



Jewish Community Center of Paramus
Congregation Beth Tikvah
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A Shabbat Message from Rabbi Arthur Weiner

Friday February 23, 2024 ~ Parsha: Tetzaveh

Dear JCCP/CBT family,

Farewell, Cantor Weiss

After 26 years as Cantor of the JCCP/CBT, and having been named Cantor *Emeritus* at his retirement last June in recognition of his unique contributions to our synagogue, Cantor Sam and Raisy Weiss will leave the community and relocate to New York City next week. Before they go, I would like to offer one last tribute.

The role of a Cantor is a unique one. Sometimes that role is to be a teacher, other times a scholar or a mentor, all while striving to create an experience of communal prayer that is enriching to all. Whether it was through his beautiful *davening*, his training of hundreds of *B'nai Mitzvah*, the esteem he enjoys among his colleagues, or his mastery of the Jewish tradition, Cantor Weiss found ways to help us give expression to the voices in our own Jewish hearts. For 26 years in our congregation, he set high standards for himself, and for our congregation, always striving to find the right blend between the old and the new, between traditional *nusach* and melodies and contemporary music, and constantly allowing the rich musical past of the Jewish people to speak to us even as he found new ways to incorporate the best of the modern Jewish religious experience into our synagogue.

Over the course of his career in Paramus, he has been a leader of our prayers, a teacher of both adults and children, and an indispensable source of wisdom and good judgment. He has performed at many synagogue events, sponsored Cantorial concerts and events both here and in other locations throughout New Jersey, as well as both Europe and Israel. He has been a teacher and mentor to Cantorial students, and is

regularly consulted by cantors throughout North America when they have questions. Cantor Weiss has fans throughout the country. And like they used to say about E.F. [Hutton](#), when Cantor Weiss speaks, people listen.

I would also like to thank and acknowledge Raisy for all she has shared with the synagogue as well. Raisy is a world class scholar in her own right who has made outstanding contributions to her field of study. She has shared her knowledge and love of Judaism with our congregation on many occasions. For over 20 years, Raisy was the Clara H. Stewardson Professor of Philosophy at Lehigh University, and earned advanced degrees both in Philosophy and Jewish Studies. She has published extensively on Greek thought, written several books on Plato as well as over 150 scholarly articles and reviews on Greek thought, Maimonides, and other subjects. She has lectured at various universities and scholarly conclaves throughout the USA, Europe, and Israel, and is the recipient of prestigious grants and fellowships. Though modest about her scholarly achievements, she too is a *macher* in her field as well.

Last June, when we honored Cantor Weiss and Raisy at his retirement, I told in the congregation a story I have shared many times over the years during Shabbat services. Growing up on Long Island, my synagogue was led by a Rabbi and Cantor who intensely disliked each other and did everything they could to undermine each other publicly. Now I've told many jokes about this over the years, but the truth is that even as a child, I saw the damage that a dysfunctional pulpit relationship could do to a synagogue and I vowed to myself that if I ever became a Rabbi, I would work hard to make sure such tension would not characterize my relationship with the Cantor or the professional staff of my synagogue. How fortunate was I, how fortunate was our congregation, that Cantor Weiss and I both had a similar philosophy of working together cooperatively, respectfully, and most importantly, as real friends and colleagues. I am grateful for what we accomplished and I will always cherish the support, friendship, wisdom, and guidance that Cantor Weiss has extended to me for all these years.

Cantor Weiss, as you leave the community next week, I want to say that we appreciate you, we are grateful to you, and that this synagogue, and *Klal Yisrael* are stronger due to your efforts. You have made a real difference. We wish you *Mazel Tov* on all your achievements and only the best for the future.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Arthur D. Weiner