



**BETH JACOB**  
CONGREGATION OF IRVINE

B"H

August 11, 2011

Dear Friends,

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Yisroel Ciner

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It is truly an honor for me to welcome you as members of the Beth Jacob Family as we enter our historic 25<sup>th</sup> year. This is a very exciting time for our community as we are expanding and developing in many directions. The common thread is our laying the groundwork of strengthening and building our wonderful community. Our fervent hope and tfilah/prayer is that you (and your family) will gain Jewish inspiration, knowledge, friendship, camaraderie and *community*.

The great sage, Hillel, was famously approached by an individual who wanted the entire Torah taught to him as he stood on one foot. Shamai had already summarily dismissed him and his request, but Hillel welcomed him, teaching that what one does not want done to oneself, one shouldn't do to others. As this person, I imagine, settled more steadily and comfortably on both feet, Hillel explained that the rest of the Torah is simply explanations of that rule.

It was individuals such as these who joined Hillel's community and academy where the level of scholarship and erudition was such that the halachic ruling was almost always in accordance with Hillel's opinion. We can only imagine what the expansive breadth and inclusivity of Hillel's community must have been.

Hillel's maxim in Pirkei Avot, Ethics of the Fathers, was: Don't separate, join the community! There's something there for everyone. We connect our individual selves into the communal dynamic of generations upon generations of Jewish teachings, prayers, aspirations, successes, challenges and destiny. The Talmud teaches that those who make themselves a part of the community, with all the challenges that are involved, will ultimately share in the communal and national joy and redemption.

I have had the privilege of serving as Rabbi of Beth Jacob these past three years and the perspective to contrast them with years in Israel and on the East Coast. We have a very special and unique synagogue and community. Our widely diverse members are warmly embraced with the respect and appreciation that is extended to each and every individual. Therein lies our strength and the key to the amazing growth we've experienced. All who have just 'stopped in' for a minyan or class have been touched by the warm welcome that envelopes them.

We are at a breathtaking stage of growth and vitality. We offer the only three-times-daily minyan in Orange County, full Shabbat Ashkenas and Sephardic services, joyous T'filah, relevant drashot, Kiddushes, the elegant Irvine Community Mikveh, the Beth Jacob Irvine Eruv, full youth programming including our newly opening Olam Jewish Montessori of Beth Jacob, NCSY, an array of classes ranging from Daf Yomi and Talmud to Judaism 101 and Crash Course in Basic Judaism, classes in writing and speaking Hebrew, and, of course, full pastoral services.

We are a community that faithfully and respectfully draws from and builds upon our past as we energetically and eagerly catapult into the future. We welcome you as an active and integral partner in our journey! On a personal level, I look forward to getting to know you even better and I thank you for the partnership.

Warmest regards,  
**Yisroel Ciner**  
Rabbi Yisroel Ciner