

SANCTUARY ARTWORK



IN MEMORY OF RABBI PETER AND ELAINE KNOBEL

The artwork on our Sanctuary wall is in memory of Rabbi Peter S. Knobel and his wife, Elaine, for their decades of loving and dedicated service to our Beth Emet community and the Jewish world. It was designed by Judaic artist and architect Amy Reichert. The artwork is a tribute to the legacy of the Knobels and the values they exemplified in their lives.

The sculpture is based on the form of a tent, the desert home of our ancestors Abraham and Sarah. Their tent had open sides, welcoming to all, a perfect expression of their hospitality. The motifs on each tent reflect the Torah text's elements that describe their interactions with others. Some have stars that remind us of God's promise to Abraham and Sarah that their off spring would be as numerous as the stars in the heavens (Genesis 15:5). Other tents have tree leaves representing the oaks of Mamre (Genesis 18:1), where God visited Abraham right before the wayfarers arrived to announce the birth of Isaac. The reflective silver of some of the tents reminds us of the invitation of refreshment offered by Abraham and Sarah to their guests.

There are five Hebrew quotes scattered throughout the artwork that speak to Rabbi Knobel and Elaine's qualities, values, and leadership:

Hachnasat Orchim – gracious hospitality

Tzadik Ka'Tamar – the righteous shall flourish like a date palm (Psalms 92:12)

Chesed V'Emet – love and truth (Exodus 47:29)

K'doshim T'hiyu – you shall be holy (Leviticus 19:2)

V'heyeh Bracha – you shall be a blessing (Genesis 12:2).

Hachnasat Orchim, Gracious hospitality - Rabbi Knobel and Elaine's home was open to the congregation. They hosted many events where good food was served, and wine flowed freely. Elaine was a superb cook, including making the most amazing cheesecake, and Rabbi Knobel was an oenophile par excellence. They also made Beth Emet a warm and welcoming place with their openness of spirit and insistence that everyone who came to Beth Emet should feel like family. The Rabbi Peter and Elaine Knobel Soup Kitchen at Beth Emet was named in their memory because it exemplifies what they valued—generosity, compassion, good food, and inclusivity.

Tzadik Ka'Tamar, The righteous shall flourish like a date palm - is from the Friday night Kabbalat Shabbat liturgy and was a favorite psalm of Rabbi Knobel. When he retired from Beth Emet, the congregation commissioned a new setting of this psalm by the famed Israeli composer, Shulamit Ran. Rabbi Knobel was a Tzadik (a righteous person) because he was honest, upright, and a pursuer of justice.

Chesed V'Emet, Love and truth - is how we should act towards the deceased. We learn this value from our forebear, Jacob, who, at the end of his life, asks Joseph to treat him with love and truth after he dies. An important contribution that Rabbi Knobel made to our community was to help found the Progressive Chevreh Kaddisha—a consortium of liberal Jewish synagogues and minyans that prepare the dead for burial by providing a Taharah—a ritual preparation of the deceased that shows our love and respect for one who has died.

K'doshim T'hiyu, You shall be holy - is enjoined upon the people of Israel as they make their way through the wilderness to the Land of Israel. The Torah portion, Kedoshim, in which this expression appears, exhorts the Israelites to acts of holiness through their moral and ritual actions, teaching us how to achieve the supreme value of loving our neighbors as ourselves.

V'heyeh Bracha, You shall be a blessing - is the purpose for which God sends Abraham on his journey to found the Jewish people. Rabbi Peter and Elaine Knobel exemplified in word and deed how to live blessed lives. Our community is forever grateful for the many blessings they bestowed upon our congregation and the enduring legacy of kindness, righteousness, and graciousness that they bequeathed to us.

DEDICATION BLESSING FOR SANCTUARY ARTWORK

IN MEMORY OF RABBI PETER AND ELAINE KNOBEL

On the dawn of a new year, we reflect on the year that has passed and pray for another year of growth and good health. On this S'lichot, we look back not just on the year that is ending, but to the history of our congregation and on whose shoulders we stand.

Tonight, we express our appreciation for Rabbi Peter and Elaine Knobel and the many years they lovingly served our community with distinction. In reverence, we memorialize the impact they had on our congregation—how they held us when we struggled and were in need of solace, fed our souls and our bodies when we were depleted, and made us laugh and enriched our celebrations. This artwork is a reminder of all that was good and true in their character and how much they loved each other and the Beth Emet community they called family.

We pray that we might be worthy bearers of the Knobels' legacy by pursuing justice and right, striving to lead lives of holiness, and treating everyone with dignity and respect. May love, truth, and generosity infuse our lives and guide our actions.

In joy and gratitude, we dedicate this artwork to their memory. May their legacy long endure and continue to bless our congregation.

