Clergy, board members, friends -

Community. It’s fitting that tonight’s parsha, Ki Tavo – literally, “when you enter” (the land), is the one that coincides with the installation of both our Temple Board of Trustees and our JTV Board. After 400 years of enslavement and 40 years wandering in the wilderness – four hundred and forty years of exile, deprivation and rootlessness - the Israelites, our people, are on the verge, at last, of returning home. They are instructed to celebrate the enormous blessings they have received – and to be generous to the Levites, who will oversee the place of worship, and to the “stranger in [their] midst,” to the fatherless and the widow” – to all who are in need. The downtrodden host that left Egypt with only the things they could carry on their backs and hold in their arms, has, at last, been delivered into a land of milk and honey, a place of enormous bounty. But they must never forget their origins and their history, or their obligations to others. Celebrate, yes. But then give back. And give forward.

So from a mass of oppressed, dehumanized slaves; to a nomadic but stiff-necked people; to, at last, a nation, a real, rooted community. They must rejoice for the blessings they’ve received, but each must also do his or her part to support the community, their community and to care for those in need.

And that is what you, our trustees, and you, our JTV board members, do, day in and day out, year after year.

To our young leaders, let me say that I am constantly impressed by the energy, the intelligence, the talent, the enthusiasm you bring to everything you do for our Temple and for the community at large, through fundraising, food drives, helping at soup kitchens and much, much more. You represent us so well, and you do so much for us. I don’t know how we would get by without you. I certainly know that TBT would be a much lesser place without the vibrancy, the imagination, the dedication, the countless things you bestow upon us. Thank you, and your advisers, Rabbi Wiesenberg, Youth Director Jodi Mishkin-Michaelson, and, until recently, Mora Lisa Aamodt, for all you have done and are doing to help make our Temple the wonderful, exciting and inviting place it is. Without you, we would be – well, a bunch of old people, with much less hip-hop, dub step and rap (probably no hip hop, dub step or rap!) - and a poorer place by far. Thank you!

To our trustees and officers. We’ve definitely lived in interesting times. Like the Israelites of Ki Tavo, we’re not quite out of the wilderness, but we’re on the verge. The promised land is within sight, almost within reach. We can taste it. That we have gotten from where we were in those difficult times to where we are today is attributable entirely – and this is no exaggeration – entirely to you, to your tireless effort, endless sacrifices, grit, smarts and determination, your collective resolve not just to keep us afloat, but to make us
thrive, to make us prosper, to preserve all of the good things this congregation has always stood for, to introduce extraordinary new things, to give our incomparable clergy – our multifaceted and accomplished Senior Rabbi Susie Heneson Moskowitz, our dynamic Rabbi and Educator Rachel Wiesnberg, our sublime Cantor Sarene Appelbaum - the means and the tools and the support they need to teach, to inspire, to uplift, to counsel, to provide spiritual leadership and to bring comfort to our congregation. You have each stepped up to the challenge and brought your special talents and skills and insights to bear, generously. We don’t always agree on everything, but we’ve all learned from our different points of view and then pulled together. As a community.

Thank you for all you have done, and for all you will do in the months and years ahead, and thank you for your sacrifices, and thank you to your families for sharing you with us, and for the sacrifices they have made. You, our officers and trustees, have lived up to the commandment and the teaching of Ki Tavo, you have dedicated yourselves to supporting your community, your Jewish community, and your contributions will bear fruit for many, many years to come. Thank you to our predecessors, for their foresight, hard work and generosity. We stand upon their broad shoulders. Thank you to our outstanding faculty and incomparable office, religious school, nursery school and maintenance staff; you are our reality checks and the people without whom nothing would work. And thank you to the congregation for the support it has given us. And I would be truly remiss, and possibly in a lot of trouble, if I didn’t also say thank you to my incredible wife, Susan, for your support and inspiration – I couldn’t do any of this without you - and to my children, who can be challenging at times [not to mention funny], but who are always there when I need them, which is pretty much always.

Thank you everyone.

Shabbat shalom.