

Introducing the Art Piece

Aaron Silver & Noam Sienna • Oct 2018

When we were asked to create a art piece for the shul that would honor Rabbi Allen's rabbinate at Beth Jacob, we started by talking to a lot of people. We wanted to collect ideas, words, and images that could convey 32 years of a rabbinate, 32 years of intention, 32 years in just one piece of art, one piece of art that could also focus those years into this moment: this moment of transition, this moment of reflection, this moment of honor.

We talked about Beth Jacob. We talked about Torah, Avodah, and Gemilut Hasadim. We talked about moments of transition. We talked about passion, and about inspiration.

The two of us worked together to design, draw, erase, draw again, get paper, get other paper, lightbox, cut, calligraph, get more paper, trace, and cut again.

The central image of the piece we created is a havdalah candle, which is a fitting symbol for two reasons. First, the havdalah candle is the logo of Beth Jacob, where its three strands represent our community's central values: the pillars of Torah, Avodah, and Gemilut Hasadim. Second, havdalah is a ritual of transition that acknowledges the bittersweet and inevitable nature of change, a ritual which both honours the past and looks forward to the future.

The havdalah candle in this piece is both created from and surrounded by the words of our tradition. The texts we chose to express these ideas came from three places:

- The first source is a text from the Talmud recited as part of the shacharit service, every day in morning minyan. This prayer describes the most important deeds, those which have both an immediate beneficial effect and which also establish patterns that last beyond one's own lifetime. These phrases describe the values that Rabbi Allen has inspired us to manifest in community.
- The second source is Micah 6:8, a verse which outlines our responsibilities in this world: "you have been told what is good, and what G!d demands of you: *'asot mishpat*, to pursue justice, *ahavat hesed*, to love kindness, and *hatznea lekhet*, to walk humbly with G!d."
- The third source is D'varim 33:4, when Moses is saying farewell after bringing the Israelites to a significant milestone and entrusting them to transmit the Torah from generation to generation. Similarly, Rabbi Allen has brought our community to this milestone and is now entrusting us with our own carrying-forward.

Rabbi Allen's presence is also represented in the passionate and fiery flame of the candle. It bears an English phrase, one that we chose both because Rabbi Allen employs it frequently, and because it is perfectly apt, in that it reminds us to focus on what's truly important.

At the end of the day, our synagogue will continue to embrace the core values that this piece highlights; core values that Rabbi Allen has promoted throughout his rabbinate. At the end of the day, the small acts of showing up for each other will continue to strengthen the sacred ties that bind our community together. At the end of the day, Rabbi Allen is leaving us with the ideas, skills, and tools that we will use to continue to thrive.

The havdalah ceremony marks a sacred change: the end of one day and the beginning of another. So too, this piece marks the transition between two chapters of the life of this community. From now on, as we see this piece hanging in the entrance of our synagogue, we will be able to reflect on the many strands, past, present, and future, of our evolving journey as a community.

Texts in the Art Piece

Aaron Silver & Noam Sienna • Oct 2018

In Havdalah Candle

אלו דברים שאדם אוכל פרותיהם בעולם הזה והקרו קיימת לו לעולם הבא.
ואלו הן. כבוד אב ואם. וגמילות חסדים. והשקמת בית המדרש. שחרית
וערבית. והכנסת אורחים. ובקור חולים. והכנסת כלה. ולוית המת. ועיון
תפלה. והבאת שלום בין אדם לחברו. ותלמוד תורה כנגד כלם.

“These are the obligations that yield benefit to one in this world, and which illuminate the doer in the World to Come: to honor parents; to **perform acts of love and kindness**; to **attend the house of study daily**; to **welcome the stranger**; to **visit the sick**; to **celebrate the joy of marriage**; to **bring honor to the dead**; to **pray with sincerity**; to make peace when there is strife; and the **study of Torah** is equal to them all.” (Shaharit morning service, based on Mishna Peah 1:1)

הגיד לך אדם מה טוב ומה ה' דורש ממך כי אם **עשות משפט ואהבת חסד**
והצניע לכת עם א-להיך

“You have been told, O mortal, what is good, and what G!d demands of you: to **pursue justice**, to **love kindness**, and to **walk humbly** with G!d.” (Micah 6:8)

In Circle

תורה צוה לנו משה מורשה קהלת יעקב

“Moses commanded us the Torah — the heritage for the Congregation of Jacob.”
(Deuteronomy 33:4)

In Flame

“At the end of the day ...”