

With our three generational families, we are reminded of the transitions we make in our lives. Children become parents, and parents, if they are fortunate, become grandparents. When Bruce Hartman, who was younger than me and whose arrival in the community I remembered clearly, became president of our congregation, it was a moment of transition for me. After many presidents, who, if not founders, were very longstanding members of Shir Hadash, all of a sudden I was the continuity and the historical memory.

This evening is about progressions in the life of our congregation and falls appropriately at a time when we are reading about a major transition in the life of the Jewish people. At the beginning of the portion, we are a large extended family, the descendants of Jacob, his sons and their families. By the end of the reading, we are the Children of Israel, a people, a nation, who will develop new structures of leadership that will be more formalized than those necessary for a single familial tribe. Political and religious leadership will be separated into two distinct roles, Moses as the communal leader, and after him Joshua, Judges and eventually Kings, and Aaron and his sons, as priests. Judges will also be appointed to serve at the local level and in courts of appeal. As our portion stresses, the people become so much more numerous, and yet are bound tightly together, in destiny and in commitment to one another. Our Torah portion Shemot, did not

really need to start with that list of names, the 70 members of Jacob's family who came down to Egypt, after all, the same material is found in Genesis Chapter 46. But this list was included so that just as we were becoming a nation, we were reminded our roots as a family.

In many small congregations there are lay leaders who are the patriarchs and matriarchs of the community, more significant at that stage than the clergy who often at that stage come and go. Many of those gathered here can instantly call to mind those patriarchs and matriarchs who brought our community into existence. Several of these leaders have remained active in our congregation all through the decades. We value our founders and the leaders who followed them in the early days of our congregation.

But as I mentioned at our Town Hall in December, one generation of leadership is not sufficient. The success of the founders is in the succession of new leaders to follow in their footsteps. Combining our honoring of our founders with the families that are now three generations within our congregation, highlights that generational transition. Sons and daughters of our founders along with others of their generation are now steering the ship. The Havurah that Rabbi Joel Fleekop founded more than 15 years ago of young couples, some not yet married, and

most without children, is one example. They are now “old married people” with children in school and even appearing on lists for B’nai Mitzvah dates to be assigned in the not so distant future. And many have already served on our board, or are on our board today. Our pre-school families are another example of generational transition, children whose parents were not even born when the congregation was first established.

Tonight we offer special blessings for all those who support and sustain our community, founders and longtime members, and the new younger generation that will succeed them.

Followed by Mi Sheberach for Congregations.