

NEW RABBI FOR BETH EL



March 2, 2010

16 Adar 5770

Dear Beth El Family,

As you know by now, Rabbi Arnowitz will be leaving Beth El in the Summer of 2011. (And if, for some reason you did not read the Beth El News last month where that was shared with the entire congregation, I am including his article explaining his reasoning and plans, as well as the article by our president, Ed Hochberg in this e-mail.)

For the next three Shabatot, starting this weekend, we will be interviewing candidates who will be mentored by Rabbi Arnowitz (and me) in the transition year that will start this summer. Each of our candidates will graduate Rabbinical School this spring. The candidates will have numerous speaking and teaching opportunities throughout the weekend in our schools and from the pulpit, including the sermon on Shabbat morning.

This Shabbos we will extend the warmest of Beth El welcomes to Rabbi Philip Ohriner and his wife, Rabbi Shoshanna Ohriner, as well as their 2 year old son, Ari. Rabbi Ohriner will be teaching in our Hebrew High, working with the children in our ECC as well as visiting classrooms in the Religious School on Sunday. Please plan on coming out to greet the Ohriners, especially on Shabbat morning. (After all, they are interviewing us as much as we are interviewing him.)

Let's show them the warmth and hospitality that Beth El is famous for!

See You in Shul,

Rabbi

The following article, by Rabbi Arnowitz was published in the Beth El News last month:

Dear Beth El Family,

As rabbis, we aspire to emulate those who came before; people like Moses and his successor, Joshua. We hold them up as models of leadership and consistency throughout the generations.

The Jewish people have had many rabbis over the millennium. In the time of the first rabbis, the career path was clear. You served the community until the end of your life and then your apprentice assumed the role of leader. When Moses dies on Mt. Nebo just before the Jewish people crossed into the Promised Land, Joshua, who had trained with him for thirty-nine and a half years, was there to take over the reins.

Since then, the role of rabbi has evolved. In today's rabbinic environment the role of an associate rabbi is generally a short-term position. Once a rabbi has been able to learn from the bounty of knowledge a congregation has to share, he feels a duty to move forward, to serve a new congregation in need of leadership. This is the path that I am following. And soon, it will be time for me to move on, as well. The summer of 2011, to be exact.

I am writing now in an effort to help people understand the transition that is about to happen. Our immediate past-president Eric Boory recently pointed out to me, that most of our Beth El members have not had the experience of "graduating" an assistant rabbi. The only assistant to serve here before me was Rabbi Krupnick, who was originally brought on board with the understanding that he would assume the mantle of leadership when Rabbi Kahn retired. The truth is that eight years - the length of my tenure here at the end of this term - is unusually long term of service for an assistant.

This congregation is blessed with exceptional klei kodesh. Rabbi Krupnick and Hazzan Alisa Pomerantz-Boro are extraordinary leaders, not only for the lay community, but for each other and for me. I have benefited from their wisdom and their nurturing guidance. In Rabbi Krupnick, I have found my mentor, friend and personal rabbi and I am thankful every day for our relationship. As sad as I will be to lose his everyday tutelage, I look forward to putting all I have learned from him into practice to help a new community.

Beyond the Rabbi and the Hazzan, it is all of you who make Beth El so special. It is my honor to serve here. I know I have learned at least as much from all of you as you have from me. From the weekend I interviewed here seven years ago, my family and I have been welcomed into your lives and this community as part of your families. Not every synagogue community is like that

and the warmth and caring of this one is something in which I take great pride and for which I have great respect. My part in helping to foster that atmosphere of community has been one of the most fulfilling aspects of my rabbinate thus far and I expect will be for the next 18 months.

My work here is hardly over. As you read in Ed Hochberg's accompanying article, we are seeking to engage a new assistant rabbi for next year, the better to engineer a smooth transfer of all of my projects and responsibilities. As he or she assumes the role, I will continue to explore new initiatives here at Beth El. Of course, I'll keep you apprised of all of them.

In the next year and a half, there will be plenty of time for goodbyes. Right now though, there is still much great work for us to do together. I remain not only fully engaged with my duties, but fully energized as well. It may be premature for "goodbye", but it is not too early to say "Thank you."

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The following article by Beth El President Ed Hochberg also appeared in the February issue of the Beth El News:

By the time you read this article, the new decade will be well underway; however, I do want to take a moment to think about the transformation of our magnificent synagogue over the 2000's. We opened the decade by installing a Senior Rabbi for the first time since the 1960's. In the years that followed, we added depth and unbelievable talent to our klei kodesh and professional staff. We ended the decade by moving into our new home on Main Street. Through all of that, we have been able to maintain the values and traditions that have made Beth El what it has been and that will propel it forward into the future.

One of the puzzle pieces that we added in this decade was Rabbi Jeffrey Arnowitz, or less formally (as we love to call him), "Rabbi Jeff". Rabbi Jeff came to us in 2003 as Assistant Rabbi, moving to Associate Rabbi a couple of years later. As you may know, this position is really supposed to be fairly temporary. Of course, that's not been our experience here at Beth El. In his accompanying article, Rabbi Jeff notes that we have not "graduated" an Assistant/Associate Rabbi, as the only one we have had in recent memory is Rabbi Krupnick. However, as you have probably heard by now, we will be "graduating" Rabbi Jeff in the Summer of 2011. I bring this up with very mixed emotions. On the one hand, I am very excited for Rabbi Jeff; I know that he will be excellent in his "own" pulpit, wherever that may be; he is exactly the sort of rabbi our movement needs. On the other hand, selfishly, I will be sad to see him leave us. He has been such an integral part of our transformation this past decade. Moreover, on a personal level, he and his wonderful family have become

such a good friends to us and I know many, many of you feel the same way. Most congregations of our size graduate their Assistant/Associate Rabbis pretty frequently; it will be a new experience for us and it will be a little bittersweet.

Of course, now is not the time for all of the Rabbi Jeff tributes, as his work here is far from done (that time will come). He will continue in his current role as an integral part of our professional/religious leadership for the next 18 months. He will also have some additional responsibilities with respect to our new Assistant Rabbi. Specifically, Rabbi Krupnick, Hazzan Pomerantz-Boro and I will be visiting the JTS the week of February 21st to interview graduates for our new Assistant Rabbi position here at Beth El. From there, over the succeeding couple of months, we will audition some of these candidates on Shabbat mornings, followed by group interviews by our Search Committee. Sometime on either side of Pesach, we will likely make an offer to our preferred candidate, who will join us before the High Holidays. This process will allow us a very orderly transition, as Rabbi Jeff will spend considerable time mentoring our new Assistant so that person will be in position to make an immediate impact.

As Rabbi Jeff says in his article, it is too soon to be saying goodbye, as that will not be happening for awhile. However, it isn't too soon to say "thank you". Of course, it will be very hard to thank him enough for his leadership, counsel, guidance, and friendship over the last seven years and for the 18 months ahead. Still, Rabbi Jeff, thank you for all that you have done and all that you will do!

B'Shalom,
Ed