

A blessing in honor of spouses/partners who are “fellow travelers”

Yom Kippur 5767, Late Morning Torah Service – October 2, 2006

Yom Kippur 5773, Early Morning Torah Service – September 25, 2012

Yom Kippur 5774, Late Morning Torah Service – September 14, 2013

Rabbi Adam Stock Spilker, based on a blessing by Rabbi Janet Marder

I want to recognize on this Yom Kippur day some very important people in our congregation. They are part of Mount Zion because, somewhere along the way, they happened to fall in love with a Jewish man or woman, and that decision changed their life.

I hope that you will not be embarrassed or upset that I am singling you out in this way. The last thing I want is to make you feel uncomfortable. What I do want is to tell you how much you matter to our congregation, and how very grateful we are for what you have done.

You are a very diverse group of people. Some of you are living a Jewish life in virtually all respects. Some of you are devoutly committed to another faith. Some of you do not define yourselves as religious at all. You fall at all points along this spectrum, and we acknowledge and respect your diversity.

What we want to thank you for today is your decision to cast your lot with the Jewish people by becoming part of this congregation, and the love and support you give to your Jewish partner. Most of all, we want to offer our deepest thanks to those of you who are parents, and who are raising your sons and daughters as Jews.

In our generation, which saw one-third of the world's Jewish population destroyed, every Jewish child is especially precious. We are a very small people, and history has made us smaller. Our children mean hope, and they mean life. So every Jewish boy and girl is a gift to the Jewish future. With all our hearts, we want to thank you for your generosity and strength of spirit in making the ultimate gift to the Jewish people.

You are the moms and dads who drive the Hebrew school carpool and bring the refreshments to the Shabbaton. You help explain to your kids why it's important to get up on Sunday morning and to learn to be a Jew. You take classes and read Jewish books to deepen your own understanding, so you can help to make a Jewish home. You learn to make kugel and latkes; you try to like gefilte fish; you learn to put on a Seder; you learn to put up a Sukkah. You join your spouse or partner at the Shabbat table – maybe you even set that Shabbat table and make it beautiful.

You come to services, even when it feels strange and confusing at first. You hum along to those Hebrew songs, and some of you even learn to read that difficult language. You stand on the *bima* on the day of your child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah, and tell them how proud you are and how much you love them, and how glad you are to see them grow into young Jewish men and women.

We know that some of you have paid a significant price for the generous decision you made to raise Jewish children. For some of you, you have made a painful sacrifice, giving up the joy of sharing your own spiritual beliefs and passing your own religious traditions down to your kids. I hope your children and your partner or spouse tell you often how wonderful you are, and that *their* love and gratitude, and *our* love and gratitude, will be some compensation, and will bring you joy.

We hope, as well, that you have found meaning in your own journey in your time here part of this congregation.

I ask you now to rise -- and our entire congregation with you in your honor -- as we offer you this ancient blessing from the Torah.... *Congregation repeats:*

May God bless you; may God keep you;
May the light of the Holy One shine on you;
And may God grant you the precious gift of peace and wholeness.