



There will be a time in the future when the complete story is told about COVID-19 and what it did to all of us in 2020: how it reshaped social norms, imbuing everyday encounters with the anxious awareness of the spatial distance between people; how it made all of us appreciate those who work in professions and jobs that put them at risk every day, all for the sake of our safety and well-being; how it brought some families together, even as presented challenges to others. Telling that story in all of its details will require a perspective that is not currently available to any one of us.

Still, it is perhaps worthwhile making a few remarks at this transitional point in time. I do so from the vantagepoint of the end of my term as President of BHBE (with whatever perspective that gives me), just before the start of the Presidency of Keri Bahar (whose wisdom, patience, fortitude, and dedication to BHBE will ensure our continued flourishing as a community).

In sum, what I find remarkable is the attitude I see in so many of us at BHBE. This attitude is a curious blend of **hopefulness**, a renewed **sense of community**, and a strong **commitment to persevere**, each of which persists despite a clear-eyed recognition of the overwhelming changes that COVID-19 has brought in its wake.

It is fitting to begin with hopefulness. I speak here of the sort of hopefulness I discern in the eyes of those I see on Zoom, in the voices I hear on the phone, and in the body language of those I encounter (from a safe distance!) on the street. This is no ordinary hopefulness. The optimism at its core reflects a deeper conviction: whatever happier future awaits us will need to be earned, and each of us will need to play our part. When I speak to our members on the phone or interact with you on Zoom, I discern something in our voices: a clear expectation that we will prevail, tempered by an awareness that the burdens coming our way will need to be allocated equitably. We share an anticipation of better things to come, qualified by a sober recognition of the grievous losses suffered by many.

It is with the health of our friends and loved ones in mind, of course, that we most keenly feel the renewed sense of community. For most of us, sheltering in place went from a novelty to a burden in very short order, a constant reminder of the distance we need to keep from one other. And yet everywhere one looks, one sees indications of the basic human need to connect. We see this in the varied and sundry attempts to recreate social gatherings on Zoom, but also in the long-overdue phone calls that we are making; in the ways we are reaching out to our family and friends, but also in the small courtesies we extend to one another when we negotiate a common space (a park sidewalk; a supermarket aisle); in the joys we can still share if we are fortunate enough to be sheltering in place with others, but also in the melancholy of the memories of ordinary pleasures not presently available to us.

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But above all I am most deeply moved by the sense of perseverance – by the quiet but persistent urge to “keep on keeping on,” by the sheer refusal to give in. There is much to admire in this. I would not normally say that stoicism is among our virtues at BHBE; but there is a hint of the stoic in the parent who tells her child that this too will pass, and in the friend whose quiet support and comfort aid those around him even as he, too, grieves silently for what has been lost.

It is with these images in mind that I find myself in a pensive mood at this, the very end of my presidency. It has been a humbling experience to serve our community as BHBE’s President. The last two years have had their share of challenges and setbacks. There have been the occasional frustrations and disappointments. But the overall feeling I have as I prepare to leave this position is one of deep and enduring gratitude. Gratitude to the many, many of you who have given of your time and your resources, and of your expertise and your wisdom, to serve our community’s needs. Gratitude to the many wonderful people I have been most fortunate to have as members of the Board, and as members of the Executive Committee, who helped guide BHBE through these somewhat turbulent times. Gratitude to the exceptional clergy (our rabbi and our cantor) with whom I have cherished participating in services and celebrating holidays. Gratitude to a superlative executive director, who has made all of our lives so much better by his combination of optimism and can-do spirit. Gratitude to a Head of School whose commitment to our children is unmatched. Gratitude to an office staff whose dedication and hard work are the glue that keep us together. Gratitude to a custodial staff whose tireless efforts often go unappreciated but who help to ensure that our facility is heated in winter, cooled in summer, and clean throughout the year.

I have had the great fortune to serve our community at a rather interesting moment in time. In the past two years we have seen one rabbi depart, and we have welcomed another; we have embraced a new executive director; we have overseen the start of a systematic attempt to ensure that our records are up to date and accurate; and we currently stand in the midst of a pandemic, trying to organize BHBE’s response in ways that are consistent with our highest values. These are the sorts of things one can only do as a member of a community. It is as a member of this community that I thank all of you for your help and support throughout this period and beyond. It is as a member of this community that I express my excitement at Keri’s leadership going forward. And it is as a member of this community that I express my most fervent hope, that when we look back on this period, may it come to pass that we find ourselves proud of the many, many things we managed to achieve together.

Sandy Goldberg  
(Soon-to-be Immediate Past) President, BHBE