

# Congregation B'nai Israel

## TEMPLE TOPICS



February 2006      3 Shevat – 30 Shevat, 5766

My Dear Fellow Congregants,

Twenty-six minutes. Larry Abelkop smiled, exclaimed, “It’s a new world record,” then bolted from the room. Our Rabbi sat stunned and finally said, “I’m trying to take in what just happened.” Michael Yoffe patted me on the back and said, “Good job.” Yes, the first meeting of the Board of Directors under my presidency, on January 16, lasted exactly 26 minutes. Yes, with two more board members, we would have had a quorum and would have taken votes and that might have pushed the meeting to 30 minutes but we turned a corner on squeezing 30 minutes worth of discussion into three hours. I’m thinking of challenging other congregations to have monthly board meetings in less time. Actually, my goal is to get done in one hour so our first meeting even beat my expectations. And so, for those of you who are not on the Board because of long meetings, you are invited back.

Sometimes, changes happen overnight. Sometimes, changes happen over time. One change that is evolving within our synagogue and many other Reform temples throughout the United States is a move toward a more traditional service. Gone are the days when Reform shuls shunned the wearing of yalmukas, all but avoided the use of Hebrew and the wearing of the tallis was something even the Rabbi didn’t do. Our Temple has developed a wonderful mix of tradition and “modern.” No, we are not on the leading edge of a movement, we are right in line with other Reform temples. On Friday evenings, Saturday mornings, on Holidays and during special services, we can enjoy the beauty of prayers and songs recited by our ancestors and, happily, pass those same prayers and songs along to our children and to our grandchildren.

How do I know its working? On Friday night, January 13, the rain began to fall about 6:30pm. Soon, it was torrential. Even our Rabbi had to pull his car to the side of the road because he couldn’t see enough to drive safely. We wondered if we would have a minyan. Twenty-six people showed up for the service. That number keeps coming up. We should find out what it means. On Friday night, January 20, we had 47 guests. Amazingly, 100 of our own members showed up for the same service! It reminded me of the High Holy Days.

Our education program is more active than it has been in years. We have 42 children in our Sunday/Wednesday school and our adult education program has 24 adults who come “religiously.” On Tuesday evening, January 17, we set another record with 31 people attending our Adult Ed Program. Not since our Rabbi had a pulpit in San Francisco has he had such a response. Is it the charming personality of Rabbi Liebowitz or are we meeting the spiritual needs of our members in a welcoming and inviting environment? The Rabbi’s “Brown Bag Lunches” are stimulating and thought-provoking and our social hall is often filled with programs for our members and friends. Our membership has increased from 117 to 125 in just the past two months and more members are joining regularly. We have an active, vibrant Temple in a community where Jews make up less than 1% of the population.

We could not have any Temple if it were not for the dedication of so many volunteers. Each month, I would like to recognize someone who is making a big difference in the life and success of our synagogue. Although I mentioned Larry Abelkop a bit light-heartedly in the first sentence of this letter, Larry deserves special thanks from all of us. He has taken on the role of Treasurer, a thankless task, for the past five years and has done so without complaining or expecting anything in return. During the Board meeting on January 16, Laura Knight, our vice president, presented Larry with a gift certificate for a one-hour neck massage because his job as Treasurer "Has been such a pain the neck." Yes, Larry has done a great job and yes, he and the rest of us can and do have fun.

You are welcome to join in the fun anytime and call me with your ideas and suggestions.

Until next time.

**B'Shalom,  
Barry**

**February 2006  
[www.ourtemple.us](http://www.ourtemple.us)**