

Temple Israel of Boston

February 12, 2015

Dear Friends,

I am writing to you and to all members of the Temple Israel community in order to share the news that our Board of Trustees has recently granted my request for a leave of absence during the 2015 – 16 Program Year, which will begin on July 1st. As many of you know, throughout most of my tenure at Temple Israel, I have (slowly) pursued a doctoral degree in Bible and the Ancient Near East. This leave of absence will provide me with the opportunity to complete my dissertation, and will also include several months of a paid sabbatical: my first after working for fourteen years as a Rabbi in our congregation.

I have long considered myself fortunate to work in a community that both values intellectual rigor and provides a welcoming environment for scholarship. Many of the ideas and content that I have learned through my graduate course-work and research have made their way into weekly Torah Study sessions, various learning and worship settings, and have enhanced my capacity to create and pursue a vision of education for our congregation. Throughout my rabbinate, you have supported my academic pursuits in both formal and informal ways. I am grateful to the Board for its unqualified backing and I am looking forward to having a year in which, free from my pulpit and other professional responsibilities, I may focus on my writing and spend more time with my family. My goal is to complete this long-term project so that, in time, I may embark on new scholarly pursuits that will enable me to make further contributions to the spiritual and intellectual underpinnings of synagogue life, and, more broadly, to the Reform Movement.

This decision, however, likely signals the conclusion of my professional affiliation with Temple Israel. Recognizing that having two internal candidates for the position of Senior Rabbi could create tension for the congregation and might negatively impact the search process, and with respect for the longevity of the service of my colleague, Rabbi Zecher, I have decided not to apply for the position of Senior Rabbi.

Molly and I are still forming our family's plans for next year, which will include both a period of time living abroad, and also my own search for a senior rabbi position at a different temple. There will be more to share with you in the months to come. We, and our children, are excited about the future, as it is the right time for us to explore professional opportunities and build relationships within a new community.

Ezekiel and Poppy are the fifth generation of my family to experience the creativity, dynamism, and sanctity of our synagogue. Molly and I feel profoundly grateful that their lives were launched at Temple Israel: you have interwoven into their evolving identities the life altering sense of sanctuary that only a vibrant synagogue can provide. In the Book of Jeremiah, God describes a new covenant that will be made with the House of Israel. God declares (Jer. 31:33): "*natati et-torati b'qirbam; v'al-libam echtavenah* -- I will place My Torah into their innermost being and inscribe it upon their hearts." The Torah that I have learned throughout the course of my life in our synagogue home constitutes my innermost being. Wherever I go, I take Temple Israel with me. Our magnificent congregation, in which so much of my identity was forged, is inscribed upon my heart.

B'Yedidut,

Rabbi Jeremy S. Morrison

