

Nine years ago, I sat in the Temple Beth Or sanctuary during my interview weekend.

It was Sunday morning during the Q&A open to all congregants.

After a full and intense weekend, and I was doing my best to wow all of you :)

Someone asked the question if I thought my age would be a challenge,

and after I responded, a certain congregant who shall remain nameless,

but who had a starring role in the infamous hot tub story and is the proud papa to 6 kids

said, "I don't think it's a challenge, I think it's an asset."

I remember feeling so grateful for his confidence in me

and the willingness of a community to put their trust in a rabbi

who was still a bit of a greenhorn.

How we've grown together the past 9 years...

I look out at each of you and I see flashes of countless moments shared...

holding you as a loved one died,

cradling your newborns and blessing them with their Hebrew name.

Burying your loved ones, singing our hearts out at *tisches*, and bonfires, and Shabbat services, and Purim, and...endless joyful singing.

All the sweet moments when you pop into my study just to chat....

When I catch your eye during services as your child leads from the *bima*

and we share a look of pride at what a beautiful job they're doing
and all it took to get there.

Outdoor hikes and picnics and sitting in the Sukkah under starry skies.

The way we carry each other on Yom Kippur.

I am half delirious at the end, and as our voices harmonize, we stand together,
and our fervent prayers propel us all forward into a New Year filled with promise.

You have given me so much these past 9 years,
and when I think about what this community has really taught me,
there is only one word to capture it: *mishpacha*, family.

This *kehillah* is here for each other in a way I've never experienced. We show up—with
food and more food and more food,
we help people move, many of you have so generously helped me move into 4 different
homes during my time here.

This community has also come together to keep many congregants from being
homeless—not just 1 or 2 but many--know that you've offered that mitzvah.

We volunteer and give even when we're tired. We show up.

And then we show up again and again.

We hold each other in silence and tears and laughter.

We are classy, and menchy, and generous.

We disagree and find paths of common ground.

You have also taught me that it's good to try new things.

And that it's ok for them not to go as planned and to call it a learning experience.

There is something special that has happened only more recently,
a comfort, a playful intimacy that comes after a good handful of years together.
And I love the gentle teasing, and the XO's at the end of emails,
and how real we can be together.

We have walked together through painful losses and deep tragedy.
My heart goes out to you each time
and every anguish serves as the most profound reminder of our fragility,
how much of life is not in our control,
and that each day we must consciously make sure we are living the life we want to be
living.

I am so grateful for the last 9 years,
and for this community which gave me the courage to dream big, and creatively,
thank you for that.

It is not easy to leave a place when things are good, when there is so much shared love
and deep respect and connection.

Sometimes when good things come to an end, they end precisely because they were good.

As my soul calls me to try something else,
I have tried to hold my palms open to say yes to a new chapter, a new season.

Thank you to each of you for the caring and love and understanding you have extended as I journey to stretch myself in new ways.

Next week we celebrate Shavuot. As we commemorate receiving the Torah, the story of our people, we're reminded that our story never really concludes. We're left with the Israelites en route to the Promised Land, an ellipses of sorts. So much promise awaits them, and yet, they are journeying forward without their leader, guided to embrace the unknown and breathe into it.

They are walking forward *bamidbar*—in the uncharted wilderness.

Imagine the fear our ancestors felt moving forward into an unfamiliar land.

Despite the potential that awaited them, they carried deep loss leaving behind known leadership and a familiar rhythm of life.

In the old season, they, like us, treasured the comfort of familiarity.

It was important for the Israelites to grieve the passing of a season and so too for us.

May we each give ourselves the blessing to feel this loss.

And sometimes when one season has ended, it doesn't feel like the next one has begun.

We don't know what the next chapter will look like--liminal space.

In liminal space, we are trying things out,
we are searching or waiting for the next thing.

And sometimes it feels like we are trying to play the piano in oven mitts.¹

But spirit works all sorts of magic in liminal space.

Pastor Rob Bell reminds us that this is the space
that has the most capacity to actually transform us.

As we take our time, grieving what was and what could have been.

We sit with discomfort and feel the sting of not knowing.

Precisely because of our discomfort, the liminal space offers opportunities.

Here, uncertainty pokes and prods and creates new openings.²

Pastor Bell reminds us that sometimes when we move into a new season,
we have a tendency to think of the past as right or wrong,

I used to do it that way, and that was wrong and this is right.

We can shift from right and wrong to then and now—

in that season, that's how we did it, but now we've grown and changed and see it like
this. We hold the past as a teacher and a guide.

I hope that I might leave you with the eternal blessing to live your lives to the fullest.

May we each pause each day to deeply consider what makes us come alive –

¹ Pastor Rob Bell, *The Robcast*, "Seasons," October 30, 2015.

² *Ibid.*

to chase it and protect it. We get this one spin on this planet as the souls that are uniquely us. Let us not regret how we choose to live our lives.

May we listen to Divine whispers

calling us to throw our arms wide open to the universe brimming with potential.

May we hold ourselves and each other gently on the uphill sections.

And may our Judaism forever offer a foundation of connection to the still small voice, a story of wandering in the wilderness, but always blessing the journey, sanctifying sacred time,

and practicing *teshuvah* as we look inward growing our hearts and our deeds.

I want to share some words by one of my favorite poets, John O'Donohue, an Irish poet, author, priest, and philosopher.

“I would love to live like a river flows, carried by the surprise of its own unfolding.

Though your destination is not yet clear

You can trust the promise of this opening;

Unfurl yourself into the grace of beginning

That is at one with your life's desire.

Awaken your spirit to adventure;

Hold nothing back, learn to find ease in risk;

Soon you will be home in a new rhythm,

For your soul senses the world that awaits you.

Thank you each for a rich season of such treasured memories,
profound growth, generosity, laughs, and immense fulfillment.

I hold this temple, and each of you in my heart, always.