

Dear Friends of Hillcrest Jewish Center,

This past month, after twenty years of inspiring presence, we bid farewell to Lesley and Cantor Moti Fuchs.

I like to think that as the time of Lesley and Cantor Fuchs's departure drew near, all of us who had the honor to know them, spent time slowly shifting memories from the cantorial, more work-related aspect of Cantor Fuchs's persona, to the more personal one.

Yes, Cantor Fuchs is an accomplished Cantor, knowledgeable in both Hebrew and in nusach. His voice and knowledge, I am sure, were the main reasons he was hired twenty years ago.

In these past twenty years, however, Cantor Fuchs has brought innumerable gifts to our beloved shul.

First of all, Cantor Fuchs trained countless children for their b'nai mitzvah. While this was part of his job description, Cantor Fuchs had a special way of strengthening his students' connection to Judaism through his interaction with the children and their families, and made the b'nai mitzvah experience an unforgettable one.

Cantor Fuchs organized concerts, which not only raised funds for our shul, but also for Israel. He started a monthly Ahava meditation, which throughout the last twenty years, was attended by people of different religious backgrounds from our greater-community, all while retaining a core group of followers and students. Finally, yet importantly, Cantor Fuchs strengthened his bond with our congregants, officiating at many life cycle events, including weddings, baby namings, and funerals.

Lesley has been very active in the Caring Circle, reaching out weekly to many members of Hillcrest Jewish Center (those whom she lovingly referred to as "my list"). Lesley coordinated the Nichum Aveilim Committee, helped with the congregational Pesach Seder, was involved in Sisterhood, Hadassah, and contributed to the well-being of our beloved shul in every capacity she was able to.

Moreover, above everything that Lesley and Cantor Fuchs have done for us all these years, they gave us all the irreplaceable gift of who they are, their menschlichkeit, their unconditional love, their blessings of shalom – peace, and ahava – love.

If you were with us over Shabbat on December 7, you might already know that the leadership of Hillcrest Jewish Center named Cantor Fuchs, "Cantor Emeritus." Some might view this appointment as a mere formality or expression of love and appreciation. I, however, see it as an open door, on both sides, for all of us to reach out to Lesley and Cantor Fuchs when in need of a word of wisdom and comfort, and even more importantly, for Lesley and Cantor Fuchs to know that they will always have a home at Hillcrest Jewish Center.

And so, we do not say goodbye, but l'hitraot – until the next time we see each other and our paths cross. We also say Today Rabah – thank you so much, for everything you have given us all these years, and last, but not least, we wish you derech tzlecha - a meaningful and successful journey.

With love and appreciation,

Rabbi Manes Kogan