

Matt Langweber
High Holiday Speech
September 21, 2017

L'shanah Tovah!

It's so good to be here with all of you as we welcome in the new year of 5778. A special welcome to Rabbi Danny and Rav Rebecca as they lead us in this very exciting year.

Please join me in wishing L'shanah Tovah to all who are streaming the service. Please turn around and wave to them while giving them you best wishes for a sweet new year.

And a special L'shanah Tovah to my mother who is here from Florida. If you see her and want to wish her a happy new year—please tell her nice things about me. That should help her get over the

disappointment of my becoming a temple president instead of a doctor or lawyer.

“I’ll have what she’s having,” “Go ahead, make my day,” and “We all live in a yellow submarine.” Two lines from two iconic movies: *When Harry Met Sally* and *Sudden Impact*, and one line from two of the great prophets of the 20th century, John Lennon and Paul McCartney, sang by Richard Starkey also known as Ringo Starr

So what do these have to do with TST? So now that I have your attention I will tell you that later. But first a story...

There was once a town much like ours that had a Buddhist House of Worship, a Catholic Church and a Reform Jewish Synagogue. All three congregations shared a serious problem with squirrels invading their

respective buildings. The squirrels would get into the Buddhist house of worship and disturb meditations and climb all over and store their acorns in and around the beautiful Buddha statues. They would get into the Catholic Church and eat the communion wafers and drink the sacramental wine while listening in on confessions. They would enter the Reform temple and eat the challah, drink the Manishewitz, and help themselves to bagels and lox. The leaders of all three of the congregations knew they had to do something or the squirrels would take over these three houses of worship.

So a solution was reached at the Buddhist Temple. The monks informed the followers that it was predestined by the Zen forces for the squirrels to be in the Buddhist temple and that the people would just have to live with them. And so the squirrels remain there to this day.

A solution was also reached at the Catholic Church. The priests of the church decided that they would deal lovingly with the squirrels, so they trapped them humanely and released them into a park at the edge of town. Within days they had returned to the church and they again were trapped and released. And so it goes at the church to this day in the endless cycle of trapping, releasing, and returning.

The third most effective solution was reached at the reform Jewish Temple. The Board met for hours in special meetings in consultation with the clergy and the congregation...and finally a solution was reached...and here it is...the congregation voted all of the squirrels in as new members—now they only come to temple once a year on Yom Kippur and they don't eat.

So now let's go to *When Harry Met Sally* and hopefully we can all have what she's having. If you recall, Meg Ryan expresses her pleasure in a very graphic way. Another woman in the restaurant (who in real life was Carl Reiner's wife) sees this casually but sincerely remarks "I'll have what she's having!" So what does this have to do with TST? I contend it has everything to do with us---we have choices---we can be squirrels and only come once a year and not eat. Quite boring when you consider the prospect of Meg Ryan's remarks. So let me put this in context for you...

As you spend time in the temple, do you notice people who seem to totally enjoy their experience here? Do you observe congregants who seem to constantly bask in the joy of what Shir Tikva has to offer? Do you see members enjoying services? And most importantly do you see members of course

enjoying the food? If these are things that you regularly observe but are not an integral part of your temple involvement—let me suggest that you have what they're having! If you recall, last year I held up a four page list referencing over 100 ways to get involved—here is some of what I said:

- If you think your dues are too high join the finance committee.
- If you want to change the paint color somewhere in the building—join the facilities committee
- And if you don't like the President join the nominating committee.

There are many more too numerous to mention. An unprecedented number you took advantage of these opportunities last year, which is reflected, in our continued success. To those of you who still need encouragement to get involved—all I can say if you have not had what they're having I promise if you do----you will be as gratified as Meg Ryan was.

Now to **“Make My Day:”** The expression “Make My Day” is usually used as a challenge to someone who is about do something that one is convinced they won’t do. If you recall, Clint Eastwood a.k.a “Dirty Harry Callahan,” a gun wielding detective uses the catchphrase, "Go ahead, make my day" in the beginning of the film as he stares down an armed robber who is holding a hostage. All I can say is that you’re Board of Trustees and you the members of our congregation took this saying to heart and made my day last year. You made my day when:

- 14 former presidents stood on the bimah as I was installed as the 22nd president of TST.
- You made my day when over 300 of you showed up on a cold January evening and unanimously voted to hire Rabbi Danny as our senior Rabbi.

- You made my day when the Early Learning Center enrolled over 60 children which got us to capacity and then your Board of Trustees boldly approved a policy granting complimentary membership to our ELC families. This really speaks to who we are regarding making Judaism accessible to all.
- You made my day when our softball team, the Chosen Runs, won the championship in the Shul Softball league.
- You made my day when you stepped up to support the annual fund with the unprecedented amount of \$475000 and over 50% of you participated...and you made my day when the Board of Trustees approved a planned giving

program that will help ensure our future by allowing members to accommodate TST in their estate plan.

I could go on and on---2016-17 was a great year for TST and you made my day in many ways too countless to mention in the 2 hours that I plan to speak.

So now I ask---what will it take for you to make my day this year? Well I'm glad you asked...

- You can make my day by looking at your membership in TST not as place in time in your Jewish life i.e. do not look at yourself as a young family or a synagogue elder, rather you need to consider yourself as a facilitator for the entire community –you are supporting everyone's

Jewish journey through your involvement and financial commitments.

- You can make my day by stepping up and supporting our annual fund toward its lofty goal of \$577800. This is 25% greater than last year. This is an investment in our excellence. We need you to step up so that we can improve our Early Learning Center facility, hire more great staff, and move our technology into a state of the art program. There is a reason that we are on offense and that the expression “we can’t afford that” is not in our vocabulary. On the contrary—we now invariably say yes to appropriate initiatives and then thoughtfully find a way to fund them. We had 50% participation in our annual fund last year—Please make by day with 100% participation this year—there is no better return on investment for you and TST. And

Oh by the way, your Board of Trustees has already participated 100% in giving to the annual fund—they lead by example.

- You can make my day by being an active participant in the celebration of TST's 40th anniversary. We should all embrace this celebratory year by participating in the many events that will shortly be communicated to you. We would especially like everyone to attend our May 12 congregational celebration where Paula and Rabbi Blumberg will be the honorees as we celebrate a retrospective of our 40 years.
- Finally you can make my day by embracing all of the above as we develop the vision for our next 40 years. This vision will inform our programming, our staffing, our partnerships, and

yes a potential new building project that will serve our changing needs.

And now—I'm going to make your day with three announcements:

- First, we concluded our fiscal year with a financial surplus. We are not only financially stable—but we are on the precipice of being able to financially thrive and no this will not result in a dues reduction.
- Second, I am pleased to announce that we have 50 new members since June 01, 2017 putting our membership again over 500 and above the level of 2 years ago. Friends—this is just the beginning—we are going to be the place where Judaism thrives in metro west—we are making

this the place where Judaism is relevant to all who enter our doors.

- And finally, I am so happy to announce that our beloved Cantor Hollis Schachner and your Synagogue have completed a multi year contract. I am so thrilled that Hollis' voice and all that she brings to our community will be here for many years to come. Yes it is OK to applaud.

So you all remember that last year we discussed that the building that you are in today was originally a restaurant. So my question to you is do you want to be a squirrel this year that only comes to the restaurant once a year and eats acorns---very boring? Or do you want to **Have What She's Having** and enjoy all of the great food and nourishment that you can get in the Shir Tikva restaurant? Sounds like an easy choice to me.

...And what about the Yellow Submarine? I cannot think of a song that better speaks to who we are---it talks about our friends being all aboard and as a community having all its needs met together. That is clearly who we are. —So since our name is Shir Tikva—and Shir means song—what do you think Hollis and JZ—should we sing? Let’s change the words to reflect who reflect who we are...

We’re all in Shir Tikva’s restaurant
Shir Tikva’s restaurant
Shir Tikva’s restaurant
We’re all in Shir Tikva’s restaurant
Shir Tikva’s restaurant
Shir Tikva’s restaurant

—So I want everyone to put their arms around each other and sing the chorus “We’re all here in Shir Tikva’s Restaurant”.....after JZ and Hollis sing the verses. Are your ready?

Verse 1:

With our friends, we feel complete
With many more of them across the street
We're all here – to daven and pray
As we celebrate – this holy day!!

Chorus:

We're all here in Shir Tikva's restaurant
Shir Tikva's restaurant
Shir Tikva's restaurant
We're all here in Shir Tikva's restaurant
Shir Tikva's restaurant
Shir Tikva's restaurant

Verse 2:

When we hear, the shofar sound
Another year, has come around
When the service is complete
Return your prayer books (or Machzorim?), and then
we'll eat!

We're all here in Shir Tikva's restaurant
Shir Tikva's restaurant
Shir Tikva's restaurant
We're all here in Shir Tikva's restaurant
Shir Tikva's restaurant
Shir Tikva's restaurant

Verse 3:

And we pray (and we pray), the year is sweet (the year is sweet)

Like raisin challah (raisin challah), that can't be beat (can't be beat)

Another year (another year), the slate is clean (slate is clean)

But this is not a (this is not a), submarine (submarine)
ha ha!....

We're all *here* in Shir Tikva's restaurant

Shir Tikva's restaurant

Shir Tikva's restaurant

We're all *here* in Shir Tikva's restaurant

Shir Tikva's restaurant

Shir Tikva's restaurant

...one more time.....

L'shanah Tovah!