



What Will We Place in Their Hands?

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Have you ever made gefilte fish? From scratch? Years ago, my grandmother taught me how to make it. She had a recipe, although calling it a recipe may be generous. There were ingredients, of course, but the measurements were less than precise: a little of this, enough of that, grind the fish, mix it all together until it looks right, and then boil it until it is done.

Once, while my grandma and I were standing in my kitchen making gefilte fish for the holiday meal, I asked, “How will I know when it’s done?” She looked at me... a little bewildered if I am being honest and, in her Yiddish accent, said, “What are you, a dope?”

That was my grandmother.

She taught me the recipe, but she did not hand me a perfectly measured set of instructions. She showed me how she did it, shared what she knew, and trusted that eventually, I would learn how to do it myself.

Perhaps this is how legacy works. We inherit something. We learn it. We live it. And eventually, we pass it on.

And **what** we pass on matters.

Last year, when I stood here on Yom Kippur morning, I reflected on the opening words of Nitzavim, the Torah portion we read today: *Atem nitzavim hayom kulchem*. You stand this day, all of you.

I spoke about *kulchem*—all of us coming together—and that Temple Beth-El is defined **not** by the walls around us, but by the people who stand together within them. This year, I find myself returning to the same Torah portion and hearing it differently.

Nitzavim speaks to a people at a moment of transition, but the covenant extends beyond that moment and across generations. We are part of something that began before us, and we have a responsibility to make sure it continues beyond us.

Maybe that is what legacy asks of us: What did we receive? What are we responsible for preserving, and what will we place into the hands of those who come after?

Those questions have become very personal for me.

Lately, I have found myself thinking often about my children and their relationships with Judaism, the Jewish people, and Israel.

We celebrated the holidays. We lit Hanukkah candles with our ever-growing collection of menorahs. We built many sukkahs. We came to Temple Beth-El. We traveled to Israel. Judaism has always been woven into the fabric of our family life.

And yet, my children have not all connected to Judaism in the way I once imagined they would. This is not about whether they are Jewish “enough,” and it is certainly not a judgment of their choices.

It is about a question I suspect many parents ask when their children become adults: Did the things about being Jewish that mattered so deeply to me take root in them?

I find myself asking that question because I know what I received, and I know how much of it took root in my own life. And I don’t know if that will be true for my children.

I am a first-generation American. My father and his family came to the United States in 1951 after the Holocaust. My family lost more than 60 relatives.

For me, the Shoah was not something abstract or distant. It was personal, and it shaped my childhood, my understanding of who I was, and who I am today.

My grandmother lost virtually her entire immediate family except for one sister. She lived with unimaginable loss and tremendous survivor’s guilt, but she moved forward. She married my grandfather and raised my father and my aunt.

She was not what I would describe as overly religious, but Judaism was woven into every part of her life.

She persevered. She built a family. She lived her Judaism. She truly was an *Eshet Chayil*, a woman of valor.

My father carried that legacy in his own way.

When our daughter celebrated her Bat Mitzvah in Israel, our extended Israeli family gathered with us. Our family had arrived in Israel after the Holocaust - roughly 15 people. Generations later, that family has grown to more than 65 cousins.

Taking in the joy of having us all there together, my father looked around and said something I have never forgotten: “Hitler lost. We are all here. We are thriving. In the end, we won.”

In that moment, my father could see that our family’s story had continued.

And here I am, a generation later, looking at my own children and wondering what will take root in them.

I don’t know. And maybe I never will.

But I am beginning to understand that not knowing does not relieve us of the responsibility to keep trying.

There is another reason these questions feel particularly urgent to me now.

My grandparents’ generation did not need to be convinced that Jewish survival mattered. History had taught them.

My father carried that understanding. I grew up with it.

But what happens when our children haven’t grown up with that same sense of Jewish vulnerability?

October 7th reminded us that what we thought belonged to another time is not in fact behind us. The horrific events of that day and the Jew hatred that followed have made clear that Jewish life still needs to be protected, and that standing up for our people still matters.

But I don’t want fear to be the reason our children remain connected to Judaism.

The question for me is not simply how we make sure our children remember our history. It is how we help them discover what Judaism has to give them: a connection to those who came before them, a way of making sense of the world, and a framework for navigating a purposeful life.

There is a foundation that we inherit. There is Torah and tradition, a culture, our connection to Israel, and our responsibility to one another and to the Jewish people.

We don't build that foundation. We receive it.

Our responsibility is not just to pass on a set of instructions for how to be Jewish. It is also to make sure that what we have received remains alive and meaningful for the next generation.

And for me, that question of what we pass on is deeply connected to Temple Beth-El.

For more than two decades, TBE has been an important part of my family's Jewish life and our Jewish community.

And now, these are our final High Holidays together in this main sanctuary. And yet, what makes these moments sacred was never simply the walls around us. These walls became sacred because of the Jewish life that was lived within them.

Our physical space may be changing, but the heart of our community is **very** much alive.

You can see that vitality in this year's Horizons catalog, and in the classes, speakers, programs, and events already filling our calendar. The Jewish life we are talking about preserving and building is not something in the distant future. It is happening here, right now.

Who Temple Beth-El is today has been **shaped over generations**—by those who founded this congregation, by the rabbis and members who came after them, and by all of us who have helped make this community what it is. And what we have built together is something worth being proud of.

And now, we get to help **shape** what comes next.

Our visioning work gives us the opportunity to think together not simply about what Temple Beth-El will look like, but what kind of Jewish community we want to create for future generations.

And I want to hear from you.

Send me an email. Call me. Or let's meet for coffee. I want to know your thoughts on two things in particular: What part of Temple Beth-El's legacy is most important for us to preserve? And what is the most important thing we should do, or become, in the next 25 years?

I don't expect us all to have the same answers. And it's important to hear yours. Because deciding what comes next is something we all need to figure out...together.

When I think about what it means to pass something on, I keep coming back to my grandmother.

What I learned from her was not a set of lessons or instructions. It was something quieter. She loved me and was always there for her family, even while carrying so much pain of her own. She showed me what it means to care for the people around you and what it means to give of yourself. My father carried those same values, and together they taught me, by the way they lived, how to show up for the people you love.

Sometimes I wonder if my grandmother could ever have imagined that the granddaughter she taught to make gefilte fish would one day stand here as the president of a synagogue....

I still don't know what my children's Judaism will ultimately look like.

Maybe I don't get to know.

Maybe legacy doesn't reveal itself when we expect it to.

We live our Judaism. We pass it on. And we trust that, in ways we may not see, it will take root.

I think that is true for Temple Beth-El, too. We may not know exactly what this community will look like in the years ahead, but we will continue to build a place where Jewish life is lived, shared, and passed on.

We are one generation in a chain, connected to those who came before us and responsible for those who come after us.

So on this Yom Kippur morning, I want to leave you with the question I have been asking myself:

What has been entrusted to me, and what will I place into the hands of the generation that comes after me?

I don't know if any of us can answer that question today.

But asking it—and continuing to ask it—is part of our responsibility.

Maybe that is what my grandmother gave me without ever knowing she was giving me a legacy. She gave me a recipe. Not one with exact measurements, but enough for me to learn, to make it my own, and eventually to pass it on.

We may not know what our children will do with what we have tried to give them. We may not know what future generations will do with what we build here at Temple Beth-El.

But we will make sure that we give them something meaningful to receive....

And just so you know...

I make a **really** great gefilte fish.

G'mar Chatimah Tovah. May we all be sealed in the Book of Life.