

MICHAEL J. SAFRA

הרב מאיר יעקב ספרא

Senior Rabbi

July 2, 2021

22 Tamuz 5781

Dear Rabbi Silverstein,

Sharon and I are excited to congratulate you on the occasion of your retirement after 42 years of service to Agudath Israel. I can imagine that you and Rita are excited for the opportunity to spend more time with your growing family and do other things that might have been pushed off due to work responsibilities. It was heartwarming to see the tremendous show of gratitude by the congregation after all these years.

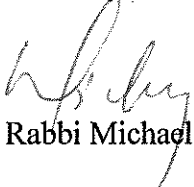
Sharon and I want to add our expressions of gratitude for all you did to launch our careers in the Jewish community. We were newly married – about 6 weeks! – when you first entered our lives. On one of her first days working as Program Director at Agudath, Sharon discovered that you and my father share the same birth date; and that discovery added another special nuance to our relationship.

As Rabbinic Intern, I benefitted from your insights about sermon content and presentation (“Tell your audience what you’re going to say, say it, and then hit them over the head and tell them what you just said!”). I appreciated the opportunities you provided to join in conversions and lifecycle events, teach classes, and reflect on the rabbinate during our many meetings and car rides. But it was more. A classmate once suggested: “You are so lucky. He’s the kind of rabbi you want to watch and mimic; just do things the way he does them.” And she was right. I am amazed at the number of times I respond to a challenge or crisis by imagining: What would Alan do? You exemplified for me concepts like vision, self-awareness, and self-differentiation, which we learned about in the classroom. And we are forever grateful for the relationships you fostered by bringing us to live in the model community that is Caldwell.

Sharon and I feel blessed by the paths of our professional careers. Sharon has had incredible success as Assistant Director for Camp Ramah’s Greater DC Day Camp after serving 13 years as Family Education Director at B’nai Israel. I am now entering my 20th year at B’nai Israel, where I have served as Assistant, Associate, and now Senior Rabbi. We know that our accomplishments are owed to the teachers and mentors who guided, pushed, and directed us along the way. And we are proud to say that Rabbi Alan Silverstein tops that list.

Mazal tov on your well-deserved retirement. We look forward to celebrating many other wonderful occasions in the months and years ahead.

With Gratitude,


Rabbi Michael Safra



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