

"Going Forward", Rabbi Lily Solochek, Installation, 10 Nov 2019

Beloved community members, rabbis, fellow clergy, officials, family, and those joining us on the internet, I am honored to stand in your presence today as the new rabbi of Adas Yoshuron Synagogue. Thank you all for being here today.

When I applied to rabbinical school I wrote in my application that I hoped to someday serve a small and/or rural congregation. I felt that Jewish communities in small towns had a special *Torah*, a special teaching, for the broader Jewish world: living as a Jew in remote corners where the world is not set up for us teaches us a deep love of our Jewish community, our traditions, and our history. Jews in Maine do not take our Judaism for granted, and our continued commitment to our tradition should be an inspiration for Jews everywhere. Standing before you today is quite literally the fulfillment of my dream.

This past Shabbat we began the story of our ancestor Abraham, who God commands to leave his familiar surroundings and journey to a land that God will show him. Abraham begins this journey without knowing the destination. He steps into the unknown, trusting that everything will be ok. It feels fitting to have just read this part of our Torah as we now follow the path of Abraham, stepping into an exciting new journey together.

This journey brings with it so many opportunities to build upon the foundations laid by the generations of Adas Yoshuron members who have come before us, deepening our roots in the broader community and drawing upon the strengths and talents of each of us to create an exciting future together.

Throughout the next few weeks we will continue the story of Abraham and Sarah. We will see their relationship with God grow and change. They will argue, question, and seek advice from God as they continue their own development. Their story teaches us that our spiritual lives and relationship with our Creator can deepen and change; they remind us that we are all constantly learning, even if we never find all the answers. It is my hope that our community will always strive to continue deepening our connections to Judaism — through learning, prayer, and

music — and that we will open ourselves to the possibility of finding Judaism meaningful, perhaps in ways we had never before considered.

Our ancestors Abraham and Sarah were known for the open doors of their tent and the hospitality they offered to passing travelers. Their relationship to the Creator taught them to share everything they had, to connect with those around them, and to be a role model for their people. Abraham and Sarah practiced radical welcoming and acceptance of all who entered their tents, teaching us the importance of seeing the value of each individual and their unique perspectives and talents. It is my hope that we can extend this radical welcoming to each other, and also to ourselves, and that we will strive to build accessible communities, to ensure there is a place for everyone here, just as Abraham and Sarah did.

This coming Shabbat we will recount the story of Abraham arguing with God not to destroy the cities of Sodom and Amorrhah. Abraham's courage to speak truth to power is a lesson to each of us that our actions and words matter. We have a responsibility to stand up for justice in our world, even if it means being the moral compass for our leaders. In the coming months and years, I look forward to strengthening our community's connection to social justice and action, to building bridges with other faith based social action groups, and to working together to bring more justice and light into the world.

As we begin this journey together, let us carry the teachings of our ancestor Abraham with us: to deepen our spiritual lives through prayer, music, learning, and community; to practice radical welcoming and acceptance of ourselves and others; and to speak up for justice and love in this world. It is my honor and blessing to serve as your rabbi and I look forward to the future we are creating together.

Thank you.