



## ***A Word From Rabbi Moskowitz***



Dear Friends,

We are all so saddened by the passing of Dr. Joseph Graffeo, Temple Beth Torah's Choir Director and organist for the past 33 years. A few weeks before the High Holidays Joe was admitted to the hospital and diagnosed with cancer in his kidney. This was of great concern as he had been the recipient of a kidney transplant 9 years ago. He was able to go home for a few days but then contracted sepsis and returned to the hospital. It seems the cancer had spread and his systems were shutting down. Cantor and I visited Joe and his wife, Barbara, about a week ago and while the prognosis was not good, he was doing okay and we had a nice conversation and offered prayers of healing and love. The Wake and Visitation are today at Raynor and D'Andrea Funeral Home -245 Main Street in West Sayville, NY 11796 from 2-4:30 PM and 7-9:30 PM. The Funeral Mass is Thursday at St. John Nepomucene- 1140 Locust Avenue, Bohemia, NY 11716 at 11:00 AM followed by a repast. Condolences can be sent to Barbara Graffeo at 1335 N. Windsor Ave, Bayshore, NY 11706. I know she will read and cherish your notes.

Prior to Dr. Joe becoming sick, we were planning on purchasing a new piano. We would like to follow through with his plan and dedicate the piano in Joe's memory. A memorial plaque honoring Joe's legacy will be made for the piano. Donations can be made to the Choir Fund, which will be earmarked for this purpose. We will acknowledge these contributions to the Graffeo family.

**Please join us on Friday, November 15, 2019 at 6:30 PM Shabbat Services at which we will honor Joe's memory with some of his favorite musical pieces and compositions as well as share some thoughts and reflections on his life and his influence at TBT.**

I personally appreciated Dr. Joe's dedication to Temple Beth Torah and his constant support and encouragement of my work. Not only did he come in flawlessly with the musically clues but his deep baritone voice would lead the congregation in the responsive readings. He played at services even when he wasn't feeling well and would often rush from a Saturday evening service at a church where he played, to TBT to accompany a havdalah Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. He took such pride in his work and gave of his superlative talents and Julliard training to the Temple community on a regular basis. Thank you Dr. Joseph Graffeo. You will be missed.

He had special relationships with all of the clergy at TBT. I would like to share their reflections.

From Cantor Sarene Appelbum:

I worked with Dr. Joseph Graffeo for eight of the thirty- three years he was the music director at Temple Beth Torah. It was but a small part of his tenure with our community, but Dr. Joe and I spent a great deal of time together, at services,

rehearsals, planning meetings and writing music. He was a very talented man, with myriad musical abilities, many of which I am sure I will begin to discover in noticing their absence. He effortlessly transposed, composed, and followed me wherever I wandered vocally, without complaint. Joe was smart, passionate and very proud of his illustrious accomplishments as a conductor, here and abroad, but he was also patient and kind with the many novice musicians and vocalists that he worked with over the years. Dr. Joe cared deeply about the Temple Beth Torah community. He took great pride in his contributions to the music of our services and events, and in his long-standing relationships with so many of you.

His commitment and reliability were unparalleled, and I always felt that his work at TBT was his priority, though I'm sure any community he worked for, felt the same about his dedication.

There are inside jokes and confidences we shared that I will miss, but I will also feel the loss of his support of me and his constant reminders of his respect and appreciation for my abilities as a musician and clergy, even before I could officially refer to myself as a Cantor.

Often I would show him music and he would look at the notes written on the page, turn to me and say, "I'm hearing things." He meant that he was imagining how the music could be improved or made more interesting.

I will miss listening to the things he heard, and I will miss my musical partner. May his memory be for a blessing.

From Rabbi Rachel Wiesenberg:

The Hebrew term for the clergy, musicians, artists and workers that create Jewish Spiritual life is "K'lei Kodesh" - or "Holy Vessels". This term is somewhat based on the notion that people who lead services, counsel and teach 'pour out' holiness, like a jar...AND they also inherently contain within them a holiness... just by being themselves. For over three decades, "Dr. Joe" poured out the sacred music that enriched our congregational life. Within Joe, there was also an inherent holiness - just because Joe was Joe. I will miss seeing his smile. I will miss his interesting stories of a life well lived. I will miss seeing his wheels turn when I asked him questions about the arts. Most of all, I will miss what he added to our community through his personality and his talents. I take comfort in the thought that he will enrich the sacred music of the heavenly choir now. May he rest in peace.

From Rabbi Marc Gellman:

In the Book of Ezekiel 28:13-14 we read about God's description of the angel who wrote music to accompany the Creation of the world,

*You were in Eden,  
the garden of God;  
every precious stone adorned you:  
carnelian, chrysolite and emerald,  
topaz, onyx and jasper,  
lapis lazuli, turquoise and beryl.  
Your settings and mountings were made of gold;  
on the day you were created they were prepared.  
You were anointed as a guardian cherub,  
for so I ordained you.  
You were on the holy mount of God;  
you walked among the fiery stones.*

For over thirty years my friend Joe Graffeo was my guardian cherub. His masterful organ and piano accompaniments for all our services lifted us upward to Eden and spread before us the fiery stones of God's celestial music.

Joe led our choir through the annual spiritual gauntlet of our High Holiday services and he gave support and guidance to all our cantors. He encouraged me to preach the truth as I was given to see it. He knew when I had tried by best and when I had merely tried.

This year's High Holidays were not the same without Joe. It was not just his virtuosity but his heart and soul that we all missed deeply.

In The Book of Job 38:7 we read,  
*"When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"*

When the morning stars sing together tomorrow they will have a new accompanist.  
May they love him and his music the way I did—the way we all did.

God bless your luminous soul Joseph.

As you can see, Dr. Joseph Graffeo had a deep effect on all of us and I know his music and his warmth touched many of you as well.

Zichrono L'vracha - May his memory be a blessing and may his gifts continue to inspire us.

L'shalom,  
*Rabbi Susie Heneson Moskowitz*

Temple Beth Torah  
35 Bagatelle Rd  
Melville, NY 11747

Sent By ShulCloud

[Unsubscribe](#)

Delivered to [dpinkowitz@dcpmarketing.com](mailto:dpinkowitz@dcpmarketing.com)

[Forward This Message](#)

[Can't see any pictures?](#)