

**Presidential Remarks**  
**Rosh Hashanah 5774, Community Synagogue of Rye**  
**Karen Cherney Zaltz**

*Shanah Tovah.*

Our dreams will not just fall into our hands.

Aristotle said:

“Excellence is never an accident. It is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, and intelligent execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives - choice, not chance, determines your destiny.”

We celebrate life in milestones - each time we recognize a significant change in ourselves, others and in our communities. Individually, we recognize bar/bat mitzvah, entering college, marriage, births, and jobs. As a community we recognize a reimagined religious school, and a second Rabbi. However, the paths that each one of us takes to reach our milestones - the challenges and triumphs along the way - tell the real story. It is these paths - not the milestones - that define us individually and as a community.

Collectively, we have the power to define Community Synagogue’s milestones; for as an integrated whole – we are greater than the sum of our individual pathways. It is my job to gather and channel our distinctive perspectives and lead Community Synagogue down the BEST path to our desired milestones while keeping each individual voice in mind. To understand the diversity of individual pathways in our community, we conducted a feasibility study performed by Mersky, Jaffe & Associates, the same consulting company successfully used for our last capital campaign. They surveyed a cross-section of our congregation – in part- to determine whether a campaign for \$10.9 million dollars would succeed. This campaign represents combined dollars for the proposed renovation project plus endowment dollars.

A renovation must be responsible:

- a. For the continuation of a Jewish community in this part of Westchester,
- b. to an aging building, and
- c. to the creation of spiritually inspired spaces that originate from listening to our community

Major findings of the study indicated that:

- Community Synagogue of Rye is highly valued – congregants value their affiliation and connection to Community Synagogue;
- congregants’ involvement in Community Synagogue ranges widely – committee involvement, participation in adult education, and lay-leadership as examples
- more than half interviewed believe that the proposed project is important or very important;
- our congregation believes that a goal of 10.9 million dollars is not achievable - yet a majority will give;
- we need more volunteer and leadership participants;

What did we learn from you?

Our proposed plans need to be more specific. Additionally, those interviewed demonstrated a strong desire to have HHD services at our Forest Avenue home. We are already in the process of understanding the requirements associated with moving our HHD services back to Community Synagogue.

This snapshot of your views will continue to shape our future decisions and has guided our community down a more united pathway leading to our next milestone.

Thanks to those congregants who participated in this study. Your input is valuable and your time taken much appreciated.

The suggestions – based on the results of these findings - align with our need to make a sincere commitment to the development agenda. Development is the discovery of shared values. Help make Community Synagogue a place that meets your needs.

As your president, I am not only focused on our next milestone, but on our ability to realize all future milestones. We must ensure that our children and our children's children have the opportunity to learn, grow, and struggle on their own paths. Our ability to be forward thinking will allow Community Synagogue of Rye to continually create and achieve milestones. As noted in a letter to you in this year's affiliation packet, income from dues alone cannot support all that we do here. Thanks to the hard work of our financial secretary, treasurer and budget committee – we have a balanced budget, yet we are seriously under-endowed. EJewish Philanthropy advises that a synagogue's endowment should be three to five times its annual budget – currently, ours is merely half of our annual budget. Establishing a sustainable endowment will secure a community that embraces its own path and reaps the rewards of recognizing its own milestones for generations to come. Our goal is to build a legacy for a future community that is in control of its destiny.

Milestones are important – but are merely chapter pages in the book of life. It is the paths that we all take to achieve the milestones that are in our control. As Aristotle said - our choices, intents, and effort are what determine our destiny. We must take ownership of our individual and shared paths to ensure we reach the milestones we envision for ourselves and our community synagogue for generations to come.

*Shanah Tovah.*