

Good morning and Shanah Tovah to everyone.

This morning is my opportunity to give a sort of “State of the Temple” address. But I decided that I would rather send you a letter for things like budgets and our new parking lot curb cut... and instead, I want to talk about something else very dear to my heart. My RV.

My husband Joe and I own a small, aging motorhome. We drive it around the country for a few weeks every summer, and try to get away for weekends whenever we can. Anyone who has ever heard us talk about our vacations knows that we have become completely hooked on RV travel. As soon as we get home, we’re ready to leave again. So this morning I am going to take all of you on a trip with me, and show you how Anshe Emeth is like my RV.

I absolutely love being in the RV. Somehow, I always feel at home there, and even before the engine turns over, I know I’m going to have a wonderful time. The same is true when I walk through the doors of Anshe Emeth—the Temple is my “second home” and I love being here. Of course with the RV, it has happened that the engine has NOT turned over when expected... and it may be that once or twice, at the Temple . . . the air conditioner hasn’t worked. The RV is 22 years old, which in RV years is probably about equivalent to a Temple which is 150 years

old. Occasionally . . . the roof leaks. But that's really unimportant; we love it anyway.

Our RV vacation starts with a general itinerary—what states we plan to visit, and where we might stop along the way. Anshe Emeth's year starts with an itinerary also—our Program Book. I must say that my vacation itinerary is usually very full—and of course, that is also true of Anshe Emeth's program book. This year's itinerary contains 24 pages of classes, concerts, scholars-in-residence, films, youth programming, and holiday celebrations. I hear some of you saying that it's too much—no one can do all of it! You may not be sure today which stops you will make as you travel. But I encourage you to attend as many of these activities as you possibly can. Remember, THIS trip lasts a full year!

Now—here is something important about our journey. Even though both—the RV vacation and the Anshe Emeth year—start out in a general direction, what I've found during our RV trips is that we can't anticipate in advance what will actually be the best part. We stop someplace that looks interesting and we discover a hidden gem. You never know what little detail is going to make the biggest impression on you. And the same thing is also true for activities at Anshe Emeth. For example, a couple of weeks ago I came to the Temple to watch the movie "A Serious Man". What turned out to be the most special wasn't

actually the movie. It was the warmth and fun of watching a Jewishly-themed film with my Jewish friends, and discussing it with them afterwards. But if I hadn't come to see the movie in the first place, I wouldn't have had either of those special experiences. All of the stops on the Anshe Emeth itinerary offer that same kind of opportunity for an unexpected discovery. It could be an intellectual "ahah moment", a spiritual insight, or maybe—a new friend! The more stops you make on this journey, the more wonderful surprises you'll encounter. So come on and explore a new road. It could turn out to be the highlight of your trip.

Maybe you feel that your life is already too busy to add even one more activity along the way. In that case, remember that it is the pauses in the drive which allow you to truly appreciate what you have already seen. Imagine a spacious campsite at dusk, surrounded by fragrant pine trees. We're sitting with friends, enjoying our wine, and catching up on the latest news. The beauty of the stars reminds us of the vastness of the universe and how fortunate we are to be together just at that moment. Shabbat at Anshe Emeth is an oasis in time which allows us to contemplate the week behind us. Come to Shabbat dinner at the temple, lose yourself in the music during services, and catch up with your friends at the Oneg afterwards. Enjoy that precious pause which leaves us energized for the travel to come. And then, come back

on Saturday morning and study Torah with one of our Rabbis, or even with me! Relax! Slow down. Savor the scenery.

Joe and I never leave home without a few good guidebooks on board—otherwise we wouldn't have a clue where we were going. Anshe Emeth has a fantastic team of tour guides. Rabbi Miller has guided me personally through my presidency with wisdom, understanding, and tact, and I am most grateful to have learned so much from him. But of course I'm not the only one—all of you can always turn to Rabbi Miller, Rabbi Epstein and Cantor Ott for guidance, support, advice, and knowledge. If you are bringing your kids on our trip, you know you can count on Chase Foster to make sure they are having a great time while they learn a lot about growing up as Jews. For our littlest ones, Karen Goldstein has dozens of games and toys with Jewish themes to keep them thoroughly entertained on the journey. And let's not forget our executive director, Heather Kibel. Like a master mechanic, she has kept Anshe Emeth on the road all year. If you're working on a volunteer project for the Temple, or have a question about your membership, or need anything at all from our office staff, Heather will keep you moving right along. But remember, Anshe Emeth is not a package tour—You are in an RV, not a group bus. Our professional staff is available to offer suggestions to facilitate your own personal journey, but you are the

driver. It's up to you which direction you travel and what road you take.

Perhaps you are thinking, a trip like this costs money! And you are right, it does. The RV uses a lot of gasoline, and the Temple building uses a lot of heating oil and electricity. That's why the Board of Trustees takes the fiscal responsibility for Anshe Emeth very seriously. I'm happy to tell you that, with constant oversight by our Budget and Finance committee and the Temple's professional staff, last year's budget came in right on the nose. We work very hard to anticipate and plan for routine tune-ups and major engine overhauls. We also try to alleviate expenses when possible. Take, for example, that electric bill. This year, we are investigating the possibility of putting solar panels on the Temple's roof. It would be wonderful to participate in a solar collection plan and see those electric bills go down. Meanwhile, we try to strike a fair balance, plan for the future, and remain determined to keep this trip affordable to everyone in our congregation. That's why most of the exceptional attractions on our itinerary have no entrance fee.

So we're just about ready to hit the road. But there's one last thing that's most important about every trip—who you travel with. I am most grateful to be travelling with all of you. Together we create a

community of warmth and welcome, a community dedicated to the best of Jewish life and living. As long as we travel together, we will always be able to repair any unexpected breakdowns, and continue on to explore new roads toward a fulfilling Jewish life. Something else I know from travelling in my RV: Ultimately, it's the journey itself, not the arrival, which is most rewarding.

As we look forward to a new year and a new journey, I thank you all again for placing your trust in me as president of Anshe Emeth. Joe and Beth join me in wishing you all a happy, healthy, and fulfilling year. And, I hope you are all packed. Together we are taking, quite literally, the trip of a lifetime. Our journey begins now.