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May 2003

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From the Desk of Rabbi David E. Fass *Some Assembly Required*

What three words are bound to strike terror into the hearts of people everywhere? Even worse than the annoying "Batteries Not Included" is the dreadful "Some Assembly Required."

But of course! What is parenthood if not the assembling of a family? What is school if not the assembling of an education? What is religion, all religion, our religion, if not the assembling of a meaningful code of morals, ethics, and actions by which to lead a meaningful life?

We do not emerge from the womb bearing a "Some Assembly Required sign." Neither do we emerge with a guarantee that we will grow up to have a decent life, make some small, positive impact on the universe, or remain relatively free from the horrors of illness and accident that plague so many.

Perhaps we should. Perhaps we should take a moment and remind ourselves that no matter how much we think we've put it all together, everything can change in an instant. Such a reminder might cause to pay attention to the ongoing acts of assembly that are required of us all our lives, until our final moments.

We often assemble material objects with hammers and screwdrivers. We assemble ourselves with the help and love of others. As most of you know, our family has been beset over the past two years or so by a series of tragedies and losses. The medical difficulties will continue for at least the next six months. As we have had to assemble and reassemble ourselves with each new catastrophe, the glue that has kept us from falling apart has been the love and support of friends and family. Your kindness and caring has

indeed been a bright light in a very dark time. You continue to help light our way into an uncertain future. My family and I are deeply grateful.

From our house to yours, all good wishes that you may assemble at your seder table this Pesach surrounded by those you love the most.

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Cantor's Notes

"From the Bimah to Opera" is the title of Temple Beth Sholom's annual cantorial concert, to be held on June 14 at 8:00 pm.

It has become our tradition to have an annual cantorial concert with the participation of several guest cantors. This year will not be an exception. It is my great pleasure and privilege to invite you to our Sanctuary on Saturday night, June 14 to a concert featuring four cantors. This time, our guests will be: soprano Regina Lambert-Hayut of Congregation B'nei Jeshurun, Franklin Lakes; tenor David Perper; mezzo soprano Irena Altshul who has just received her cantorial investiture from Hebrew Union College, and who will be serving as a cantor at Manhattan's Temple Israel; and tenor Sergei Schwartz, cantor of Temple Beth Sholom in New City, New York. Cantor Schwartz will come all the way down the hall from his office especially for this occasion!

As you probably noticed, I described each of our guests according to the "professional definition" of her or his voice, which I have never done in my introductions to the concerts before. The reason that I did so is that all three of our guests pursued a career in opera and classical music prior to entering the cantorate. The opportunity of having these wonderful singers at our Temple will enable us to hear examples not only of Jewish Cantorial music, but examples of some of the best opera and classical music as well. I believe that it will be very memorable evening. This is an event that is not to be missed! Please mark your calendar, June 14. Come and bring your friends with you. I promise you a wonderful evening of wonderful music at "From the Bimah to Opera."

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to our president Joan Lifson who is finishing her term as president of our Congregation. I am grateful for her devotion to Judaism and personally for her constant support and kindness. Thank you Joan from the bottom of my heart!

Cantor Sergei Schwartz

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