



December 1, 2017

**Israel Bond 2017
Acceptance Speech**

By Silvia and Rabbi Manes Kogan

Dear friends of Hillcrest Jewish Center,

Thank you very much for this honor. We are truly humbled by your love. We are also blessed with our children, Daniela, Ilan and Abby, who fill us with pride and Jewish nachas. We love you so much!

Yesterday we read in the Torah portion (Genesis 12:1): *"The Lord said to Abram: go forth from your country, from your native land, and from your father's house to the land that I will show you."*

The Ramban – Nachmanides - commenting on this verse, explains: The Torah expresses Abraham's test in ascending degrees of difficulty. It is hard for someone to leave his homeland, even harder to leave his extended family, and hardest of all to leave his parents.

As we are being honored today by Israel Bonds, Silvia and I recognize that our departure from Argentina 21 years ago was imbued with a sense of mission, but it was, nevertheless, a challenging move. It was hard to leave our country, the place we grew up in, the city, the familiarity with the streets, and places filled with good memories. It was even harder to leave our native land, its language, its particular noises and rhythms. Hardest of all was leaving our parents, siblings and friends. Since we left Buenos Aires 21 years ago, our parents and Silvia's brother also left Argentina to settle in Israel, but when we left we didn't know that would be the case.

And yet, despite all of the emotional and practical challenges involved in leaving family and friends, we found, first in Roanoke, VA, and then at Hillcrest Jewish Center, new friends, and a community that became our home away from home. Today, we are full of gratitude and appreciation towards our Hillcrest Jewish Center family for your love and support.

This is our 12th year at Hillcrest. Time flies, but it does, because the years that passed were filled with love and a sense of mission, fulfillment and realization.

It is very difficult, if not impossible, to look at the rabbinic vocation as just another job. To begin with, the "job" hours are not normal hours and the nature of the "job" makes it personal, intense, and impossible to draw a clear line between the public and private life of a rabbi and his family.

The rabbinic vocation is a family vocation. Without the family being on board, the rabbinic congregational work is impossible. In this regard, it is very fitting that Silvia is being honored today with me, since without her explicit and implicit support, as well as that of Daniela, Ilan and Abby, my work at Hillcrest would not be possible.

The unique involvement of a rabbi's family –in this case my family- can be seen in three distinct areas:

First of all, due to the intensity and unique emotional characteristic of the rabbinic vocation, the family support needed by a rabbi is essential not only to his work but also to his mental health.

Second, my family understands that me being a rabbi affects them as well. Silvia is being seen as the rabbi's wife and my children as the rabbi's children. People have expectations not only from me but from them as well. Their lives are also under the magnifying glass. What they do, where they go, what they eat, and what they say, carries the additional weight of "the rabbi's family." Either they like it or not. My family not only accepts this challenge but embraces it as well.

Finally, Silvia, Daniela, Ilan and Abby, have made their unique and independent contributions to Hillcrest Jewish Center. Silvia was instrumental in developing KinderShul and creating Minyan Katan. She came up with the idea and the practical execution of writing a Torah for Hillcrest's 75th anniversary, which raised more than \$125,000 for our shul. Silvia served as a liaison in the youth committee, ran a successful Challah Bake, and taught countless classes.

Daniela was a co-leader of Junior Congregation throughout her High School years and Ilan was a Minyan Katan leader for two years until he left for Israel. Both Daniela and Ilan were counselors and specialists in charge of Jewish Culture at the HJC Day Camp. And Abby volunteered many hours to help in the office, especially with the High Holy Days preparations.

I am full of gratitude and appreciation that Silvia, Daniela, Ilan and Abby are sharing this rabbinic journey with me, with love, patience and understanding.

Today we also celebrate Israel and renew our commitment to the Jewish State.

Silvia and I lived and studied in Israel. My parents and Silvia's brother made Aliyah 15 years ago and Silvia's parents six months ago. Our children's four grandparents, uncle, aunt and cousins live in Israel and are Israeli citizens. We have traveled to Israel countless times in the last years, both to visit family and to study, and each time we have returned with a renewed feeling of love and appreciation for Israel. We also believe that love and appreciation must be translated in concrete ways and therefore, as a way to show that our money is where our mouth is, Silvia and I decided to invest in the State of Israel by purchasing \$10,000 worth of Israel Bonds.

We don't like long speeches so we are going to keep this one short. Thank you so much for honoring us today. We feel so blessed to call Hillcrest Jewish Center and Israel our home!

May Hashem bless all of you and your loved ones with all the best!