

Message from Cantor Shron



Reason #1249 Why I Love Shabbat: The Walk to Shul

Since I was a child, I've been walking to my synagogue almost every Shabbat.

Growing up, I usually walked with my father. Though the walk was not very long, about 6 blocks, it gave us a chance to talk about everything...from how I was doing in school, to – later on – discussions about girls. In the summer we'd kvetch about the cicadas disrupting the peace of a quiet Saturday morning in Teaneck, New Jersey...and in the winter, well, he'd usually find a way to playfully push me in the snow before the walk was over. These days, when I visit my parents in Kansas City, my father and I still enjoy walking to his synagogue together, usually accompanied by the rest of the family for the leisurely stroll home.

Today I'm proud to continue the tradition with my own children. While it's not always easy to round up all five kids before heading out the door on Shabbat morning, at least a few of us will usually walk together. I've pushed all of them in a stroller over the years, but these days, even four-year-old Tobey would rather walk on his own. No smartphones, no TV, no radio...just US. Do we fill every minute of the walk with meaningful discussion or fun? Of course not. But our weekly walks offer us some precious moments to chat, vent, laugh, plan or play, and I value every moment. I sincerely believe that our Shabbat walks have made us closer as a family.

Even when I'm walking to shul by myself, the time is precious. It offers a chance to exercise a bit, to enjoy nature, to be alone with my thoughts on a beautiful (or sometimes not-so-beautiful) day. I've written songs, planned out speeches, thought about the direction of my life, deliberated difficult decisions, and let off steam during this time. I take in the sights and sounds, get my blood pumping a bit, and just enjoy a few private, distraction-free moments.

At home, five kids can take a toll on the eardrums. In the car, I'm the kind of guy who never goes anywhere without the radio on. So outside on Shabbat, the serenity is a nice change of pace.

Is it always easy? Not at all. I've walked in thunderstorms and snowstorms, trudged on through high wind and rain, nearly fainted from excessive heat, been soaked from head to toe from an unexpected downpour, arrived with muddy shoes (and pants!), nearly been hit by a car, and slipped on icy sidewalks plenty of times along the way. And as we nervously await the fury of Old Man Winter, I dread what obstacles may be in store over the next few chilly months. But more often than not, it seems that weather is on my side, and my family and I usually enjoy the experience quite a bit.

I encourage you to give it a shot. If you live close enough, consider walking to services on a Friday night or Shabbat morning. If not, try parking a few blocks away and walking the rest of the distance. Or just take some time on Shabbat to go for a walk with your spouse, your children or grandchildren, your friends or just by yourself. Leave your earphones at home! I think you'll agree that it's time well-spent.

I do have an ulterior motive in choosing to share this with you this month. You see, since my family's home base is in New Jersey, being in Little Neck for Shabbat and holidays has always been a bit of a challenge. When I first joined our congregational family in 2009, not willing to drive on Shabbat, I faced the challenge of finding accommodations for myself and my family within walking distance of the synagogue. Fortunately, I managed to locate a small basement apartment on 57th Avenue in Little Neck, about three-quarters of a mile from the synagogue. A bit of a schlep, a bit crowded at times...but for the most part, it's worked. Until now.

My landlord is selling her home, and the new owners feel a bit uneasy (understandably so) about renting out their basement. So I'm now on the prowl for a new "vacation home" in the neighborhood. If you know of a space that's close to the synagogue AND inexpensive (remember, I still have a mortgage to pay in New Jersey!), please let me know (cantor@olnjc.org) as soon as possible.

And if you live nearby, I hope you'll join me for a leisurely walk to shul sometime!

Conversations with the Cantor

January 16 & 30 at 9pm (9th & 10th Graders)

January 9 & 23 at 8pm (11th & 12th Graders)