

Even I need a “go to” guy. Someone upon whom I can rely for sound-and-sage advice-and- counsel. Yom Kippur is not merely a time to ask for forgiveness. It’s also a time to acknowledge our gratitudes.

In that light, I want to give a shout out, and publicly acknowledge my “go to” guy, my predecessor as president, Dr. Seth Krosner. I am glad and grateful that I got to serve under him as Administrative Vice President for his entire 3-year term as our kehilla’s chief executive. While I certainly do operate a whole lot differently as president than he did, nevertheless, I acknowledge and admit that I learned a great deal from just watching him, and I believe, that I’ll be a better president for having served at his right hand all of these years. My respect and admiration for Seth is immense. Thankfully, he’ll still be around, both on the Board, and on our Executive Committee, serving in the role of valued Immediate Past President.

Few of you will ever fully know exactly how much this man has done for Tifereth Israel, in so many different areas, mostly without any fanfare. Take my word for it: Seth Krosner achieved so very much as president. Time constraints really keep me from listing what he accomplished in office. The bottom line is this: Seth left office on June 30th with a legacy as one of Tifereth Israel’s greatest and most accomplished presidents of all-time. Who knew? I did.

Each and every one of us owes him a huge debt of gratitude. So, thanks again, Seth, for three great years as our leader.

My friends, do you think it’s easy being president of this congregation for 36 consecutive months? Huh? Try it sometime. I’ve been President for only 3 months, and look how gray my hair is!

The institution that is Tifereth Israel in 2014 is almost un-recognizable from the stodgy, stuffed-shirt Tifereth Israel that Sue & I joined in August of 1980. This is definitely not your grandfather’s, or even your father’s, Tifereth Israel. We are no longer an institution run by old white men. Well, OK, maybe one old white man.

Yeah, but we still offer 52 weeks of Shabbat services each and every year, spiritual exploration, stimulating learning for kids and adults, interesting programs for every segment of our membership, a wonderful USY chapter for our youth, and most of all, a real, bona fide community, which we in synagogue life call a kehillah.

As Rabbi Rosenthal so eloquently described in his Erev Rosh Hashana sermon last week, I am proud to say that we now make becoming and being a member of Tifereth Israel very easy and kehillah-like with our new T'rumah program.

I do have some news to announce tonight. Even our Board doesn't yet know what I'm about to tell you now. This Yom Kippur we have more Tifereth Israel members than we had last Yom Kippur. No Tifereth Israel president has been able to say that in over a quarter century. We knew that our innovative T'rumah program would bring us new members, and we hoped that there would be a membership increase. So, yes, we are "up" for the first time in anyone's memory. But not "up" just a few. We are up ten. Not ten people. Not ten families. Ladies and gentlemen, our membership numbers are up by ten percent! You know what that means? That means that there is a one-in-ten chance that someone you don't know, who is sitting near you tonight, is spending their very first Yom Kippur with us here at Tifereth Israel in their new kehillah. So, at the right time, or at the end of the service, please introduce yourself to someone you don't know who is near you, and make a likely newcomer feel special and welcome.

I am proud to be the president of a congregation that has members from every conceivable demographic group: 20-somethings all the way up to several 100-year-olds, Jewish couples, intermarried couples who are raising their kids Jewish, Jews by Choice, ex-Orthodox, ex-Reform, ex-nothing, gay, straight, black, white, Asian, Filipino, Israeli, South American, Mexican, Eastern European, Russian, Moroccan, North African, South African, Yemeni, and, yes, we even have members who walk like an Egyptian.

All of us, from whatever background from which we came, have come together here, at Tifereth Israel, to form a kehillah that meets all of our spiritual needs. We are an ever-evolving dynamic congregational entity, constantly refining and improving with the times, for the benefit of us all. As I said, this is not your father's static Tifereth Israel.

We are proud to have the longest serving rabbi of any synagogue of any denomination anywhere in San Diego, Leonard Rosenthal, a man who is a learned, respected and great rabbi, a spiritual leader and educator.

Seth's final act as president was arranging for the lovely and talented Cheryl Katz to be Tifereth Israel's first-ever cantorial soloist, and to be the first consistent vocal and musical presence, on our bimah, for our services, in well over a decade. You've all now heard Cheryl's cantorial work for three Rosh Hashana services & tonight's Kol Nidre, so you all know what I'm talking about.

We have a dynamic new Preschool Director in place, the one and only Amy Stanley, one of our own, someone who grew up in this synagogue, someone I've known since she was like eight years old, someone who is 100-point-zero percent committed to seeing to it that your youngsters, attending our Silverman Preschool and our camps, receive the ultimate Jewish preschool and day camp experience in San Diego.

Both of these women, along with the sensational program director we have in Beth Klareich, are doing fantastic jobs for Tifereth Israel, working hard each and every day to improve an already great congregation.

There are way too many other staff members to individually acknowledge, but let me tell you that our teachers, office and maintenance staff, Vice Presidents and Board members, are second to none.

Tifereth Israel truly is a great and wondrous place and I am sure glad that all of you here tonight are a part of it.

But there are other Kol Nidre and Yom Kippur reflections. We will pause tomorrow during Yizkor services to remember those members of our kehillah who've passed away since last Yom Kippur. Among those we lost was a giant, a true Tifereth Israel icon, my dear friend, the great late Louise Winicki, whose presence benefitted this congregation, and our Sisterhood, for decades. She left us far too early. Louise will never, ever be forgotten by anyone who knew her.

In closing, I'm going to thank my wife, of 43 years next month, for granting me permission to accept this unbelievable-to-me honor, the position as President of Tifereth Israel. I love this congregation. It still feels weird, to me, however, to be standing up here tonight, after 33 years down there. Honestly, at first, Sue was not particularly overjoyed at the prospect of me becoming President at this advanced stage of my life. And I'm sure some of you here tonight are in total agreement with

her about that. But, thanks honey, for your blessing and for your support. I know that this position, President, will be my final one at Tifereth Israel. Sue, I promise to you, after this gig ends, I'm 100% all yours. (Is she smiling? Does she look happy?)

Sue and I do want to wish each and every member of our Tifereth Israel mishpacha ----and I do mean that, you are our family---- an inscription in Hashem's Sefer Ha Chaim. And to that, let us all say: Amen.

I wish for you all a very easy fast, especially for all my recently bar-or-bat mitzvahed, first-time-fasting buddies, who are age 13. You guys know who you are. Welcome to Jewish adulthood.

Thank you everyone for listening. I know I went a little long...OK....a lot long. No one except Hashem knows if I'll ever be doing this again, so, thanks for sticking with me.

G'mar chasimah tovah to all.

Good night and Shabbat Shalom.