



Message from our Mara D'Atra

We are here this evening to honor two outstanding couples for their contributions to our synagogue and our community. The synagogue is a central institution in our lives. Our Sages teach that the synagogue is a shadow and reflection of the Mishkan. There were three crucial utensils in the Mishkan. There was the *Aron*, the ark that housed the two tablets of Torah law. In addition, there was a *Shulchan*, a golden table that contained the twelve showbreads, the "*lechem ha-panim*". The *Mishkan* also contained a *Mizbayach*, an altar where the sacrifices were offered. These three objects also served as values and ideals contained within Judaism.

It is precisely these three values that are alluded to in Pirkei Avot where we learn that the world stands upon three pillars: Torah, Sacrifice and loving kindness. These are the three areas of our responsibility:

G'milut Chassodim, acts of kindness, describes our duty to reach out to our fellow man. It is a category described as our *mitzvot bein adam l'chaveiro*, our interpersonal relations. The *Shulchan* symbolized *Gemilat Chessed*. *Avodah*, Sacrifice, teaches us that we are enjoined to create a deep relationship with G-d, *bein adam la-Makom*. Bringing sacrifices acknowledged our dependence upon a Higher Being. It teaches us that in addition to reaching out to our neighbor we need to reach out to *Hashem* in Heaven. Sacrifice is the lesson of the *Mizbayach*.

What about the third value, Torah? What does that represent? The Maharal of Prague in his introduction to Pirkei Avot teaches that it refers to a third and often ignored value/ relationship, "*bein adam l'zulato*" - a person's relationship with himself. Man has an obligation to himself. It is the obligation to become a maximal person, to realize one's G-d given potential. It is not sufficient to love

G-d. It is not enough to love your neighbor. You need to love yourself. Living up to your potential is the true expression of self-love. This is the deeper meaning of

that third ideal enunciated by *Shimon Ha-Tzaddik*. Torah does not mean rarified abstract intellectualism. It is rather a profound striving to not only unravel the mysteries of G-d, but to unlock and discover the Divine buried deep within ourselves in Whose image we were all created. This was the symbol of the Holy Ark.

No synagogue can truly fulfill its function in Jewish life if it remains faithful to only one or two of these three pillars. Thankfully, our synagogue admirably reflects all three of these ideals. Our *Gemilut Chasadim* is exemplary. We dedicate ourselves to social action in many of our programs and projects. We are thankfully a generous and caring synagogue community. *Tefilla*, which in our days serves as our *Avodah* is manifested by the fact that we are blessed with a number of daily *minyanim* and are working on creating a respectful and decorous Shabbat Morning Prayer environment. In the area of Torah we truly excel and hopefully can even increase our effort in Torah study. It is clear that our honorees and their families are exemplars of all three of these important pillars.

Dina and Marc Serman and Mickey and Doni Nyer are, in their actions and demeanor, a source of great pride to us and their families. Dina and Marc have contributed greatly to the growth and success of our community. Marc served as a *gaabai* for many years with dedication and distinction. Marc is the *baal tefilla* for morning selichot in the High Holiday season. He is a dedicated attendee at the minyanim and Torah learning sessions.

Dina has served us in every imaginable capacity. She was our first Executive Officer. She served on the board and executive board for many years. She participated in a great way in the building of our shul. She served as president of Women's League and on many other committees. Dina serves on the Executive committee of the New Rochelle Mikvah and has, since its inception. Dina is also the chief architect of the *Chevrah Kadisha* of our shul. There is little in our shul that has been accomplished without Dina's helping hand.

Mickey and Doni Nyer, from the moment they arrived in our community, were all hands on deck in working for the shul. Mickey chaired the hospitality committee. She would often host families for Shabbat and made arrangements for others to do so as well. Despite the fact that she is a young mother with young children she somehow finds the time to involve herself with many shul projects.

Doni has served in many capacities. Having grown up in New Rochelle, Doni knows the shul and its needs. He served on the youth committee and later co-chaired it. He has brought many innovative programs to benefit our youth. Doni spearheads the afternoon learning program for our children. He also helped to develop the *seudah shelishit* program for our youth. Both of these programs have proven to be very successful. Doni is a daily minyan goer and a daf-yomi devotee. Doni has davened for us during the High Holiday season and is a wonderful *baal tefillah*. Doni brought the fun and inspiration to our communal *Shalom Zachor* celebrations. His singing and great *ruach* make these celebrations exciting and fulfilling.

May G-d grant our wonderful honorees and their families that "He Dwell in their midst", and shower them with blessing, success and happiness

Rabbi Reuven Fink