

Rabbi Joshua Samuels
January 28, 2013

Closing Benediction: Interfaith Coalition's Celebration of Hope Event

Good evening. Thank you Robert and Laura for asking me to speak. I am very honored to be here. My name is Joshua Samuels and I am the rabbi at Congregation Beth Israel.

I was asked recently why Beth Israel likes to make a difference with Interfaith Coalition. The answer is simple. We are obligated to engage in acts of righteousness and justice. This is what our community is about. This is the focus of Reform Jewish belief and practice. We find this in our daily liturgy and we hear this call to help others from our prophets, such as Isaiah, who teaches that more important than being a pious individual is clothing someone who is naked and not hiding from our fellow human beings in their time of need.

Beth Israel is proud to be a member of Interfaith Coalition, working with over 40 other faith communities, doing work that is no less than divine. Together we assist many individuals and families. Sometimes the task seems daunting. While we pray that one day our services will not be needed, we live in the present and heed the words from the

sages who said, “You are not required to complete the task, but neither are you free to desist from it” (Pirke Avot 2:21).

I would like to offer a closing blessing this evening:

Dear God, we are grateful that our community is committed to compassion, to goodness, to caring for those who are frightened, who are hungry, who are bewildered and lost, who are ill, who seek shelter from the cold. Ours is a holy charge.

‘Rachmana,’ merciful and compassionate God. May we be guided by your wisdom, and may we truly act as individuals created in the image of God. May we become more understanding of the needs of others. May we be uplifted by those we heal and those we provide shelter for. May we give each other strength.

Adonai ahava, God of love, continue to spread over us and over everyone in our greater community, your shelter of peace. Amen