

It is a pleasure to join the Young Israel of New Rochelle community in celebrating our 56th Annual Dinner. The Gematria value of 56 corresponds to the Hebrew word “וכל”, which means “and all.” Our collective celebration at our Shul’s dinner is truly a celebration of “and all,” celebrating ALL the amazing individual programs, events, and most importantly all the people that make our Shul such a wonderful place. Our dinner is a celebration of every Tefilah prayed at 1149 and 1228 (and even in between). It is a celebration of all the hours of Torah studied. It is a celebration of all the moments of Chessed that are extended from one Shul member to another on a daily basis. What makes our community so special is the “and all” mindset of how each individual family contributes to create the cohesive unit that is the YINR community, united in continuing to create the Kiddush Hashem and Shem Tov that this community has done for decades. May Hashem continue to shower us with His blessing as we continue to be the warm and special Shul we all know and love.

Mazel Tov to Dana and Yudi Fishkin, our dear guests of honor. Mazel Tov to the entire city of Chicago who join us in celebrating this amazing couple who are so proud of their Chi-town roots. Dana and Yudi have definitely stepped into the role of becoming Builders and Pillars of our YINR community. They have served in so many roles in their communal service with each one lending their area of expertise in such a giving way. Dana’s current focus is on our communal intellect, and how we can all be advanced by hearing new ideas and fresh perspectives on the world. Dana has also shared her thoughts and ideas as a valued member of numerous committees in the Shul. Yudi helps keep the lights on, literally. He is involved in every building related matter, and shares his experience and connections to help the Shul grow and prosper. Yael and I both appreciate their guidance, feedback, assistance, and friendship. Dana and Yudi are also terrific parents to their children, and they are models for the community in following the advice of Shlomo Hamelech, to educate a child according to the child’s own way. May Hashem continue to bless this special couple with health and happiness, with many more years of contribution to our community, and of course with lots of nachat from their amazing children, Reuven, Sydney, Coby, Gabriel, and Liam.

Mazel tov to Deena and Rafi Zlotnick, our Community Leadership Awardees. Deena and Rafi are truly the prime example of a community minded couple. They both respond with such immediacy and enthusiasm to any communal need that comes their way. Deena, in her role as Co-Youth-Chair, has worked tirelessly to help ensure our children (and our adults) have a great experience in Shul. She is also a celebrated educator, both formal and informal, and she has developed a reputation of someone who gets things done, and gets them done well. Rafi and I have a personal connection that takes us back to Yeshivat Shaalvim. Rafi was a year ahead of me, and was always a role model for being a ben Torah and a Mentch. It is so nice that we have been able to reconnect here in New Rochelle. With Rafi as one of our Gabbaim, I know we are in good hands. Each time I reach out to him with a Gabbai related matter he handles it so quickly and with the utmost sensitivity. It will be amazing to see the many contributions that the Zlotnicks will B’ezrat Hashem make to our community in the years ahead. Yael and I thank them for their friendship, and all that they have done for us and the Shul. May Hashem bless Deena and Rafi with health and happiness, with many more years of contribution to our community, and of course with lots of nachat from their wonderful children, Kira, Ellie, and Jonathan.

It has now been six and a half years since my family and I joined the YINR community. The annual Dinner is a perfect occasion to offer thanks for allowing my family to become part of yours. I thank Rabbi and Rebbetzin Fink for continuing to enable our collaborative efforts to enhance the Shul, as well as providing mentoring and guidance with a sincere care for our well-being. I thank Andrew Wurzburger and David Blumenthal, as well as the members of the Executive Board and Board of Trustees, for their constant support and guidance. I thank Amy and Isio for doing all the heavy lifting in the office, and for smoothly managing the day to day activities of the Shul. I thank the members of the YINR family for continuing to open up your Shul and community to me and my family. The entire Axelrod family is so excited to continue to work for this Shul in the years ahead. I thank Hashem for giving me the opportunity to be part of a wonderful congregation, and for allowing me to help play a role in furthering the success of the New Rochelle Jewish community.

I look forward to celebrating with you all at the Dinner!

Chaim Axelrod