

## President's Remarks at the 2020 AGM

Honoured Clergy, Board Members, Staff and Members:

Was it really only a year ago, also during Chol Hamoed Sukkot, that I spoke to you all as the newly elected President of KBI? Well, what a difference a year makes.....or has it really?

First and foremost, on behalf of the Board of Directors, the Clergy and the entire staff, I truly thank each and every one of you that has taken the time and made the effort to communicate with us and express your kind words and expressions of gratitude for the work we have done both before, leading up to and throughout Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. We are energized by the support for the difficult decisions we've been forced to make and so appreciative of your acceptance in these difficult and unusual times. These past 7 months or so have truly been different.....or have they really?

Last year, I spoke of the Sukkah and how some of the walls remain open or transparent so that those inside can see those outside and welcome them into the Sukkah. I also related a teaching I learned that the Sukkah can also function in the reverse, that those outside can see and choose to join those that are inside **because** of the open and transparent walls. Little did I anticipate or understand how these two beautiful metaphors might come to fruition less than a year after I uttered them and how different this Sukkot holiday is from last year's.....or is it really?

We are all aware of how our Clergy and staff quickly pivoted and changed the way we deliver our programmes and services (both ritual services and member services). It has certainly been challenging for them and also for you, our members, as our age old customs and practices seemingly disappeared overnight. Rabbi Kenter wrote about the stages of grief that he and all of us are either going through or have gone through and how we arrive at acceptance. We have managed to conclude our fiscal year with a minimal loss, as you see from our financial statements, though this coming year will be more challenging and difficult.....or will it be?

While many of you have kindly and sincerely suggested to me that this period we're in is not what I would have expected for my Presidency, I smile and respond that it also isn't what our Congregants expected either. I'm not aware of a single shul President who experienced exactly what they might have expected during their term of office; nor am I aware of any current shul President who is prouder than I am to be honoured with your trust and to be the President of our amazing Kehillat Beth Israel during these unusual and unprecedented times.....or are they really?

Sukkot has always been the season of the fall harvest and one of our shalosh regalim, one of three festivals when our ancestors would travel and ascend to Jerusalem, bringing their offerings to the Temple of old. Little did our ancestors ever think or believe that **their** age old practices, rites and rituals might be challenged, different or even turned upside down and require new ways of worshipping while going through their stages of grief to arrive at a place of comfort and a new normal. Countless later generations of Jews throughout our history, including some of you here this evening, have had their communities shattered, their way of life altered forever and their rites, rituals and practices irrevocably

changed and yet.....here we all stand having faced new and different challenges while learning to adapt, maintain our identity as Jews, keep our community intact and engaged and looking out for each other's welfare. Is it what we hoped and planned for? Could any of us have foreseen, let alone planned for the uncertain times we are facing and will continue to face? Of course not, but we have all faced these challenges head on and have demonstrated the strength of our Kehillah; a Kehillah that we should all be proud to be a part of. These are indeed unusual times.....but are they really??

Lastly, I want to take this opportunity to thank our retiring Board members, Harvey Slack and Joel Sachs, who have served you well and faithfully over these past years. Additionally, on behalf of all of us, I'd like to thank our Executive Director, Rena Garshowitz, as she begins her maternity leave immediately after this meeting. Please join me in wishing her a safe and easy delivery and much joy and nachas with her growing family. We look forward to an announcement b'sha'ah tova, in good time, and we know that our interim Executive Director, Elisheva Brantz will ably fill Rena's role until Rena's return next year.

Thank you all for being here tonight and Moed Tov to everyone.