



The book of Vayikra deals with the sacrificial order of the Tabernacle and later the holy Temple.

The Jews offered sacrifices for over one thousand years until the tragic destruction of the Second Temple and the subsequent exile of the Jewish people. Our sages taught us that today, despite our inability to offer sacrifices in our Temple, we can simulate the offerings by reciting every day the verses associated with the sacrifices. There is however, a more profound way of understanding the dictum of the Rabbis. While recitation makes one mindful and cognizant of the value of sacrifice, actual service to a Temple i.e.: a synagogue and/or community is certainly efficacious and meritorious.

We have joined together this evening to honor individuals who have exhibited devoted and selfless service to our Shul, the Young Israel of New Rochelle as well as to the larger Jewish community.

Simone and Mark Semer have served and continue to serve our community with much time, talent and dedication. From the moment they moved into the community they rolled up their sleeves and said, "What can we do to help?" From that time forward they have never stopped. Simone served as the president of Women's' League with innovative ideas and programs. Simone puts a lot of energy into Shul committees. I also know her to be a "*talmidah chachomah*" with a tremendous storehouse of Torah knowledge and a profound grasp of Torah texts..

As President of the Shul, Mark moved the congregation up to new heights in political activism and communal participation. His energy, empathy and overall sensitivity and compassion for the members of our community were so evident to me while I worked closely with him for three years. He cares deeply about the community. Mark is the exemplar of what Jewish leadership is. Mark is also a passionate advocate and participant in so many Jewish organizations. To name a few, he is involved with Yeshiva University, AIPAC, the OU, Rabbinical Council of America, and UJA-Federation. He works tirelessly to bring about *achdut* and unity among the Jewish people. The Semers' devotion to Zionism and the State of Israel is self-evident with their wholehearted embrace of their young son Eli making *Aliyah!*

We wish them and their children and the entire family Mazal Tov on this well-deserved honor!

Six years ago when Michelle and Rafi Halpert moved in to our community all I knew was that Rafi was "The Coach's" son. Immediately Michelle and Rafi started to demonstrate their caring for the larger Jewish community.

They brought the leaders of the "ORA" congregation to spend a Shabbat with YINR. Motzai Shabbat they opened their home to the community to offer us the opportunity to help and care for ORA.

From that moment on Michelle and Rafi have not stopped their participation in a host of communal activities.

Rafi, a coach like his celebrated father, teaches our children not only skills but ethics and good sportsmanship in athletics. Rafi also helped organize Shabbos learning for our youth Shabbat afternoons. Rafi was one of the architects of the *seudah shlishit* for our youth. Michelle was and is involved in many committees including the hospitality committee and the Mikvah Bake Sale. She always has an enthusiastic "YES" whenever asked to do things communally. What wonderful role models Michelle and Rafi are to their children and to us!

Mazal Tov to the Halperets on this wonderful honor!