

SPEECH FOR YOM KIPPUR - 1994

RABBI URECKI, CANTOR WEISE, FELLOW CONGREGANTS AND GUESTS; IT IS A PLEASURE AND AN HONOR TO DELIVER MY STATE OF THE CONGREGATION ADDRESS DURING THIS MID POINT OF MY TWO YEAR TERM AS PRESIDENT OF CONGREGATION B'NAI JACOB. I APPRECIATE THE CONFIDENCE THAT YOU HAVE PLACED IN ME BY ELECTING ME TO THIS POSITION DURING THIS EXCITING AND DYNAMIC PERIOD IN THE LONG AND STORIED HISTORY OF OUR SYNAGOGUE.

I AM PLEASED TO REPORT THAT IN TERMS OF FINANCIAL CONDITION AND DAY TO DAY ACTIVITIES AND PARTICIPATION, OUR CONGREGATION IS MUCH HEALTHIER TODAY THAN EVEN MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL AND A HECK OF A LOT MORE FUN. THIS PAST YEAR HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY DYNAMIC AND EXCITING FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS. WE HAVE SEEN THE INSTALLATION OF THE STAINED GLASS WINDOWS, DESIGNED AND SUPERVISED BY OUR NATIVE SON, DAVID PUSHKIN. THEIR MAJESTY UPON COMPLETION SURPASSES THE EXPECTATIONS OF EVEN THE MOST OPTIMISTIC OF THOSE OF US WHO ANXIOUSLY AWAITED THEIR ARRIVAL. THESE WINDOWS ARE TRUE WORKS OF ART WHICH HAVE ALREADY BEEN FEATURED IN AT LEAST ONE NATIONAL

PUBLICATION AND HAVE PROVEN TO BE AN INSPIRATION TO EACH OF US WITH EVERY VIEWING.

BUOYED BY THE ENTHUSIASM OF OUR CONGREGATION AND THE EFFORTS OF CHAIRMAN ALVIN PREISER, WHO MADE THE WINDOWS A REALITY, THE BOARD HAS COMMISSIONED DAVID TO DESIGN ANOTHER SET TO BE PLACED ON THE THREE WINDOWS IN THE SANCTUARY ON MY IMMEDIATE RIGHT. THE DESIGN, WHICH HAS AS ITS THEME, JERUSALEM AND THE SABBATH PRAYERS, IS CURRENTLY ON DISPLAY IN THE LOBBY. WE HAVE ALREADY RECEIVED COMMITMENTS TO DONATE TWO OF THESE THREE FUTURE WINDOWS AND AS SOON AS THE THIRD WINDOW IS SOLD, WE WILL PROCEED POST HASTE WITH THEIR CONSTRUCTION AND INSTALLATION.

OTHER JOYOUS EVENTS OF THE LAST YEAR INCLUDE THE BAR AND BAT MITZVAH'S OF 9 YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN, INCLUDING THE FIRST ALL WOMAN SATURDAY MORNING SERVICE IN THE HISTORY OF THIS CONGREGATION WHICH TOOK PLACE AT THE RECENT BAT MITZVAH OF LEALAH POLLACK. WE HAVE ENJOYED THE REVIVAL OF THE LONG DORMANT CHOIR THROUGH THE EFFORTS OF BARRY OGRIN. THE HOLOCAUST TORAH WHICH GRACES OUR PULPIT WAS GIVEN BY THE FAMILY OF REV. SAMUELS IN HIS MEMORY, AND I WAS

PRIVILEGED TO CARRY IT LAST NIGHT DURING KOL NIDRE. THE INTERVENING 12 MONTHS ALSO SAW THE PASSING OF 7 BELOVED MEMBERS AND THE BIRTH OF 4 NEW BABIES AMONG OUR CONGREGANTS.

AS NOTABLE AS THESE OCCASIONS WERE, HOWEVER, THE CROWNING EVENT OF THE YEAR AND, IN FACT, ONE OF THE BIGGEST EVENTS EVER STAGED IN THE HISTORY OF THIS CONGREGATION, WAS OUR 100TH ANNIVERSARY CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION, APPROPRIATELY NAMED L'DOR VA'DOR '94, TO NOTE THE SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PASSAGE OF OUR HERITAGE FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT.

UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF CHAIRPERSONS PHIL AND SHIRLEY GOLDSTEIN, AND THE ASSISTANCE OF SCORES OF OUR MEMBERS, WE WERE BLESSED TO PARTICIPATE IN WHAT BECAME A REUNION FOR MEMBERS PAST AND PRESENT, OLD AND YOUNG, FROM WEST VIRGINIA AND THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. IT WAS A MIXTURE OF TRADITION, NOSTALGIA, REJOICING, MASS CONSUMPTION OF KOSHER FOOD AND THE SIMPLE PLEASURE OF BEING WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY FOR AN ENTIRE WEEKEND. IT SAW OUR THREE GREAT RABBIS OF THE PAST 62 YEARS REUNITE WITH US TO SHARE A COMMON PULPIT AND GIVE INDIVIDUAL ADDRESSES WHICH MADE EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US REALIZE

HOW BLESSED AND FORTUNATE WE HAVE BEEN TO HAVE SPENT PART OR ALL OF OUR TIME IN THIS PROUD BUT MODEST CONGREGATION. ON BEHALF OF THE SHUL, I WISH TO AGAIN THANK PHIL AND SHIRLEY FOR DEDICATING OVER A YEAR OF THEIR LIVES TO OVERSEE AND ORGANIZE THIS ONCE IN A LIFETIME PROGRAM, WHOSE MEMORIES WILL BE WITH US FOREVER.

OTHER MAJOR ADDITIONS TO THE PHYSICAL PLANT OF THE SHUL INCLUDE AN EXTENSIVE LANDSCAPING PROGRAM CONDUCTED BY CARY LEVENSON AND VALLEY GARDENS. THE LEVENSON FAMILY HAS A LONG AND PROUD LEGACY IN THE SYNAGOGUE AND HAVE ALWAYS BEEN SYNONYMOUS WITH THE BEAUTIFICATION OF OUR GROUNDS, SUKKOS AND CEMETERIES.

THIS PAST YEAR ALSO SAW THE REPAINTING OF THE ENTIRE INTERIOR OF OUR BUILDING. STATE OF THE ART LIGHTS AND HANDRAILS HAVE BEEN ORDERED FOR THE VIRGINIA STREET ENTRANCE TO OUR SYNAGOGUE AND WILL BE INSTALLED IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THE CEMETERIES REMAIN, AS ALWAYS, IN FIRST CLASS CONDITION THANKS TO THE ENDEAVORS OF ISSIE GORSETMAN.

FINANCIALLY WE REMAIN RELATIVELY HEALTHY. OUR TRUST FUND IS AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL THAT IT HAS EVER BEEN, THANKS IN LARGE PART TO

A SUBSTANTIAL AND GENEROUS BEQUEST FROM THE ESTATE OF FLORENCE LEVIN. IN ADDITION TO OUR PRIMARY TRUST FUND, THE ALEX AND BETTY SCHOENBAUM EDUCATION FUND CONTINUES TO GROW AND TO BE USED FOR THE PAYMENT OF OUR HEBREW SCHOOL TEACHERS AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES WITHIN OUR SYNAGOGUE.

MOSE SLUTSKY ALSO MADE ANOTHER LARGE CONTRIBUTION TO THE MARY SLUTSKY LIBRARY FUND WHICH IS USED FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF OUR EXCELLENT LIBRARY AND THE PURCHASE OF BOOKS FOR OUR CONGREGATION. ANOTHER NOTABLE GIFT WHICH WE RECEIVED IN THE LAST YEAR WAS FROM THE ESTATE OF ETTA RUDA. OUR CONGREGATION IS GRATEFUL FOR THESE REMEMBRANCES.

THESE INVESTMENTS HAVE CONTINUED TO GROW UNDER THE WATCHFUL EYE OF OUR INVESTMENT COMMITTEE. THIS IS NECESSARY BECAUSE OF OUR INCREASING OPERATING EXPENSES AND THE SIMULTANEOUS DECREASING OF OUR DUES PAYING BASE.

DESPITE A RECENT REVISION IN OUR DUES STRUCTURE, WE UNFORTUNATELY CONTINUE TO OPERATE AT A SIGNIFICANT DEFICIT TO OUR DUES REVENUE AND HAVE THEREFORE BECOME DEPENDANT ON THE INTEREST

EARNED BY OUR ALL IMPORTANT ENDOWMENT FUND.

ALTHOUGH THE NUMBERS OF OUR MEMBERSHIP HAVE REMAINED RELATIVELY STATIC OVER THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS, THE BREADTH OF REGULARLY SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES CONTINUES TO GROW TO MEET THE NEEDS AND DEMANDS OF OUR CONGREGANTS. WE CURRENTLY HAVE 58 CHILDREN ENROLLED IN OUR SUNDAY SCHOOL. IN ADDITION, OUR DEDICATED HEBREW SCHOOL TEACHERS, MARILYN URECKI AND AMI LAMBORNE, HAVE FOR THE FIRST TIME, STARTED TEACHING CHILDREN IN THE SECOND GRADE, GIVING OUR STUDENTS 6 YEARS OF PRE BAR OR BAT MITZVAH TRAINING. OUR DAILY NURSERY SCHOOL CONTINUES TO THRIVE IN ITS 12TH YEAR.

NEXT MONTH WILL SEE THE REINTRODUCTION OF THE BAR MITZVAH BOYS BREAKFAST, TO BE STARTED ON A MONTHLY BASIS AND LED BY RABBI URECKI.

ATHLETIC DIRECTOR AND INCOMING MEN'S CLUB PRESIDENT, GARY SHEFF, HAS SUPERVISED A RESURGENCE IN OUR SPORTS PROGRAM WHICH LAST YEAR BOASTED 4 BASKETBALL, 1 SOFTBALL, AND 2 VOLLEYBALL TEAMS.

THE MENS CLUB IS POISED FOR ANOTHER BIG YEAR UNDER GARY AND THE ALWAYS WATCHFUL EYE OF THE EVER PRESENT HARRY LAZAROFF.

POLITICAL SPEAKERS, BLUE GRASS MUSIC AND A TIE EXCHANGE ARE AMONG THE TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED PROGRAMS.

OUR LADIES AUXILIARY CONTINUES TO FLOURISH, PROVIDING ACTIVITY AND RAISING MONEY FOR THE BEAUTIFICATION AND OTHER NEEDS OF OUR SYNAGOGUE UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF PRESIDENT ELINORE SILVERBERG.

RABBI URECKI WILL CONTINUE TO OFFER HIS ADULT EDUCATION CLASSES. OUR MOST RECENT SESSION, FOCUSING ON THE TORAH, DREW IN EXCESS OF 150 PEOPLE FROM THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY. OUR SHABBOS IN THE WOODS HAVE BECOME AN ANNUAL RITE OF SPRING, AND UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF ART RUBIN, HAVE BECOME A TREAT TO BE SAVORED BY ALL WHO HAVE SAMPLED ITS FARE.

THE MOST IMPORTANT FUNCTION OF THE SHUL MAY WELL BE TO PROVIDE AND CONDUCT RELIGIOUS SERVICES. WE CONTINUE TO BE THE ONLY SYNAGOGUE IN THE STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA OFFERING DAILY MINYANS AND OUR CONSECUTIVE EVENING MINYAN STREAK NOW STANDS AT 2933. THESE MINYANS, HOWEVER, PARTICULARLY THE MORNING MINYANS, HAVE BECOME EVERMORE DEPENDANT ON THE SAME CORE OF LOYAL MINYANAIREs WHO SHOW UP EVERY DAY DESPITE THE WEATHER AND THEIR OWN PERSONAL SCHEDULES,

AND THE BURDEN WE ASK THEM TO ASSUME CANNOT CONTINUE INDEFINITELY. UNFORTUNATELY, THERE ARE SOME WHO FEEL THAT A GOOD SYNAGOGUE IS LIKE A GOOD HOSPITAL; THEY HOPE THEY NEVER NEED ONE BUT IF THEY DO, THEY WANT A GOOD ONE TO BE NEARBY.

AS COMMENDABLE AS ARE THE EFFORTS OF THESE LOYAL MULTI-MINYANAIRES, TOO MANY OF US ARE ASKING TOO FEW TO MEET THE DAILY OBLIGATION OF THE MINYAN ATTENDANCE AND WE MUST GET MORE BROAD-BASED PARTICIPATION FOR THESE DAILY MINYANS TO CONTINUE. AN EXAMPLE IS SAM WILAN WHO ATTENDS BOTH MINYANS EACH DAY, BUT IS CURRENTLY RECOVERING FROM BY PASS SURGERY, CREATING A VOID IN US BY HIS ABSENCE. WE HAVE A GREAT SYNAGOGUE IN OUR PRESENCE AND THOSE THAT LOOK TO THE DAILY MINYANS FOR THEIR ANNUAL YARTZEIT OBSERVANCES MUST ATTEND OTHER TIMES AS WELL SO THAT ALL THOSE NEEDING THE REQUISITE TEN MEN TO SAY THE MEMORIAL PRAYERS WILL CONTINUE TO BE ABLE TO DEPEND ON THE SYNAGOGUE TO DO SO.

ACCORDINGLY, I NOW CHALLENGE ALL MEN HERE WHO ARE NOT OTHERWISE ATTENDING ANY DAILY SERVICES, TO COMMIT AT LEAST TWO MORNINGS PER MONTH TO COME TO THESE BRIEF BUT IMPORTANT SERVICES.

I NOW WISH TO SHARE A FEW PERSONAL EXPRESSIONS OF THANKS TO THE OFFICERS AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES WHO HAVE LOYALLY SERVED THE SYNAGOGUE DURING THE PAST YEAR. AS ONE OF THE YOUNGEST MEMBERS OF THIS FEISTY BOARD, I SOMETIMES FIND IT HARD TO CONTROL THE BOARD MEETINGS. YET IT IS COMFORTING TO LOOK AROUND THE ROOM AT THESE MEETINGS AND VIEW THE VAST KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE IN OUR MIDST. DESPITE THE TREMENDOUS COMMITMENTS OF TIME WHICH EACH MEMBER HAS TO THEIR CAREERS, FAMILIES AND OTHER SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS, THE TRUSTEES STILL HAVE DEEP ROOTED FEELINGS IN YOUR HEARTS TO THE SYNAGOGUE AND OUR PRESERVATION OF JUDAICA. I WILL ALSO MISS THE WISDOM OF OUR TWO DEPARTING TRUSTEES, RUBY NEWMAN AND JACOB ISACOFF, PREVENTED BY OUR BY-LAWS FROM SEEKING RE-ELECTION. YOUR COUNSEL AND SERVICE HAVE BEEN VALUED AND I KNOW YOU WILL REMAIN ACTIVE DESPITE YOUR ABSENCE ON THE BOARD. I PARTICULARLY WISH TO THANK MY FRIENDS AND VICE PRESIDENTS, STEVE RUBIN AND STUART MAY, WHO OFTEN ACT AS SOUNDING BOARDS FOR MY OCCASIONAL FRUSTRATIONS AND WHO STAND IN THE WINGS READY TO ASSUME THE FUTURE LEADERSHIP OF THIS CONGREGATION.

TO THE TRIO WHO MAKE THE SHUL OPERATE ON ALL CYLINDERS ON A DAY TO DAY BASIS, HARRY KANNER, NANCY MORTON AND JOHN TERRY. THE DEVOTION SHOWN BY DAD AND NANCY IS LEGENDARY AND EXEMPLARY TO US ALL. WE ARE FORTUNATE TO HAVE JOHN, NANCY'S BROTHER, AS OUR MOST RECENT ADDITION, WHEN HE JOINED OUR STAFF AFTER THE RESIGNATION OF LONG TIME ASSOCIATE HARRY LYNCH. LOYALTY AND FAITHFULNESS ARE ONLY TWO OF THE MANY WORDS WHICH CAN BE USED TO DESCRIBE THIS GROUP FOR WHOM NO PROBLEM IS TOO GREAT AND NO REQUEST, TOO MUNDANE. YOUR LEVEL OF RELIABILITY AND DEDICATION ARE THE BENCHMARKS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS AND ARE APPRECIATED BY US ALL.

TO RABBI AND MARILYN URECKI, YOU ARE THE SOUL OF THIS CONGREGATION, PRESENT AND FUTURE. ONE OR BOTH OF YOU ARE INVOLVED IN VIRTUALLY EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THE AFOREMENTIONED ACTIVITIES WHICH HAVE MADE OUR CONGREGATION WHAT IT IS TODAY. I WOULD VENTURE TO SAY THAT THERE IS NOT A SINGLE PERSON HERE WHO HAS NOT IN SOME WAY BEEN TOUCHED BY YOUR KINDNESS, YOUR COMPASSION, YOUR TEACHING OR YOUR FRIENDSHIP. AS PROUD AS WE ARE OF WHAT WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED AND WHAT WE ARE AS A CONGREGATION, I SHUDDER TO THINK

OF WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE WITHOUT YOUR PRESENCE. IT GIVES ME STRENGTH AND SOLACE TO KNOW THAT I WILL GROW OLD WITH YOU AT MY SIDE AND THAT YOU WILL PROVIDE OUR RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP WELL INTO THE SECOND CENTURY OF THIS WONDERFUL CONGREGATION. NOW IF ONLY YOU COULD MAKE A SON I'D REALLY BE IMPRESSED.

IN CONCLUSION, OUR CONGREGATION IS A GROUP OF JEWISH BRETHERN WHICH IS ONLY AS STRONG AS THE PARTICIPATION OF ITS INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS. WITH ONLY 232 FAMILY MEMBERS OF OUR CONGREGATION, OUR RESPECTED PRESENCE IN THE COMMUNITY BELIES OUR NUMBERS AND WE MUST ALL REMAIN ACTIVE TO CONTINUE TO THRIVE.

YET THERE ARE STILL MANY OF YOU HERE TODAY WHO WE WILL NOT SEE UNTIL NEXT YEAR AT THIS TIME; THOSE WHO NEVER ATTEND A FRIDAY NIGHT SERVICE, A SATURDAY MORNING MINYAN, A LADIES AUXILIARY OR MENS CLUB FUNCTION. THIS SHUL IS HERE FOR YOU, YET NEEDS YOUR PARTICIPATION TO MAINTAIN THE STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE WE HAVE COME TO EXPECT. YOU WON'T REGRET THE EFFORT.

THANK YOU FOR THE CONFIDENCE AND SUPPORT WHICH YOU HAVE GIVEN ME AND THE SYNAGOGUE OVER THE PAST YEAR. PLEASE ACCEPT MY

HEARTFELT WISHES FOR A HAPPY AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR.