

## Mark Holtzman

### Annual Meeting Comments

It is truly a pleasure to stand here and accept the role of Beth Am President for the next two years. I am both flattered and humbled to be selected for this wonderful appointment. I will attempt to heed a key piece of advice of certain respected colleagues I conferred with over this past year in discussing this role; that advice being: keep your speeches short.

It is only appropriate to open my remarks with my personal words of gratitude for Rachel. Over these past two years, Rachel poured her tremendous spirit and passion into all facets of her Presidency, with an unrelenting smile and remarkable results. For the past year, she welcomed me into her busy schedule of Beth Am activities, graciously spending many hours helping prepare me for my Presidency. As the old adage goes, Rachel is a "tough act to follow." Yet, on the other hand, as someone rightly pointed out to me, her many accomplishments will only pave the way for a smooth transition for the next President.

I also want to thank Don Allen for his tremendous contributions over these past three years; Don, your wisdom and sage advice will be sorely missed in the board room, but I know your spirited involvement in several activities and deep commitment to Beth Am will persist.

As I realize many of you may not know me too well, I thought I would take a few moments to introduce myself and my family to you. My wife Marla and I, and our two daughters, Ellen and Beth, joined the Beth Am community twelve years ago. The girls are all grown up now: Ellen is 22 and has been participating in a yearlong community service program in Israel called project Otzma. Beth is 19 and a sophomore at UC Berkeley, studying history and pre-med. Marla, my wonderful wife for twenty-five years, hails from Toledo Ohio, and is a registered nurse, working for the Palo Alto Medical Foundation.

As for myself, I grew up in the San Fernando Valley section of Los Angeles, attending Temple Judea during my youth. By day, I am the Chief Financial Officer of a young company in Sunnyvale helping the hotel industry improve their revenue and guest satisfaction with a room upgrade product. I may be better known for the eight years I spent at Webvan, the infamous online grocery firm from the internet bubble era. By the way, four of those eight years were spent handling the bankruptcy proceedings.

Ten years ago, I was a relatively quiet and uninvolved congregant until one day I received a phone call at work. It was Charlie Rothschild, the Treasurer at the time, inviting me to attend a Finance Committee meeting that evening, presumably learning I had a financial background. I went to that meeting, and here I am up here now. Between that evening 10 years ago and now, it has been my pleasure to serve on the Finance Committee, the Strategic Planning Committee, the Board of Directors, serving as Treasurer for three years, the Facilities Planning Committee, and most recently, the Rabbi Search Committee.

A few other random facts about me: I don't like fish, I can't sing, I do the daily crossword puzzle, I watch Dexter, and in the interest of full and fair disclosure, I am a Golden Bear, and my baseball team of favor tends to don the color blue.

As I step into this role, I am comforted and grateful for the deep support system surrounding the President: The highly dedicated and passionate board of directors, our wonderfully gifted Program Team, the wise and accessible Past Presidents, our hard working committee chairs, and our overall community of deeply caring congregants. Be it known

now that I will lean on you for advise, wisdom, encouragement, and candid feedback. As I envision myself entering this role, I challenge myself with six basic principles to personally guide me as your President. They are:

- To be accessible and approachable
- To be a good listener, patient, and open minded
- To work hard toward making our visions and goals a reality
- To be open and forthright
- To maintain a sense of humor, have some fun and laugh
- And, finally, to diligently check my spam folder and never use this as an excuse for a late or non response

Some folks have asked about my agenda, goals, or ideas for the temple for these next two years. My frank answer has been that it is difficult for me to respond in the first person. The goals set forth for the next year are a collaborative effort, between the Board and Program Team, and we typically dedicate a half day retreat session in June to discuss and determine our outlook for the next year. With that said, there are certain critical projects in process that we will continue devoting our time to, such as:

- The work on our important Re-Imagine project; rethinking how to best educate and inspire our children
- The ongoing effort determining how we can most effectively communicate with our congregants, whether delivered on paper and/or electronically
- The preliminary discussions regarding the plot of land next door and our initial steps toward developing a plan for its usage
- The possible transition of a newly hired Rabbi into our community
- The continued reshaping of our annual fair share pledge process, and annual campaign, to address the pledge declines experienced over the past few years
- And finally, the vital continuation of our lay-professional partnership; a special unity helping create and support our extraordinary programs, classes, events and worship opportunities

Back to my personal goal of being accessible; I want to hear from you, I want to meet you, I want to know you. I want to hear when things go well, and I want to hear your constructive suggestions on how we can do better. Honestly. The [President@Betham.org](mailto:President@Betham.org) email box is a useful medium by which to connect, or, if preferable, please give me a call. However, I must warn you that the last two weeks of April are not a good time to connect....yet, for all the right reasons. Marla and I are taking our first trip to Israel, spending these two weeks touring the country with our daughter Ellen, over her break from her work in Israel. I will come back Jewishly enriched, enlightened, and fulfilled, a sound frame of mind to be in as I embark on my Presidency. A frame of mind that will only grow and prosper over these next two years thanks to this wonderful place we call Beth Am.

I thank you in advance for your continued support, and I hope to meet you all at our dinner, shortly.