

A letter from JoEllen Duckor, our new Mashpiah (February 2010)

I am very happy and honoured to accept the position of Mashpiah of Temple Sinai.

Mashpiah has a variety of translations, but most often the term is used to describe a companion, guide or witness. This is not quite the same as the role of the Rabbi. The Mashpiah will support members in noticing and appreciating moments of holiness in their lives, and cultivating an awareness of the interconnectedness of all things through prayer, study, teaching, work, play, visiting, celebrating, and mourning.

“What does a person expect to attain when entering a synagogue? In the pursuit of learning, one goes to a library, for aesthetic enrichment one goes to the art museum; for pure music to the concert hall. What then is the purpose of going to the synagogue? Many are the facilities which help us acquire the important worldly virtues, skills and techniques. But where should one learn about the insights of the spirit?”

(from Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Man’s Quest for God*).

This is the role of the Mashpiah, to provide an opportunity and a space, at Temple Sinai, to learn about insights of the spirit.

Through this lens, the Mashpiah will support the President, the Board and Committees, in serving the needs of the congregation.

This includes coordinating and supporting educational programs for adults and children as well as for the Beit Midrash and for Bnei Mitzvah, providing pastoral and ritual support, and generally being aware of, and supporting, all Temple activities.

This is an experimental role, an interim position while we search for a rabbi. It’s an opportunity for us as a congregation to learn what it is we like, and what it is we don’t like. This is a time to notice our assets, our strengths, our points of growth.

So let’s create it together. I can offer you my availabilityand I am lovingly supported by my partner Rick Sahar.

**JoEllen Duckor
Mashpiah of Temple Sinai**

