

## Rabbi Fox's Message for Temple Beth Shalom's Av/Elul 5766 (August 2006) Newsletter

Judaism speaks to us of relationships and religious conviction, enriches us with commentary and collegiality, and frees our mind and raises our spirit. So, too, is reflected our experience of the communal place for our practice of Jewish life: our *Beit Knesset*, or House of Assembly.

We Jews live dual lives: in individual and communal worlds. We are commanded to mitzvot as individuals and as members of a greater whole. Our tradition provides us numerous opportunities for personal as well as communal prayer, not to mention the many cultural traditions that cannot be separated into one arena or the other.

And that is where the role of the *Beit Knesset* comes in – it provides a holy space for *each* of us and for *all* of us. This holy space balances the communal and the personal, the demure and the passionate, and the mournful and the joyous. In doing so, we raise our spirits and create a place of healing, for ourselves and our fellow.

As we enter the month of Av, we are met with both the tremendous sadness of the ninth of Av (Tisha B'Av) and our recollection of the destruction that befell us at the hands of our ancient oppressors. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of Av, we are also greeted with the joy of Tu B'Av, the lesser-known Jewish holiday of love (both the romantic and communal sorts). In the wake of the sadness of communal destruction, we are reminded of what builds communities: the love of one's neighbor.

These are not words I take lightly and, in the short time I have been honored to be your Rabbi and spiritual leader, I can see that they resonate with you, as well. As I enter your community and together we make it ours, as I learn the sound of your laughter and your tears, as we learn to speak each other's language, it is my hope that we can build upon the communal home that serves our congregants needs to create an enriched spiritual home that will enlarge its walls with fellowship for ourselves and those yet to be our fellows. It is then – by our individual compassion and by our communal desire to raise our space even higher – that we will call Temple Beth Shalom not only a “religious house of peace” but a holy house of assembly for all.

I am honored to be a part of your journey and to be offered your sacred trust.

Kol Tuv (All Things Good),

Rabbi Gerald R. Fox