Mazel Tov, Gratitude, and Farewell!

Fond good wishes from your dear friends at Temple Shir Tikva
Wayland, Massachusetts
June 16, 2010 | 26 Sivan, 5772
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MEMORIES FOR RABBI GREG LITCOFSKY
6-12-12

We remember a Simchat Shabbat in the spring, five years ago. We went to say hello to a new young family with a baby. We thought maybe they were new members. It turns out it was you and Rachel and baby Noa, checking us out during the Assistant Rabbi search. Your warmth and spirit were immediately evident.

We have enjoyed learning and praying with you, and laughing and playing with you and your family ever since.

Your gentle encouragement helped us to experience new aspects of Jewish life.

We also have fond memories of meeting your parents and seeing them at TST for holidays, Shabbat, and simchas. We will miss your Mom’s baking as well as her friendly smile, along with your Dad’s resonant bass voice.

We have loved getting to know Rachel and following her career at Brandeis (our alma mater). Her love of life is a gift to all of us. We have also loved watching Noa and Ami grow. Noa has become a lovely young lady and is a joy. Your Mom’s comment recently that Ami is a miniature you gave us a laugh. If he grows up to be as caring, insightful and warm as you are, then you and Rachel will be blessed.

We wish you much happiness and success in your new pulpit. We will miss you and hope to see you and your family for many years!

We love you.
Mindy Milberg & Phil Benjamin
MEMORIES FOR RABBI GREG LITCOFSKY
6-12-12

You have been a rabbi, teacher, mutual mentor and friend to me. You have helped me learn that leadership is more than scheduling meetings and setting agendas. You have helped me understand that leadership requires building personal relationships at the one-to-one level. I can no longer count favorite lunch or coffee spots on one hand (and I am sure that the MetroWest economy is the better for it).

With the help of your teaching and encouragement, we have learned to expand our concept of social action organizing. It was not always a smooth road, but we learned from our missteps as well as our successes. You have helped us see what can be possible when reaching beyond our immediate community to join forces with other religious communities to try to find causes that can unite and strengthen us.

I never dreamed that I would find study of liturgy to be inspirational. But one of the things I will most remember is the time spent learning about the underpinnings of our Shabbat service and developing our own Shabbat Shacharit Siddur.

For all of this and more, thanks for your friendship. Todah Rabah.

All the best,
Phil Benjamin
Hi Greg (and Rachel and Noa and Ami),

When the call went out for links to preferred temple websites, I was surprised and caught off guard with your suggestion to check out Old South Church in Boston.

The committee was intrigued, however. The site told a story that captured the spirit of the church and its members, and the graphics were clear and the navigation intuitive.

So, with curiosity, and rabbinic imprimatur, we contacted the design team, Theory One, a tiny outfit in Watertown, Ma. They came to visit, told us they mostly work with faith organizations, have never done a website for a Jewish temple, but would love to learn about us and Judaism. They started with a series of "discovery" visits that included attendance at Friday night and High Holy Day services. Their grasp of what makes Shir Tikva tick, their portfolio, and stellar references left other contenders trailing.

As they say, the rest is history and the committee is grateful for your interest and timely response to our call for favorites. One postscript: graphic designer Cheryl’s husband is intrigued by Judaism. They signed a ketubah at their wedding and will come to services at TST sometime soon. A convert in the works and more Jewish children? Perhaps.

Keep that open mind and your famous energy. We will miss you.

Joan Blair, Captain of the Web Wizards
To the Litcofskys:

I can’t believe it has been five years since the Litcofskys entered our lives. You joined our family at Shir Tikva and we immediately made plans to play golf. Well, five years have flown by and we still haven’t met on the first tee. I guess we will have to travel to New Jersey to get in that round that has been eluding us all these years.

Your wisdom and warm and genuine caring have helped us through many a rough patch these last few years. Your counseling at the time of my mom’s passing will never be forgotten. You have touched our lives in so many ways that it would be impossible to enumerate them all. We pray that the folks in your new congregation will quickly realize what a great man you are and how wonderful is your family.

My deepest regret (aside from never quite getting to the golf course with you) is that we never had a chance to study with you at the Shabbat torah study sessions. One of your many legacies that you will leave behind is our steadfast resolve to begin attending the torah study sessions on a regular basis. Then perhaps someday you can return as a scholar in residence (for you are a true scholar as well as a Mensch in every sense of the word) and we can make up for lost time albeit briefly.

Go forward with grace, wisdom and your never-ending love for Judaism. With love and deepest appreciation to you and your entire family.

Ellen and Rick Blocker
Dear Rabbi Litcofsky:

Thank you for the kindness and love you have shown to my children Natalie and Gary. Thank you for making their experience at Friday night Shabbat services, and Saturday Shabbat Yeladim, and Sunday Ganeinu such a special and fun time. Best of luck to you and your beautiful family as you embark on your relocation.

L’Shalom,
Lisa M. Cukier
A special thanks from the TST players for loaning us your considerable talent, enthusiasm, and humor. We’ll never forget your fabulous alter egos — as a cool rapping Ishmaelite in *Joseph*, a Yiddleshe bottle dancer in *Fiddler*, and as a rockin’ Beatle. These images still bring on smiles!

— Marilyn Darack and Nancy Bergstein
for the TST Players
A Personal Tribute to Rabbi Greg Litcofsky

His radiant smile lights my path
His laughter is music to my soul
His exuberance engages the child within me
His loving presence heals my spirit
His strong hands comfort me when we pray together
His poignant stories warm my heart
His vibrant questions open new windows in my mind
His ruach enlivens our Shabbat worship
His poetic divrei Torah create lasting memories
His visionary leadership is a blessing

Hatzlachah rabbah . . .
Sheila Rosalyn Deitchman
Sarah Rivkah, Baalat Korei
Dear Greg,

We will certainly miss your dedication to Temple Shir Tikva. You played a central role in our joining Shir Tikva, and helped us feel at home as new members. It was an honor to work with you on the Young Families Committee, and it was an honor to learn from you. We will miss your warmth, your stories, and your friendship.

We wish you and your family wonderful things in your move to New Jersey, and with your new role as the senior Rabbi. We hope to stay in touch...we are in New Jersey often! Wishing you health, happiness, love, and success in all of your future endeavors!!

Our Best,
Deena, Michael, Ryan, and Brody Ebright
Stay cool, and look to just over the edge of the horizon.

— Eric

Next year at Sassamon!

— Nancy
You’ve already made an awful lot of ripples in the universe, Greg, and you’re just getting started.

Our acquaintance began when you pestered me — coaxed me, I mean — into coming to a social justice event, and getting more involved. We ended up thinking, strategizing, and taking action together for months. Though there were setbacks, we learned so much. That will stay with me, and I hope with you, for good.

Your support during one unforgettably trying year in my family’s life will stay with me, as well. You drove through the dark and the snow to be with us in the first strange minutes and hours after my mother’s death, and that was hugely important to all of us. Even more important was that during the subsequent months, marked for us by a barrage of difficulties, you never forgot, never flagged, never stopped checking in. You were, simply, there for us. There for us during the dark times, there for us during the healing, there for us when, thank heaven, good things started to happen again. And for that I will always be grateful.

And this is all in addition to your in-the-moment, open-hearted presence at services; your teaching; your energizing, inspiring work with Noah.

Here’s what’s really remarkable: As much as you’ve meant to me — a lot — you’ve also meant a great deal to everyone who wrote a tribute. Not to mention those who will express their appreciation in different ways, and those whose appreciation may never be expressed at all, but is real.

I wish all good things for you, your family, and your new congregation. And, especially now that I understand what you mean to so many, I look forward seeing what you do in the future. There’s no doubt in my mind that you will continue making ripples upon ripples, Greg. In fact, I know you’ll make waves.

— Karen
There once was a Rabbi named Greg
Who got us started off on the right leg
He gave us encouragement and a hug
Because we are the gateway drug
Would you stay if we got down and begged?

He's a Jewish prince, we all know.
From him great ideas always flow.
He runs meetings like a clock
That's why our team rocks!
We're so sad to see him go.

The foundation you've built here will stay
But now you must go a new way.
Our loss is New Jersey's gain
They'll put you in the Hall of Fame
May your next chapter bring happy days!

Greg –

Someone once said, "A good-bye is never painful unless you're never going to say hello again." We look forward to saying hello again, and to many hellos in the future.

Many thanks, from our entire family, for your energy, enthusiasm, and caring spirit. We hope you know how much you'll be missed, and as our son likes to say, "We'll miss you more."

To your next, exciting chapter, and the very best to you and your family.

Liz, Andrew, Max & Zachary Freedman
This is bittersweet to say the least. You have offered so much to our family during our time at Shir Tikva. Your dedication to the temple, the community and most importantly the programs and energy you have brought to the organization is (dare I say) unmatchable. We thank you for engaging us into the congregation and making TST feel like a 2nd home to our family. Your new congregation is lucky to have you!

Mazel Tov on your next venture in life and best wishes to you and entire family in your move to Jersey. Look in the back of the shul sometime...you might just see me :-)

All the best.
Peter, Amy, Cyrus, Molly, Amber and Sarah
Rabbi Litcofsky,

We feel so lucky to be able to call you our rabbi. Your welcome to Shir Tikva was warm and you made sure our entire family felt comfortable there. We are so pleased to have found a community that we love and it is in large part to your outreach efforts to young families.

Thank you for all that you have done for us and for Shir Tikva. You will be very much missed here but know that you have made a profound impact.

Wishing you and your family all the very best!

— Ellie, Jeff, Adelaide & Sam Goldman
Dear Greg,

We are so very sorry that weekend commitments made long ago prevent us from attending the celebratory dinner in your honor. Please know that we will be with you in spirit.

Greg, it has been such a pleasure to work with you, to learn from you and simply to be in your presence. You have brought so much light, joy and sparkle to all of us at Shir Tikva. You radiate intelligence, good humor and warmth. You shed wisdom without pretension. You are kind and caring. And you are fun to be with!

How we will miss you!

May you find happiness and fulfillment in your new home. May you and your wonderful family be blessed with long life, good health, joy and shalom. May you go from strength to strength. May you keep us in your heart and come back to see us often.

With our gratitude and love,
Nancy and Peter Gossels
I well remember the moment I met Rabbi Litcofsky. He was at TST for his final round of interviews, and he was in the front stairwell trying to get his wife Rachel on the phone. I’d already heard about “this guy you HAVE to meet” and I knew right away this was that guy. One second after shaking his hand, I felt that we were continuing a discussion started ten years earlier, one that might never be finished. And now, all these years later, I still feel exactly the same way.

To Rabbi Litcofsky, there is simply no such thing as “too busy to talk” or a closed door. He has an engaging way of getting to know a person and finding just that perfect fit, whether it’s study, tikkun olam, or a day on the golf course (or all of the above). He enthusiastically donated every one of his free non-staff-meeting Mondays over an eight-week period to study with a small group of us—not once, but twice—simply because he was asked for a topic recommendation. His presence on the pulpit is always open and welcoming, one has the feeling there’s nowhere he’d rather be than immersed in the life of the temple and the lives of its congregants.

I know this is not the end of our conversation, but I will most definitely miss my rabbi, my friend, my Tasmanian devil with a yarmulke. From our family to yours, wishing you all the most wonderful new connections, engagement, joy, and a smooth, steady swing.

Much love, respect and admiration,
Beth (on behalf of Larry, Jeffrey and Lindsay!)
Dear Rabbi Litcofsky,

We can't begin to thank you, for all you have done for us.

You are an amazing teacher. You taught me what it means to be a Jew. I am so blessed to have you as our rabbi. I wish you the best of luck.

Mazel Tov!
Brandee & Matte Henderson
Greg,

I hope that amongst the myriad of memories you take with you from your years spent at Temple Shir Tikva, you recall:

1. lessons learned during the weeks of discussions regarding the attempt to move the early morning Shacharit minyan from the sanctuary

2. the only Hebrew letter which does not start a verse in the Ashrei prayer (which you may challenge your congregation to identify during a liturgical trivia quiz)

3. the inordinate amount of time it took to get a covering for the Bimah upon which to lay the Torah

In addition to our many conversations about numerous topics, I will never forget the wonderful sermon you gave about the King who searched for an honest child by using boiled seeds as a test.

I shall truly miss you.

I pray that the Almighty gives you wisdom and guidance to make the appropriate decision for your new congregation............. whether or not to stand for the concluding prayer of Adon Olam on Shabbat!

Marc J. Homer
Rabbi Litcofsky was the officiant at our wedding! It is the only Shir Tikva Wedding he has performed, and I hope it will be a special memory for him; as he definitely made the day and the process leading up to the day very special for us.

Thanks!
Stacey and JJ Kazakoff-Eigen (and Ezra!)
From the Kesslers

Dear Greg,

My first memory of you is one that you don't even know about. Andy and I were out for dinner shortly after having Eli. We overheard someone at the next table say "Rabbi" Immediately our ears perked up since we were about to start the process of looking for a temple. It was then that we saw you and your lovely family. Not only did we love the fact that you had young kids (Rachel was pregnant at the time), but we loved how easily and sincerely you spoke. (I admit it we were eavesdropping). As soon as we got home I searched all of the temples in the area. I finally found you at Shirt Tikva and the rest is history. We have been so happy and fortunate to be a part of a wonderful jewish community at Shir Tikva. Getting to know you and your family has been an added bonus for us over the last two years. We wish you all of the luck in the world on your new job. We will miss you!

Love,
Ronnie, Andy, Eli and Sam Kessler
Rabbi Litcofsky, we’re really going to miss you. I mean, we’re REALLY going to miss you!
We’ve only known you and your family for a short while, but we feel like we’ve known you all forever. It’s like our families were meant to be together. You and I can talk social justice and leadership all night long, while Bev and Rachel trade tales of their days on the Upper West Side and bond over their adventures as moms to two young kids. And Noa and Ami can spend all afternoon playing with Bernie and Sadie. Everyone is happy...how rare—and cool—is that!

In just a couple years we’ve made some wonderful memories, but the simple fact is that it hasn’t been enough. We haven’t had enough great conversations, seen enough superhero movies, or enjoyed enough family get togethers. So we’re just going to have to do more in the years ahead. Fortunately, New Jersey is only a few hours away! Thanks for all that you’ve done to build and deepen the community of Shir Tikva. Thanks for your boundless energy and powerful wisdom. Thanks for your passion for tikkun olam and deep commitment to organizing. Thanks for all those Shabbat Yeladim services that have left Bernie and Sadie feeling like Shir Tikva is their second home. Thanks for all of this!

We wish you the best as you take the helm of your own ship, so to speak. We know you’ve got a ton of ideas about what you’re going to do, and we look forward to hearing how it all unfolds in the years ahead. We’re REALLY going to miss you and your amazing, wonderful family, but we have no doubt that that are whole lot more good times together for the Litcofskys and the Klaus in the years ahead!

Love,
Max, Bev, Bernie & Sadie
Greg:

As you have journeyed through these past five years at Shir Tikva, we have been fortunate enough to have been welcomed with open arms and embraced by the Shir Tikva community. Thank you to all of our friends at Shir Tikva for making us part of the Shir Tikva “family.”

We have had the opportunity to see your passion for Judaism develop and grow. We have enjoyed your teachings, and learned from them. Your energy, your connection to people your personality, and your tireless efforts are making your journey in your Rabbinate something special to behold.

Daddy and I have kvelled as we experienced your achievements and you “AH HA” moments that you so lovingly and thoughtfully shared with your Shir Tikva family.

Greg, may you, Rachel, Noa and Ami continue to go from “Strength to Strength” with love, health and happiness.

MAZEL TOV
Love Mom and Dad
Greg:

I am sorry that Bunny and I cannot celebrate with you on June 15, but as you know, we are out of town celebrating our daughter Becca's wedding that very weekend — and that seems to be a reasonable priority for us(!).

But I do not want to let your departure come without telling you once again what a pleasure it has been to work with you — and how much I will miss that good work together. Whether in thinking about our Shabbat mornings, and what was right for our congregation...or listening to your good ideas about how we could grow in our prayer yet also respect local traditions...or talking about the challenges of coming in as a new rabbi to an established congregation...or perhaps the challenges of being the leader of a board of committed volunteers in a not-for-profit organization...all these brought wonderful exchanges of ideas over these past years. And I still smile, from our first coffee at Mel's to our wonderful spring walk around Shir Tikva, comparing notes about the jobs we hold and the work we do.

I wish you all the best as your adventures move forward. Your new shul is lucky to be getting you; you just may need to remind them, or perhaps yourself, of that from time to time.

Warmly,
Rick
Dear Greg, Rachel, Noa, and Ami,

We have all enjoyed getting to know you. Noa and Ami are very special friends for Sarah and Juliet! They have really grown up together! We will miss you! Thanks, Greg, for being such an inspirational leader.

Best wishes,
Carrie, Paul, Sarah, and Juliet
Dear Greg,

We have so enjoyed learning from you whether from the pulpit or leading a not-so-small Torah study class. We have also seen how able you are when dealing with difficult social issues. While we are so happy that you are moving to New Jersey to lead your own congregation, we are also very sad to see you leave.

Our grandson, Aaron Orgel, says hi and you are a great teacher!!! Thank you so much for all you have done for Temple Shir Tikva. Our very best wishes to you.

Evelyn and John Neumeyer and the Orgel Family
Dear Rabbi Greg,

We are very proud of your tenure and accomplishments at Temple Shir Tikva. Marcia and I believe that Temple Emanuel is fortunate to have you as their new spiritual leader. You will be an asset to your new congregation and the surrounding Jewish community. We expect nothing short of great things from you in the future. Best wishes and continued success.

All our love,
Marcia and David Novick
I am grateful for the opportunity I had through MICAH to work with Rabbi Greg Litcofsky. His boundless energy, optimism, and brutal honesty are enjoyable and admirable. My favorite memories of Greg are times of collaborative thinking, especially with Fr. Paco and myself. The 3 of us sat together in Starbucks in Wayland planning for MICAH’s future. All were in, all were committed, all were playing off each other. Other times we sat in the living room and dining room at St. Stephen’s, or in the library at Temple Shir Tikva. Lives shifted and dynamics changed but in those moments there was hope, optimism, and commitment to one of God’s great callings for our lives – social justice.

In these sessions some of Greg’s greatest qualities shined through. Greg is a great listener and a great thinker. He truly enjoys the people that he is with. He respects others opinions and is open to ideas. These qualities will carry him far in life.

And after meetings, 5 minutes into the car drive, the cell phone ringer goes off and it’s Greg – checking in – continuing to think, to plan, to hope for a better for future.
I remember that I first met our new associate rabbi and his wife on a Shabbat evening just before Greg officially started his new position. Rachel was holding a little red headed baby girl on her shoulder who looked about the same age as my first granddaughter and little did I know at that time that Noa Litcofsky and Ami Litcofsky would become classmates and good friends of both of my granddaughters.

Of course I will miss and not forget all that Greg has brought to our Shir Tikva family — as teacher, pulpit rabbi, someone committed to and passionate about social justice, and more. I will miss the man who I also see in the role of “ABBA” — a wonderful, loving and dedicated daddy to his children. I will miss Rachel — a perfect “rebbetzin” for both her husband and congregation.

Thanks to each one of you for all that you have been for our family and we wish you all the best in your new community!

Joyce Pastor
It’s hard to believe that it was five years ago. I first met Rabbi Litcofsky at HUC as a graduating rabbi. As part of the search committee we had the wonderful duty to interview over thirty applicants from that class to Shir Tikva.

If we had gotten the worst of the lot, we would have done very well.....but that would not have been possible as there was no "worst of the lot." The graduating students were all very special and I came away from that feeling great optimism for the future of the Jewish people.

Greg has a light and an energy that shines through. He and Rachel, Noa and Ami, have become a wonderful part of our community and his new congregation in NJ are blessed to have him.

Our very best wishes for continued success and thank you so very much for all you have brought to us.

We love you,
Ed and Janet Polansky
A sweet memory of Greg, Rachel and Noa was the first day they came into the Temple office. It was perhaps the day Greg was hired or about that time. They were a young family putting their best foot forward, and I thought it would be easier for them if I could tend to the baby.

It was a treat for me to hold a new baby and I put Noa on my shoulder and started rubbing her back. She fell asleep quickly and stayed asleep for quite a long time. I enjoyed every moment of it. It felt like the presence of the Litkofskys was beshert.

Now I know it was true.

Janet Polansky
Dear Rabbi Greg,

I would like to thank you for helping us start to build a community for our family over the past couple of years at Shir Tikva. We are sorry you are leaving Shir Tikva, but know you will be building a wonderful community in NJ and be even closer to your Flyers to watch them on TV.

Danyel and Family
From the first moment I met with you, Greg, I knew you were something special. Your passion for organizing was raw, right on the surface, and your commitment to learning it and teaching it was intense. Whether I liked it or not, I knew our paths would continue to cross. Luckily, I liked it.

I've admired how much you are able to think big, to take risks, and to be human enough to admit that you still have room to grow. JOIN for Justice wouldn't be the same if not for your vision for what was possible. As a single example, you literally came up with the idea for the National Summit, and despite how many years this took off my life, this was a very good idea. There are hundreds of people around the country who are now connected to our work, and knowing that they are part of something growing, something that they are now eager to help create.

I'm glad that though you are moving away that you are still on JOIN's board, so that I will continue to work with you. I'm glad that one of the many hats you wear is ours.

Karla Van Praag, Executive Director, JOIN for Justice
Greg,

I have treasured the opportunity to learn from you and work with you as colleagues in the Boston area. I admire your dedication to your family and congregation, your passion, your wisdom, and your genuine and kind heart. You have challenged me in ways that have helped me grow as a rabbi and as a person. I always appreciate your honesty and of course, your sense of humor. I will miss partnering with you on local community organizing work, but look forward to seeing you at conferences.

From strength to strength — best wishes in NJ. The community is blessed to have your leadership.

With much love and blessing,
Rabbi Rachel Saphire
Dear Rabbi Greg, Rachel, Noa and Ami,

Each of you has provided our family with the gift of friendship, and we want you to know how much each of you means to each of us! While we are very sad we won’t see you regularly anymore, we could not be happier for you as you take on the next chapter in your family life. While Bella and Noa share their "heart bears", please give her bear an extra squeeze every once in a while from all of us!!!

Wishing you much happiness and continued blessings,
Annabella, Max, Josh, Jenny & Mike Schreiber
Dear Rabbi,

I have always enjoyed my work with you and my times spent with you. You are a special caring person, full of lively and energetic charisma.

We have a few special connections — and I hope to hold on to this and add even more special moments as the years pass. I will always be interested in your dreams and successes — and also the growth and progress of your family.

Thanks for fun, thanks for flowers, thanks for hugs, and thanks for always listening and caring. You are “one special Rabbi”!!

With affection,

Lois Seltzer
Dear Rabbi Greg,

When I first met you several years ago my impressions were that you were immediately great having interned at Westchester Reform Temple where I spent much of my formative years.

My unconditional respect and admiration grew following my first class with you regarding Shabbat morning services. I did not initially understand that this was a class held for those who were preparing to rewrite the Shir Tikva Shabbat morning looseleaf prayerbooks. During this class, I decided that you were the youngest person I had known with encyclopedic knowledge of the history of prayer, its spiritual references using Hebrew text and liturgy. In fact, you were interesting, funny and a great listener with a lot of humor.

I have to thank you for inspiring my interest in appreciation of prayer and Shabbat, “who we are and what we must know in order to understand G-d. “ Although I did not rewrite the siddur, I decided I didn’t know enough and you certainly moved me forward to understanding our history. Although intimidated, I enrolled in Me’ah shortly thereafter to learn more about our relationship with G-d and our Jewish people.

Your High Holiday Sermon on “The Path To Well-Being” will forever be on my mind. Every day I think about singing, building chevrutah, giving tzedekah, counting my blessings and studying Torah.

I wish you, Rachel, Noa and Ami a wonderful life in your new caring community and Temple Emanu-El of West Essex, NJ. I hope you will return as a visiting scholar and friend to teach us about prayer and Torah. You are already missed and forever adored.

With much gratitude,

Candy Steingisser
You have been an inspiring Rabbi, a fellow lover of Israel, and a friend. Thank you for being with us at Temple Shir Tikva.

All the best,
Lonnie and Bob Swarz
Thank you, Rabbi, for inspiring the young families of this community! Your enthusiasm, spirit, and ruach have created a place where children and families are excited to learn and to engage with one another.

Your children are an integral part of our children's everyday life and you will all be missed. They will always have a special Shir Tikva/Longfellow connection which will always serve as an important memory of your whole family.

Your new community is lucky to have you, but you always have a home here.

Love,
Adam, Ilana, Ezra, and Emily Wyner