

It is a pleasure to join the Young Israel of New Rochelle community in celebrating our 53rd Annual Dinner. The number 53 is symbolic of the word "Gan", spelled Gimmel-Nun in Hebrew. This special Hebrew word is translated as a garden. The basic characteristic that creates the beauty of a garden, is the variety of its flora. When many different types of plants and flowers can coexist in one garden, the blend of the garden's appearance and aroma can be breathtaking. We are blessed to be a part of a Shul that is as harmoniously beautiful as a magnificent garden. There are so many unique elements that make up our Shul environment. It is precisely our diversity that allows us to have created a growing and vibrant community. Our Shul offers so many growth-oriented opportunities in Torah, Tefillah, and Chessed for the entire Jewish family. May Hashem continue to shower all of His blessings upon our "garden", and may our Shul continue to help all of us to grow and accomplish in our journey of life.

Mazel Tov to Rachel and Gary Berger, our dear Guests of Honor. Rachel and Gary are perfect examples of a couple that are successful at building a home based on Torah values with dignity and grace. Everyone who meets them feels welcomed by them, and that these are the type of people who would help anyone at the drop of a hat. Within our first year in New Rochelle, we were able to add our names to Dr. Berger's patient list, and every positive praise said about Gary is 100% true. As the son of a physician, I truly appreciate the *Kiddush Hashem* that Gary creates every day through being the *mentch* that he is. Rachel and Gary both also act as role models for anyone who knows them in the area of honoring both parents and in-laws. The way that they care for and honor their parents is really quite remarkable. Yael and I feel blessed to have gotten to know Rachel and Gary's amazing children as well. The Berger kids are excellent ambassadors for our Shul and community, as they begin to make their own mark in the broader Jewish community. May Hashem continue to bless Rachel and Gary with many more years of health and happiness, with much nachat from their children, and from all that they do for others.

Mazel Tov to Yvette Finkelstein, our worthy recipient of the Community Service Award. I feel as if this award could be given to Yvette solely based on her communal efforts that I have witnessed during my time in New Rochelle. When you add the amazing contributions that came before this, this award seems to be a long time in coming. Yvette is a wonderful role model for our community in so many ways. She is always thinking about others, and of ways to advance our Shul in any way possible. She strives to take care of the minds and souls of those thirsting for knowledge and support. She is a person who gets things done, and her focus and determination allows her to plan and succeed time and again. I wish her a tremendous mazal tov on receiving this award. May Hashem bless Yvette with many more years of strength and good health to continue helping and serving our community, and may she and Jack see much nachat from their beautiful family.

It has now been close to three and a half years since my family and I joined the YINR community. The annual Dinner is a perfect occasion to offer thanks for allowing my family to become part of yours. I thank Rabbi and Rebbetzin Fink for continuing to enable our collaborative efforts to enhance the Shul, as well as providing mentoring and guidance with a sincere care for our well-being. I thank Michael Raskas and Judy Friedman, as well as the members of the Executive Board and Board of Trustees, for their constant support and guidance. I thank Amy and Isio for doing all the heavy lifting in the office, and for smoothly managing the day to day activities of the Shul. I thank the members of the YINR family for

continuing to open up your Shul and community to me and my family. I thank Hashem for giving me the opportunity to be part of a wonderful congregation, and for allowing me to help play a role in furthering the success of the New Rochelle Jewish community.

I look forward to celebrating with you all at the Dinner!

Chaim Axelrod