**KOL NIDRE REMARKS**

G’mar Tov

One year ago, I stood before you, harkening to the words of the Beatles, who told us that “**Here Comes the Sun**”. For some of us, the sun came this year; for others, it did not.

As I consider where we stand tonight, I find myself inspired by another song, a song entitled “Standing on the Shoulders”, written by Joyce Johnson Rouse. You can Google it to hear or read the whole song, but there are a few lines that I have found to be especially meaningful:

The song-writer begins: “We are standing on the shoulders of the ones who came before us.

They are saints and they are humans, they are angels, they are friends….

She then comments:

“I imagine our world if they hadn't tried

We wouldn't be here celebrating today.”

And she concludes:

“I am standing on the shoulders of the ones who came before me

I am honored by **their** passion for **our** liberty

I will stand a little taller,

I will work a little longer

And my shoulders will be there to hold the ones who follow me.”

As I have thought about this song, I have marveled at the way that the song writer connected the sacrifices of the prior generations, the gratitude and responsibilities of our current generation and the benefits that future generations may reap from the efforts of their predecessors. In our own words, **l’dor v’dor**, from generation to generation.

This year is our 180th year as a Synagogue. As Rabbi Spratt reminds us, it is truly amazing what our predecessors have done for us over the past 180 years. It could not have been easy for our predecessors to start a synagogue so many years ago. And, it could not have been easy for our predecessors to construct this very building nearly 100 years ago. They built this amazing structure, not knowing that they were about to endure a stock market crash, a Depression, and a horrendous war with unimaginable results.

If we truly stand on the shoulders of the generations that preceded us, **what does that mean for us today?**

Of course, it means that we should be grateful for all that has been done by those who preceded us. I am confident that that is a gratitude that we all feel.

But, there is more. Recall how Joyce Johnson Rouse ended her song:

“I will stand a little taller,

I will work a little longer

And my shoulders will be there to hold the ones who follow me.”

As we stand here today, let’s combine our gratitude for the past with a commitment toward the future, to the generations we will know (perhaps sitting next to you today) and to the generations we will never know.

**Fortunately, we are not in this alone**.

We have **an entire clergy team** dedicated to inspiring us, teaching us, enabling us to be the pursuers of peace reflected in our Congregation’s name, **envisioning** a world where every person thrives and lives a life of meaning and **helping us**, through Judaism, to thrive, through community, through social responsibility, and through personal development. It is a clergy team that combines the energy reflected in their actions with the passion reflected in their words and songs and with the wisdom reflected in how they lead by example.

**We are not in this alone. We have a remarkable staff**. Whether they work at RSS or CRS, whether they are teachers or not, whether they are performing any of the myriad of roles that keep our institutions functioning every day or keeping our buildings safe, clean and operational, our staff distinguishes themselves by how much they care about our school and synagogue communities, by how hard they work, by how professionally they serve and by how much of their work is behind the scenes. Please join me in thanking our staff when you see them; they truly are the backbone of RSS and CRS.

**We are not in this alone. As members, we have the means to connect with each other in so many different ways**. Through our Minyan program that enables groups of congregants to pursue mutual interests, through our Shereinu program that opens our doors to people for whom Synagogue life once was not a realistic alternative, through our Adult B’nei Mitzvah program that enables congregants to immerse themselves in our religion, through our Chapel services or regular Friday evening services, through Brotherhood or Sisterhood, through our Book Group or Mah Jong club, through our social action and social justice initiatives – to name just a few of our options - there are so many ways for each of us to connect with each other. In fact, virtually anything you do at CRS or RSS is an opportunity for connection.

We also have some new ways to connect. Some of our members have been meeting busloads of homeless persons who have been bussed to our City from communities that do not value the lives of the homeless. We may also have an opportunity in the coming weeks to provide food, clothing, shelter and other support to a family seeking asylum in the United States. If you are interested in participating in this project, or are otherwise looking for an opportunity to connect with others in our Synagogue, please see me after services tonight or tomorrow or otherwise get in touch with me by responding to an email from me.

Putting all of this in perspective, **if it is the clergy who lead us and the staff who provide our backbone, it is our members’ ability to connect, with each other, with our clergy and staff and with the communities around us, that defines us**.

With connection in mind, our Board, clergy, staff and other thought-leaders are currently in the midst of developing a strategic plan that will help us plan for the future by building on the strengths that I have just mentioned. There are four pillars to that plan, framed as goals:

* To nourish the mind, body and soul of our members, across all life stages.
* To cultivate connection and community.
* To activate our members as community creators based on their diverse needs
* To strengthen our organizational and financial capabilities.

Of course, no strategic plan can look 180 years in the future. **But, by gazing into the future and by aligning who we are with what we seek to be, we can assure a meaningful future for ourselves and the generations that follow us**.

No doubt, there is one other thing we can and must do if we are to build for this year and for the next 180 years, and that is to raise the money we need to support our efforts. When you make a contribution to our Annual Appeal, you are investing in the future of our Synagogue. You have heard this from me and my predecessors before, but the need this year is especially intense. Each of us feels the pressure of inflation in our daily lives; things cost us much more than they did a year ago. For many of us, the stock market’s decline has had a direct impact on or 401(k)’s and other investments. What we can’t forget is that these same factors impact our Synagogue as well, both in terms of the goods and services we buy and in terms of the investments we can access. We are financially secure, but that is thanks in large part to the generosity of our members, through your dues and Annual Appeal contributions.

When it comes to the Annual Appeal, we ask each member to do what he or she can do to support the Congregation. Each year, we set a goal for our Annual Appeal, reflected in dollars and inserted directly into our budget for the coming year. This year, I would like to set a second goal, which is to meaningfully increase the percentage of members who contribute to the Annual Appeal. In prior years, too much has been done by too few. Hopefully, this year, the support by our generous existing donors can be supplemented by gifts by members who have not donated before. **If you have the ability to make a contribution, please do s**o.

For those of you who have already made your gifts to our Annual Appeal, I and our Board thank you from the bottom of our hearts. If you have not yet made your gift but have done so before, please consider making a gift to this year’s Annual Appeal at a level that is meaningful to you. If you have never made a gift to our Annual Appeal before, now is a great time to start. **By acting together, we can provide the shoulders upon which our future generations will stand**.

My wife Camille and I wish you a very happy, healthy, safe and meaningful New Year.