



November 1, 2018

Dear Friends of Hillcrest Jewish Center,

As you read this message, I will be in Argentina beginning a one-month sabbatical, which is part of a three-month sabbatical I negotiated in my last contract. When I signed my contract six years ago, after already being the Rabbi of the Hillcrest Jewish Center for seven years, the thought of taking a sabbatical was very far in the future. A few months ago, however, I received an invitation from the Dean of the Seminario Rabínico Latinoamericano, my alma mater, to teach an online course to the rabbinical students, with the hope that I would be able to visit the class in person and to teach other classes as well.

With the holidays behind us and with a relatively quiet month of November upon us, I decided that it would be a good idea to take the first part of my sabbatical before the end of 2018.

This is the longest I will be in Argentina since we left 22 years ago. Many things have changed since then. For one, my parents, Silvia's parents, and Silvia's brother moved to Israel, and the people still there have changed.

In addition to teaching at the Seminario, I had already been invited by several congregations to be their scholar in residence during Shabbat, and even during the week, including Rabbi Uri's new congregation.

A sabbatical is not just a good opportunity to teach, study and learn. It's also a good opportunity to experience how things are being done differently in different places. The Rabbinical vocation is a wonderful one, but the nature of the position makes it very hard for rabbis to spend Shabbat in other congregations. It is true that when I am in Israel, for example, I get to go to different shuls on Shabbat, but that is during the summer when I am with many other rabbis and the congregations are somehow geared towards American visitors. It is not the same as visiting a congregation in the middle of the work year where you get to experience the day-to-day challenges and opportunities a rabbi faces in a different reality.

I hope that this trip will expose me to wise colleagues, meaningful rabbinical practices, and alternative ways of dealing with similar situations at Hillcrest Jewish Center. Finally, I am sure that being away for a month will make me appreciate and miss not only my family, but also Hillcrest Jewish Center, my shul.

I look forward to recharging my batteries and to return refreshed to continue working with all of you at Hillcrest Jewish Center.

See you in a month and as always, many blessings,

Rabbi Manes Kogan