

Presidential Matters

by Steve Aronowitz



I know I continually talk about how things have changed in the past three years, how our synagogue has been re-energized, how there really is something for everyone at Oakland – Little Neck. I’m a good example of how one can benefit from embracing change. For the first 50 years of my life, I was not a regular at shul; High Holidays – yes; occasional Shabbat service – perhaps; social event – never!

I’m not sure why I initially started coming to services more regularly. Like many others, I came and began to feel at home in my faith and with our people. Is the synagogue a second home? After all, we do come to shul in some of the most important moments in our lives. We don’t live here as we do in our homes. We don’t come here the way we do to our office or a club. But it is at the synagogue where we find our identity as Jews. I make that connection every Shabbat. Many of us understand the connection when we look to the synagogue in a time of crisis. And we know that when we are in need of a synagogue, of a congregation, our shul is here seven days a week, 52 weeks a year.

One of the richest moments I have experienced at the synagogue is when someone I haven’t met comes for a service. Maybe it’s a person from out of town; perhaps it’s an individual from a nearby synagogue just checking us out, and once in a while, it’s someone unaffiliated. I feel very good welcoming people to Oakland – Little Neck.

Some come to temple to feel the presence of the Jewish community. Some come to heal human relationships, past and present. Some hope to find answers to our most troubling questions. Whatever the purpose, it’s better to share our joy with one another, to give thanks for our good fortune, to be with each other in times of crisis. In those instances, the synagogue has become a second home.

What has surprised me is the number attending a regular Shabbat service; when there is no Bar or Bat Mitzvah, Auf Ruf, Baby Naming or Holiday Observance. On each of the past Shabbatot, we’ve had well over 75 people. What a great feeling to be a member of our congregation and see how we have grown – not just by number, but as importantly, by participation and involvement.

When I inquired as to what the draw is, some remarked, “It’s the children. The Rabbi involves kids in the service. They bring their parents! It works.” Others countered, “It’s the Cantor. He gets everyone singing. One can tell how much he enjoys the service and how he enjoys seeing others joining in.” Perhaps best of all, it is the kids who may just have found that *second home*. Consider these comments: “It’s good coming to temple. It’s not boring. I like going up and leading everyone. It’s fun!”

What does this mean? Let me ask you: Try to think back to when you were 5, 6, 8, 10 years old. Are those the memories you have of your visits to temple?