

A wealthy Jewish man buys a fabulous home in Beverly Hills, California.

He brings in a local designer to decorate the place.

When the job is finished, the homeowner is delighted but realizes that he's forgotten to put mezuzahs on the doors.

He goes out and buys 50 mezuzahs and asks the decorator, who is non-Jewish, to place them on the right hand side of each door except bathrooms and kitchens.

He's really worried that the decorator will chip the paint work or won't put them up correctly.

However, when he comes back a few hours later, he sees that the job has been carried out to his entire satisfaction.

He's so pleased that he gives the decorator a bonus.

As the decorator is walking out of the door he says, "Glad you're happy with the job..." "By the way, I took out the warranties in each one and left them on the table for you."

In a few moments we will attach the mezuzah that will grace the new entrance to our Tree of Life Preschool, our Daniel Rothman Religious School, and our beloved synagogue, Kol Shalom.

And along with this mezuzah, will come the warranty, not a one-year warranty or five year warranty or even a 10 year warranty.

No, this warrantee has already been available for thousands of years and will continue for probably at least that long.

The mezuzah is a most appropriate symbol to be displayed at the entrance of any home, and especially our synagogue home.

It reminds us that while the exterior can be beautiful, it is what you can find inside that truly matters.

And what we hope to find, and expect to find inside every new and remodeled classroom, is not exterior beauty, but rather an inner beauty that results from paying attention to that which is written on the warranty.

Among other well-known biblical passages, the parchment, the warrantee found in the mezuzah, contains what we know as the first paragraph of the Shema.

In Deuteronomy chapter 6, verse five states explicitly –

וְאָהַבְתָּ, אֵת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ, בְּכָל-לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ, וּבְכָל-מְאֹדֶךָ.

And you shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might.

Verse 6 –

וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ הַיּוֹם--עַל-לִבְּךָ

and these words which I command you today shall be on your heart.

Already, twice, we have reference to the heart.

We are told to love God with all our heart and to place God's words on our heart.

And then, this passage continues with two more words, specifying the first specific concrete act which can demonstrate and prove our love for God –

V'Shinantem l'vanecha - and you shall teach them, these words of love of God, to your children.

Do you love God?

Do you love Judaism?

Do you love your children, or your grandchildren?

If not your children, then surely your grandchildren.

And if your answer to these questions is yes, then you certainly also have to love Kol Shalom, what we have been so far, and what we hope to be so much further, into the future.

While our new school wing is so clean and beautiful and fresh,

and the classrooms look so large and spacious to us,

and while so many of us have worked so very hard, and contributed so very much, to get to this point,

the hardest part is still before us, in front of us and awaits us.

We need to fill the classrooms with children and adults, and fulfill the commandment of v'shinantem - teaching them to love the Lord our God, with all of our heart, soul and might.

Because we know, that just like with human beings, and perhaps even more so with God, the more we show our love,

the more we feel love and receive love in return.

We are dedicated to demonstrating to our children, that when we love God, and we love each other,

God's love for us is strong, clear and evident.

Yesterday, in synagogues all over the world, the Jewish people concluded our annual reading of the book of Exodus.

The book begins with the Israelites in exile, in Egypt, in a land that they can never call home.

The book concludes with the Israelites traveling through the wilderness, journeying toward the land that will become their permanent home, and with the construction of the Mishkan – the Tabernacle, the sanctuary, that allows them to have, if not a homeland, then a home wherein to worship God.

And we also have completed the expansion of our Tabernacle, committing ourselves to more wisely use this new Holy Space to worship and love God.

And if we look ahead, at the new biblical book congregations began to read just yesterday afternoon, that is exactly where we are right now, in the history of congregation Kol shalom.

We have begun Sefer VaYikra, commonly known as Leviticus, but translated from the Hebrew, this is the book of calling.

It begins with God calling out to Moses, and with Moses providing the program for how our ancestors and how we, call out to God in return.

Then and now, the program is called Korban, usually translated sacrifice, but in its literal sense, the word is closeness.

Then and now, Judaism provides us with our best chance to demonstrate our closeness to God, our worship of God, and our love of God.

One of the prayers our children learn here at our synagogue and many others synagogues as well is Psalm 145 and two other verses which begin with the Hebrew word Ashrei.

And one verse toward the end of Ashrei, connects these two basic lessons which we learn at the beginning of Leviticus:

Korban, or the desire to be Karov, close with God, and, VaYikra - the desire to be among those who are Korav - who are calling out to God.

קָרוֹב יְהוָה, לְכֹל-קֹרְאָיו-- לְכֹל אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָאֵהוּ בְאֱמֶת (repeat)

To all who call, God is so close, to all who call out, to God in truth.

(repeat)

May God hear us and our children when we call out in the truth of our tradition,

and may our willingness to fulfill God's will cause God's love to shine upon all of us, here at Kol Shalom.

Amen.