

Congregation B'nai Israel

TEMPLE TOPICS



April 2006

3 Nisan – 2 Iyar, 5766

My Dear Fellow Congregants,

We are, if nothing else, an opinionated people. While we might sometimes defer to our physicians, we do not hesitate in questioning what they are doing and why. Perhaps this comes from a long tradition of questioning G-D. Is there any other religion that allows, almost encourages, its members to question the decisions of the Almighty? Sometimes, we even try to second guess Adonai and so it comes as no surprise that we sometimes try to second guess our Rabbi.

In my short tenure as your President, I've come to realize that the Rabbi has the toughest job of anyone. As Reform Jews, we think we have the right to determine which rules we will follow and which we will not. We have become so egalitarian that our Rabbi is sometimes an after-thought. There are those who think it is acceptable to ignore our Rabbi's decisions. If we were an Orthodox shul, or even a Conservative shul, as we were for 95 years, I doubt that congregants would question, let alone confront, the Rabbi's decisions.

Rabbi Liebowitz is our RABBI. He's not the hired help. He is our spiritual leader and (my opinion and many others . . . And quoting George W. Bush) he's doing a heck of a job. That said, he has earned our support. If we have concerns, we have the obligation to discuss those concerns with him and after we have weighed , the pros and cons of a situation we should respect him and his position, support him, in spite of individual differences, and move on as a congregation. I have learned that Rabbi Liebowitz will listen to all. It is time that we listen to him too.

He has enlivened our services, led our educational programs and been our spiritual advisor in superb fashion. Further, he represents our Jewish community everywhere. In March, he gave the benediction at the Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting. In a town overwhelmingly Baptist, that speaks volumes. We are respected in our community, in part because of Rabbi Liebowitz's outreach and commitment. His newspaper articles are well read and appreciated. We may comprise less than one percent of the total population of the community but our impact is far greater than our numbers. . . in part thanks to our Rabbi. It is time that we recognize his commitment and his abilities and give him the respect he has so justly earned and deserves.

Enough of this soapbox. Our Purim Carnival was a great success. Thanks to all who worked tirelessly in the kitchen, cooking hundreds and hundreds of pancakes and making the festival as warm as it was welcoming. We had more children in attendance that we have seen before and their parents and friends had just as much fun.

I look forward to hearing from each of you, to learning your thoughts and to working with you on making our Temple an even more productive, exciting spiritual center in our lives and in our community.

Wishing you Shalom, I remain

Sincerely yours,

**Barry Nickelsberg,
President**

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