



September 16, 2020

Shalom uvrakha.

Gilda and I are delighted to join the Ezra Bessaroth community in celebrating the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of Hazzan Isaac Azose.

We all know Ike as a good friend, a fine human being, and an extraordinary hazzan. He has brought much inspiration and joy to all of us who have been privileged to hear him chant the synagogue services. But it's not just his beautiful voice and not just his accurate rendition of the prayers. He brings his heart and soul into his hazzanut.

S. Y. Agnon, the Israeli author who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1966, writes of a prayer leader whose hazzanut gave "a real taste of prayer." He had a pleasant voice, but "it wasn't a voice we heard; it was prayer." That description applies to Ike. We hear his melodious voice...but we experience more: we hear prayer, a yearning for the Almighty, a sense of transcendence. Through his hazzanut, he links us with the past generations; he brings us together now as a community; and he links us with the generations yet to come.

Ike's ancestor, Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon (Ha-Rambam), codified in his Laws of Prayer the following rules: "None should be appointed as Reader to the Congregation unless he is reputed for his knowledge and exemplary conduct. If he is an old man, all the better." Ike is certainly reputed for his knowledge and exemplary conduct. Now that he has reached the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday milestone, all the better! Munchos anyos y buenos!!

We thank you, Ike, for your many years of friendship, loyalty and inspiration. May the Almighty bless you with added years of good health and happiness, together with your family.

With best wishes,

Rabbi Marc D. Angel