

I first want to express my gratitude and appreciation for Rabbi Friedman, my teacher and my friend. It truly means so much to me that you are with me this evening as I begin this new chapter in my rabbinate. You have played such an integral part in helping me become the rabbi that I am today.

I also want to thank Rabbi Oren Postrel for joining us on the *bimah* this evening. You are a rabbi to many of our congregants and your presence on this special occasion marks the beginning of our relationship as colleagues. I look forward to working together and learning from you.

To Naomi Parker, our President, Sara Ellman, our Vice President of Religious School, Ivy Chesser, Board Representative for Youth, and to Joy Spodick, chair of my Search Committee. Each of you have helped both Michelle and I become part of the Shir Hadash community and have been

partners with me as I begin to learn and embrace the culture of Shir Hadash. Your guidance, insight, and willingness to be a sounding board for me has helped me be successful during these first months. I am grateful that I know I can count on each of you in the months and years to come.

Rabbi Aron and Cantor Felder-Levy, to be part of this clergy team has been an amazing blessing. You have shared your bimah and your congregation with me, and I am thrilled that I also can call it my own now. Your friendship, mentorship, and support is invaluable. Thank you for giving me the space to bring my heart into my work here while also teaching me and showing me why you love this congregation so much, and why this congregation loves you.

Michelle, you are my guiding light, my best friend, and my greatest cheerleader. I know that being the spouse of a clergy person comes with both its blessings and challenges, and there are not enough ways for me to express how much I love you and am grateful for your support.

And finally, I want to thank all of you for joining us tonight. I see many familiar faces, as well as not-so-familiar faces. Having you here with me this evening lifts my soul and spirit and fills my heart.

During my interview process, my wife, Michelle, and I had the pleasure to join our now immediate Past President, Irv Olender, and his wife, Irena, for dinner. Irv encouraged me to take off my tie, suit jacket, and have a glass of wine, ensuring that I no longer was in the "hot seat." While I obliged, I was quite confident that having dinner with the current President of

the congregation was as almost as hot of a seat I was in during the formal interview.

Much of our conversation that evening was focused on what I had dubbed the "*Besheret* Factor." There is something quite special about the interview process for a rabbi and a congregation. Beyond credentials and experience, something from both the congregation and the rabbi must *feel* right. And during the whirlwind of less than 72 hours, it became quite clear that becoming your Rabbi Educator was indeed *besheret*.

Over the past few months, you have opened your homes and your hearts to Michelle and I. We both feel as close to at home as one can feel during the first months of any transition. To seamlessly integrate within a community is rare, but there is a sense of wholeness and completeness - a sense of *shalom* - that we both feel. We are grateful for your hospitality

and welcoming, and look forward to sharing what we hope to be a meaningful and lasting relationship.

This sense of belonging is why I am a rabbi. It's why I believe that I can be my most authentic self. It's why being in a relationship with each of you is so important to me. Because when we are in such a relationship, we are able to experience the wonder and awe we sometimes overlook day to day.

Tonight begins a covenant between you and I - a sacred and reciprocal agreement that we share with each other. As your Rabbi Educator, I am honored and privileged to be with you during times of joy and of sorrow, to walk the cycle of life with each of you. So, too, I know that you will be there for Michelle and I during times of joy and sorrow as well. When we become home owners, celebrate with us. When a family member or friend has passed away, mourn with us and comfort

us. And when we have children, bask in happiness with us. Don't worry, Michelle, I am not pregnant. These are the moments in our lives where we need each other most. These are the moments in which we see what is sacred in community.

As your Rabbi Educator, I am honored and privileged to help shape our Jewish future, to inspire our youth to fulfill their highest potentials and find meaning and importance in our ancient traditions. I am excited to see how, together, we can experience a Judaism that is vibrant, that honors the past while acknowledging that it must change and grow with us. Together we can strive to create a culture of excellence, purpose, and commitment to each other. So, too, I know that you will guide me as I continue to grow as a person and human being. When I make mistakes, there will be opportunities for me to learn. When I stumble and struggle, there will be bruises and

bumps that can be healed. Let us help each other when we are low, and rise each other up perhaps higher than before.

As your Rabbi Educator, I am honored and privileged, along with Michelle, to call you family. Our namesake, Shir Hadash, translates in English as "New Song." But every song needs voices for its melody to transcend. We are a congregation that sings the song of justice and peace. We are a congregation that sings the song of inclusivity and belonging. We are a congregation that sings the song of hospitality and acceptance. We are a congregation that sings a song of connections and communal celebrations. Tonight, Michelle and I add our voices to these songs - **our** songs.

As we approach the New Year, we celebrate this new beginning. May our sacred bond be as sweet as the year ahead of us, flowing with love, laughter, and peace. Shabbat Shalom.

