

### President's Message 2026

There's a moment in Exodus 18 that community organizers have long understood better than most: Jethro looks at his son-in-law Moses, exhausted and surrounded by people from sunrise to sunset, and tells him plainly — *you cannot do this alone*. Delegate. Build a team of capable, trustworthy people. Share the load.

It is wisdom as old as the wilderness, and it is exactly what I have experienced this year as your president. Now, I know that I am no Moses — but I am a notoriously good student, and when something resonates, I dig in. I offer the comparison with full humility — and the full awareness that I have a very, very long way to go.

I have been especially fortunate — and I do not use that word lightly — to grow into this role alongside three remarkable leaders who have each, in their own way, been a Jethro to my Moses. Senior Rabbi Dara Frimmer brings wisdom, vision, and an unwavering commitment to this community that continually raises the bar for all of us. Immediate Past President Suzanne Solig has been a generous and steady guide, freely sharing her experience and perspective whenever I have needed it. And Executive Director Deb Moses — and yes, we appreciate the poetry of that name — leads our professional team with exceptional skill, clarity, and heart. I am a stronger leader because of each of them, and Temple Isaiah is a stronger community because of all three.

If I have had any guiding philosophy this year, it is this: lead with your heart. I have tried to be earnest — genuinely, unabashedly earnest — in a world that sometimes treats sincerity as naivety. I have tried to listen more than I fix, to sit with the struggles that people are carrying rather than rushing to resolve them. I have hugged when hugging was what was needed. And I have tried to receive feedback — even the hard kind — with grace, because feedback given with care is itself an act of love.

What has moved me most deeply this year is the privilege of hearing people's stories. Every person at Temple Isaiah carries a unique relationship to this community — their own history, their own meaning, their own thread in the larger tapestry. I have treasured every story that was shared with me. This is, I think, one of the deepest truths about who we are: we do not ask anyone to leave their particularity at the door. We bring our whole, singular selves — and from all of that beautiful difference, we build the whole that is Isaiah.

That whole does not build itself. It is tended and woven by people who show up and do the work — and this year, I have been surrounded by some of the finest.

But Jethro's advice was not just about one or two trusted advisers — it was about building a whole structure of capable, committed people. And this year, I have had exactly that. I am grateful beyond words for the lay leaders who gave so generously of their time, expertise, and passion on behalf of our community.

I should note that the names that follow represent our Executive Committee only. Temple Isaiah

is home to so many dedicated lay leaders — across committees, task forces, and roles too numerous to list here — and every one of them deserves recognition. I am grateful to each of them, even where space does not allow me to name them individually.

- Harris Smith, our Treasurer, led our Budget Committee through the hard and careful work of building our FY26-27 budget — one that is sound, thoughtful, and built for long-term sustainability. Harris and Jeff Misthal also took on something entirely new this year, standing up our Investment Committee to help ensure that Temple Isaiah's financial future is as strong as our present. This kind of forward-looking stewardship is a gift to all of us.
- David Chiu, our VP of Social Justice, has brought both thoughtful programming and genuine intellectual depth to the question of what advocacy looks like at Isaiah. In a year when that question has felt particularly urgent, his leadership has helped our community find its voice and its footing.
- Jeffrey Glaser, our VP of Development, has been at the helm of one of the most significant initiatives in Temple Isaiah's recent history — our Capital & Clergy Endowment Campaign. To date, we have raised over \$6 million, a testament to the generosity and vision of so many in our community. Jeffrey, in close partnership with Deb Moses and the Development Committee, is now leading us into the exciting next chapter: the "Come One, Come All" phase of the campaign. To everyone who has already made a gift — thank you. Your investment is a statement of faith in Temple Isaiah's future. If you have not yet had the opportunity to participate, we warmly invite you to be part of this moment.
- Melissa Lustgarden, our VP of Membership, is stepping down after tireless service to this community. Melissa threw herself into membership engagement with remarkable energy — including taking on the Shabbat Greeter program and working with her committee to make sure that every new member who walks through our doors feels truly welcomed. The warmth new members experience at Isaiah bears her fingerprints, and we are so grateful.
- Jami Messinger, our VP of Education, has been central to one of this year's most exciting new initiatives — the launch of Club Isaiah, our new afterschool program. Bringing something new into the world takes vision, persistence, and a lot of behind-the-scenes work. Jami was a key player through all of it, working closely with Rabbi Adam Allenberg, Deb Moses, and the entire K-12 team.
- Eric Shabsis, our Executive Vice President, is already looking ahead. Together with the task force he has assembled, Eric will lead us into fiscal year 26-27 with meaningful, intentional conversations about inclusion and belonging at Temple Isaiah — work that goes to the very heart of who we are and who we aspire to be.
- Jerry Witkow, our VP of Personnel, guided the Personnel Committee through consequential and sensitive work this year: negotiating Rabbi Zoë Klein Miles's Emerita Contract and Rabbi Dara Frimmer's contract renewal. This work required discretion, care, and deep commitment to getting it right — and Jerry and his committee delivered.
- Jeff Yaroslow, our VP of Communications, is working to elevate the way we communicate and connect as a community — from enhanced meeting presentations to innovative technology-based solutions that make information more accessible and engaging for all. There is more exciting work ahead on this front, and we look forward to sharing it.

As I look toward the year ahead, I carry with me everything this year has taught me — about leadership, about listening, about when to speak and when to simply be present. And there is so much to look forward to, not least of all a milestone that belongs to all of us: Temple Isaiah's 80th Anniversary, which we will celebrate on October 24. Eighty years of community, of worship, of wrestling with hard questions and showing up for one another — that is worth every moment of what it takes to tend this place.

I will tell you honestly: this role asks a great deal — it is, without exaggeration, a second full-time job, and one for which no job description could fully prepare you. But woven through every demand is something that cannot be measured: the profound privilege of serving a community I love, of sitting at the intersection of so many stories, so much history, and so much hope. Being your temple president is an honor I hold with both hands and a full heart. I am grateful — for this team, for this community, and for everything this year has given me. Here's to what comes next.

With gratitude and love,  
Debra