

A Note from Vivien Rabin Brown

Dear Fellow Congregants,

As you know, I am no longer President of the Ohavi Zedek Synagogue, nor am I on the Board of Directors. Being home during the pandemic that we're all living through, I began to think more about life—"what's it all about?" I'm sorry to hear that some folks were concerned about my physical health, but please be assured that I'm physically fine (or as fine as any other 67 year old person could be)!

However, I realized that it was time for me to pass the baton to Nathaniel Lew and the rest of the board and to move on. Most of you know Nat, he is a long-time OZ member and has been on the board for 2 ½ years. He is Chair of the Fine Arts Department and Professor of Music at Saint Michael's College. He is married to Jason Lorber, a member of our Development Committee, and their son Max graduated from OZ Hebrew School last year. We are lucky to have Nat and all of our other wonderful board members.

I still intend to be an active congregant and volunteer. I am chair of the OZ Human Resources Committee and I will continue to work with Judy Hershberg and Tari on *The Voice*, and in other areas where I can help out.

I want to end my final article by bugging you about something that I've been bugging you all about for a while—our General Fund! It's because of your generosity that so many wonderful things are going on here. We thank those of you who are kind enough to donate to specific projects and events that are so important. But I'd also like to remind you about the importance of giving to our General Fund. I spent my entire career in the nonprofit sector and know that general funds are not exciting and not something folks get passionate about. But without general fund support, nothing gets done—it is the secret behind our success. It complements everything we do, and allows our Jewish community to grow and thrive. Do you want to keep our building warm in winter and cool in summer? To keep the lights on? To ensure that our roof doesn't leak? To pay our phone bill? To keep our computers running? To get the snow removed from our entrances? Do you want to pay our employees a fair, living wage? You know where I'm going here – general funds!

I ask you to read the following, from an article in eJewishphilanthropy.com. It's written by Rabbi Adam Cutler, who serves as the spiritual leader of Beth Tzedec Congregation in Toronto.

On Shabbat morning, the traditional Ashkenazi liturgy includes a prayer in which God's blessing is sought for those who give funds to acquire lights, buy wine for Kiddush and Havdalah, provide food for guests, and charity for the poor. In this prayer, we recognize those whose contributions sustain communities, whose tzedakkah is aimed not at a particular, discrete though perhaps solvable problem, but rather at the ongoing maintenance required for communities to sustain themselves and perhaps to grow. These are not sexy causes. No one gets excited about paying the electricity bill. The narrative of a city's Jewish community or even an individual synagogue with all of its constituent parts and the breadth of its mandate is never as neat and clean as a narrow cause, as worthy as that cause may be. An initial capital project may be necessary and certainly exciting for some, but it is the ongoing operations and upkeep that made the Tabernacle meaningful and useful. As needed as the voluntary donations were, it was the mandatory community half-shekel levy that paid for the daily operations. One could not be an Israelite without giving to the central communal fund.

Of course we couldn't do the exciting things we do without those of you who are generous enough to support special projects and events. But I ask you to keep in mind the importance of the General Fund. Want to thank me for being president? Or maybe want to celebrate the fact that I'm no longer president? Either way, how about a nice donation to the Ohavi Zedek General Fund!

I look forward to the day when we can enjoy each other's company in person! Thank you all for everything you do and I pray that we all stay safe and stay healthy.

~ Vivien Rabin Brown