

January 27, 2012

## Rabbis give invocations for state and city addresses

Rabbi Jonah Pesner



Rabbis gave the invocation for both the State of the Commonwealth and the State of the City addresses in Boston this month.

Rabbi Jonah Pesner, who gave the invocation when Deval Patrick was first inaugurated, did so again when the governor gave his sixth annual address Monday night at the Statehouse.

Barbara Penzner has the distinction of being the first rabbi invited by Boston Mayor Mayor Thomas Menino to give the invocation as he presented his 19th State of the City address Jan. 17 at Faneuil Hall.

Pesner, who lives in Chestnut Hill, is the senior vice president of the Union for Reform Judaism. Locally, he has worked on interfaith efforts to pass healthcare legislation in Massachusetts

Pesner said among his favorite moments of the night was the Pledge of Allegiance. As everyone faced the flag, Pesner happened to be standing closest to it.

“I realized I was wearing a kippah, so everyone looking at the flag saw the rabbi pledging allegiance to the flag with a kippah on,” he said.

Penzner heads Temple Hillel B’nai Torah, a Reconstructionist synagogue in West Roxbury. A past president of the Massachusetts Board of Rabbis, she has been active in numerous Jewish and interfaith groups.

*Here is Rabbi Jonah Pesner’s invocation for the State of the Commonwealth address:*

Open up our eyes

In the Torah portion  
That the Jewish people  
read this week  
We hear the story of the  
exodus;  
Specifically, the recitation  
of the plagues  
G-d brings down upon Egypt  
Calling out to Pharaoh:  
How long  
Will you refuse  
To humble yourself  
Before me?  
Let my people go  
That they may serve me...  
So G-d we turn to you  
on the occasion  
Of this assembly  
As our esteemed Governor,  
Deval Patrick  
And his colleagues  
Here in the chamber of our  
government  
Gather to reflect on the  
State of our Commonwealth  
Under the hopeful gaze  
Of the women, men and  
children  
Who live and work here  
In Massachusetts,  
And ask before you G-d:  
Let us humble ourselves.  
Let us remember  
We are in your service;  
There is a higher purpose.  
In the scripture  
We read of the plague  
of thick darkness:  
... A darkness that can be  
touched ...  
That descended upon all the  
land of Egypt  
For three days  
People could not see one

another...  
While all the Israelites  
enjoyed light  
In their dwellings  
How could it be  
That for the Egyptians  
It was utter darkness  
But among the Hebrew slaves  
There was light?  
The rabbis teach  
That the darkness was caused  
By the Egyptians' own  
Blindness  
They were *blind*  
To the suffering of the  
Hebrews!  
For, seeing the pain of others  
Rising up against injustice