

Board of Rabbis Installation

May 11, 2009 - Lag B'Omer

Excerpts of remarks by

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Executive Vice President

The Board of Rabbis of Southern California

Special Presentation to John Fishel, President, Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles

Talmud Megillah 6a: If a person says to you, "I have worked and have not achieved," do not believe him. If the person says, "I have not worked, but still I have achieved," do not believe him. But if the person says, "I have worked and I have achieved," you may believe him.

I have had the privilege of working closely with John Fishel for the past ten years. I am impressed by his hard work, intelligence, the breadth and depth of his knowledge of the Jewish community, Los Angeles, Israel and world affairs. John has led our community through good times and bad times. We have weathered several crises together, including wars in the Middle East, natural disasters, and disasters of the man-made and woman-made variety. I have seen firsthand John's patient and calm leadership of our Federation, his unwavering dedication to and love of the Jewish people and state of Israel. It is my honor to consider John a trusted colleague and friend.

As leaders of the Board of Rabbis, we especially appreciate John Fishel's support of the growth of the Board and our intensified focus on interfaith and intrafaith programs that serve rabbis and the wider community. John has been an invaluable source of advice and assistance in his years at the helm of the Jewish Federation. Truly he has worked, and he has achieved.

Special Presentation to Rabbi Stewart Vogel, Outgoing President, Board of Rabbis:

Before I say a few words about my friend Rabbi Stewart Vogel, let me wish my friend Rabbi Denise Eger well as our incoming President. Denise has already set two records for our Board. First, she has garnered the most press and best press of any new Board of Rabbis President in the history of 72 yr. old organization. Second, she has set new standards of the quality and quantity of distinguished guests at a Board of Rabbis installation. Tonight's assemblage includes rabbis, clergy, judicatory leaders, civic leaders, communal and congregational leaders, and members of Kol Ami. These are men and women who represent the best and brightest of our great city. We look forward to continuing our work together with Rabbi Eger.

Pirkay Avot 1:6: Joshua ben Perahyah taught: *Aseh leha rav, u'k'nay leha haver, v'hevay dan et kol ha-adam l'kbaf zekbut.* "Find a rabbi; acquire a friend; when you assess people, tip the balance in their favor."

I have had the good fortune of working closely with Rabbi Stewart Vogel for the past two years. In that time he has become my *rav* and my *haver*. I value his leadership, creativity, people skills and especially his amazing ability to build bridges of shalom--peace and harmony among Jews, peace and harmony between Jews and non-Jews, even peace and harmony in a collective of 300 rabbis.

Stewart, I will miss our regular breakfasts at Aroma Cafe. I will especially miss the fixed times to sit together with one of my favorite rabbis and one of my favorite people.

In addition to your official Board of Rabbis plaque, I am pleased to share a framed photo of you with Pope Benedict XVI from last year's memorable religious leaders' mission to Rome and Jerusalem. We invited the Pope to be here tonight. He is unable to be present, but we did receive a letter from the Vatican. My Latin is a bit rusty, but I think it says (loose translation):

"Sorry I can't be with you. Difficult choice--trip to the Holy Land or joining you at the Board of Rabbis installation. Mazal tov to all of you. Rabbi Vogel, belated thanks for the book you gave me on Moses and Jesus. It's on my nightstand."