

Dear Community Members,

I hope this message finds you all healthy and safe.

Over my twenty year career as a rabbi, I have never felt as much at home as I do in the Mashadi community. The warmth, respect and unfailing support I have received from everyone here has been incredible. In addition, my role with UMJCA has allowed me the rare opportunity to learn so much from outstanding and experienced leaders, including our revered Chief Rabbi HaRav Ben Haim, Morenu VeRabbenu Harav Bassalian, my fellow community rabbis, and the dedicated members of our Central and synagogue boards. I have been impressed and inspired by their wisdom, devotion to others, broad vision, and unshakeable integrity, and seeing this has further deepened my pride in my own Mashadi heritage.

Our community is truly one of a kind. In fact, it is much more than a community - it is a family in every sense of the word, a family that it has been my honor and privilege to be a part of, and to serve, for the last seven years.

There is only one place on Earth that could possibly feel more like "home" to me than here in the Mashadi community, and that is Eretz Yisrael. For decades, my wife and I have dreamed of following in the footsteps of Avraham Avinu and Sarah Imenu and relocating to the Land of Israel. So it is with bittersweet and mixed emotion that I share with you our plan to make Aliyah to Israel this summer.

I write this with sadness, as it is never easy to leave people and places you have grown to cherish. I know that I will miss each of you dearly and that I will look back at these years as the highlight of my career. I have loved every minute of my time in Great Neck and would not trade it for the world. At the same time, I now look forward with excitement to the next stage of my journey, a transition that is of great personal and spiritual significance to me.

One of the blessings of being Mashadi is the knowledge that our bond with one another transcends the limits of space and time. Although my family will be living across the ocean in the Holy Land, we will always see ourselves as part of the extended Mashadi family. I hope to continue offering classes and shiurim online for the benefit of community members, and to be available to serve UMJCA from afar, in whatever capacity I am able, whenever I am needed. Our connection may look and feel a little bit different, but it will not end.

My experiences and the relationships I have formed in the Mashadi Community have enriched and shaped me in ways I never could have imagined. I would not be the person or the rabbi that I am today without you. Please accept my sincere gratitude for all that I have gained here and forgive me for any errors I have made. I will forever be indebted to all of you, especially to the amazing leaders of UMJCA and its affiliated boards, for your kindness and generosity.

Of course, I would be remiss if I did not conclude with a prayer that we should all, speedily and in our days, be witness to the Final Redemption and be reunited in the Land of Israel and in the Holy City of Jerusalem.

On behalf of myself, my wife Elana, and my children Netanel, Zehara, Yedidya, Zerachya, Tiferet, and Amira, I wish you a happy and healthy Pesah and a year filled with every blessing. May we merit to share many future semahot and celebrations together.

Warmest Regards,

Joshua Maroof