signature block:

בְּטַח אֶל־יְהוָה בְּכָל־לִבְךָ וְאֶל־בִּינְתֶךָ אֶל־תִּשְׁעֶנּוּ;
בְּכָל־דְּרָכֶיךָ דָּעָהוּ וְהוּא יִישַׁר אֶרְחֹתֶיךָ.

Occasionally someone asks me what this means, but usually it seems to go unnoticed. I assure you I did not put it there to test anyone on their Hebrew! Instead it's a statement of my own faith, and something to reflect on with you as we enter into a New Year and having accomplished a half-orbit around the sun together:

*“Trust in Adonai with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight.” (Proverbs 3:5-6)*

If we all look back at the past year, we can see how things have changed in our personal lives as well as significant changes for Congregation Beth El. With the lifting of COVID restrictions we have been able to come together in person once again to celebrate our traditions and our lives and our faith. During this time we have journeyed through the High Holidays, revived our Torah Study group, prayed together, sang together, lit candles, eaten latkes, and celebrated Chanukah with awesome food and music. We also have comforted one another at Yizkor and provided support to those who are ill and mourning.

On the Religious School scene we have a new curriculum, new teachers, and our kids are well on the way in what I hope will over time become a school that prepares them to emerge as future leaders of the Jewish community here in Windsor and beyond. They are learning tefillah (prayers), to chant Torah, Tanakh, and working on Hebrew as well as growing in Jewish identity. In this year of 2023 we will focus on ritual, and prepare 3 of them for B'nei Mitzvah.

Additionally we have some exciting programming on the horizon: An Adult Torah Chanting group, an Introduction to Judaism class, a weekly Havdalah group during the winter, and for the smallest in the community a program I'm calling “Musical Munchkins.”

I am filled with excitement for what is possible for us as we move forward into this coming year: G-d has given us the gift of this community, this faith, these traditions, and assures us that if we walk on this journey together as a Jewish community in love of G-d, Torah, and one another, *our paths will be straight.*

Thank you to all who work to make this community what it is. We have a wonderful Board, Ritual Committee, Friendship Circle, Volunteers, School Staff, Office Staff, Musicians, Lay Service Leaders, and those who quietly but diligently pray for us and offer words and notes and lend hands of support. Thank you all. I hope you will continue on this journey as a community into the New Year as we continue to discover all that G-d has in store for us. Here at Beth El, I am quite sure that *G-d is in this Place*.

Happy New Year,

Hazzan Devorah