

# A Rabbinic Perspective *By Rabbi Seymour Rosenbloom*

Reprinted from the June 2011 Adath Jeshurun Newsletter

## June, A Month of Transitions



It's June, and it is a month for milestones and transitions. In our personal lives, we have graduations and weddings. In our communal life, every organization has end of the year events. New individuals are charged with the responsibilities of leadership.

In our congregation our tenth graders will mark their Confirmation, an annual, historic rite in our congregation and we will have a change in our presidential leadership. After four distinguished years of service as president,

**Steve Sussman** will pass the gavel of the presidency to **Mitch Russell**. My remarks this month will focus on these transitions.

First, Confirmation. Confirmation has a long and venerated history at AJ. The Confirmation wall of class pictures in our school corridor chronicles the many men and women who have marked this important milestone in their lives.

It is so important that those in attendance not only be the families of the confirmands who love them so much and are so proud of them, but members of the congregational community. This is a moment for our celebration, our rejoicing, to see young people who have made the commitment to study beyond the moment of their *Bar or Bat Mitzvah*. Each confirmand has studied for three years beyond that first milestone, and has been involved in deeds of community service. They have bonded together as a group of friends as their Jewish identity continues to be solidified.

Confirmation will take place on the first day of *Shavuot*, the beginning of the festival that marks the blessing of God's gift of *Torah* revelation to us. The significance of that event is reason enough to celebrate. But how much more to honor young people who have fulfilled the potential of Jewish life and learning they experienced at their *Bar or Bat Mitzvah* by continuing their studies for three more years.

**I hope you will put Confirmation on your calendar: Wednesday, June 8, beginning at 9:00 AM.**

We celebrate the accomplishment of our children, and we are grateful for the leaders who make AJ a special, vital, and vibrant congregation. **On Monday night, June 13, at our Annual Meeting of the Congregation, we will have a transition of presidents, marking a new phase in our congregation's history.**

**Stephen C. Sussman** took office four years ago, and has led the congregation with distinction and dedication throughout that period. It has not been the easiest of times. He took office brandishing a knife — a challah knife — that had been given to him and **Sima** on their wedding by Rabbi Rosenberg and the AJ Religious School where they were teaching. Little did he know that he would need a scalpel to face the financial challenges of the day, insuring the financial health of the congregation. Steve and his fellow officers worked tirelessly to make difficult decisions that often eliminated valuable positions and individuals and consolidated others in order to guarantee the fiscal soundness of the institution. Decisions like this are never easy or popular, but he has kept his course truly and always put AJ's welfare uppermost on his agenda.

Steve was an early advocate of cooperation between AJ and Beth Sholom, particularly in the sphere of our youth. Under his leadership, we have seen the consolidation of our youth groups, and in the fall we will inaugurate the Old York Road Jewish Teen

Collaborative, a combined high school program of the two congregations. These efforts are intended to deepen and strengthen the experience of our young people, our future. I know it gives Steve great satisfaction to have been able to see these initiatives through to implementation.

In being president for four years, one should also have some personal *naches* in the role as well. Steve led the congregation through the glorious celebration of our 150th anniversary year, and during his presidency saw both his granddaughter **Rachel Lipton** and his grandson **Avi Lipton** become *B'nai Mitzvah* on our *bima*. **Avi's Bar Mitzvah** was just last month, and was a stellar way to cap the years of Steve's service to the congregation.

We thank Steve, and even as we return him full time — a little beaten up, but not at our hand! — to Sima, we know that both of them will continue to bring principled and devoted leadership to our congregation. As Steve ended every one of his *Newsletter* columns, we say to him as he said to us, "See you in *shul*."

At our Annual Meeting, **Mitchell Russell** will become president of the congregation. Mitch has been an officer of the congregation and worked under the leadership of several administrations. His insight, patience, and knowledge have been a blessing to our congregation. He knows the issues we face and is ready to continue the development of creative solutions.

This has been a great time for Mitch and his wife **Amy** at AJ. In May, their son **Eli** became a *Bar Mitzvah*, and this month, their daughter **Rachael** will become a confirmand. These events reflect the family dedication to Judaism and our congregation. It was so impressive on **Eli's Bar Mitzvah** to see not only Eli, his sister Rachael, and their brother **Harry** read *Torah*, but Mitch and Amy as well. And one of Eli's grandfathers and two cousins! A real family *simcha* that highlights their Jewish commitment and is a model for us all.

Mitch brings to his role as president, in addition to his love for AJ and Judaism, a dedication to the organized Jewish community which he has served with distinction through the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia. I look forward to working with him for the continuing welfare of our congregation. I know they will be years of distinction.

So, June is a month of transitions.

Please mark your calendars, and plan to be with us for Confirmation and our Annual Meeting.

They will make you feel proud to be part of AJ.

CONGREGATION  
ADATH JESHURUN



7763 Old York Road  
Elkins Park, PA 19027  
215.635.6611  
[www.adathjeshurun.info](http://www.adathjeshurun.info)