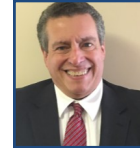


## Presidential Matters

by Mitchell Stein



### Being Jewish is Great!

During the High Holidays a question was asked: What is so great about being Jewish? It is a question that I have never thought about before. I wanted to take some time to think about the impact that Judaism has had on me.

Being Jewish has always been an important part of my identity. Upon meeting someone new, I identify myself as a White Jewish Male. It should be apparent to most that my skin color is white and that my gender is male. However, I include being Jewish along with those obvious traits in my initial description of myself.

One of the reasons I believe that being Jewish is great is because of the celebrations and our holiday traditions with family, friends and community. The Passover Seder that once seemed endless, now seems to be lively and entertaining. As a child, opening eight gift-wrapped presents every night in celebration of Chanukah was wonderful. Watching our children open their gifts every night was even more meaningful to me. Marching with a flag and eating an apple at Simchat Torah was enjoyable as a child. Adding to that feeling by dancing in the streets and carrying our Torah now fills me with an amazing sense of pride.

The greatest connection to Judaism I had occurred over 32 years ago. Words cannot explain the elation I felt standing underneath our traditional Wedding Chuppah. Briefly looking around, I saw my immediate family and my closest friends. I also saw my bride and her immediate family and her closest friends. It was a heartfelt moment knowing that by reciting our vows under the Chuppah, we were carrying on a tradition that started hundreds, if not thousands of years ago.

In addition to our traditions, being Jewish is great because of our cuisine. My grandmother's home-made gefilte fish, my mother's brisket and any Kosher Deli's pastrami are tastes that cannot be beat. In addition, I have never tasted a matzah ball soup that was not perfect. Through the years, I have also become somewhat of a bagel expert.

Of course, I cannot forget the feeling I get every time I walk into our synagogue to participate in a religious service, social event or even attend a meeting. Conversing and enjoying time with my congregational family is over whelming.

Being Jewish is having pride in our long and often times difficult past, seeing how we are impacting and improving today's world and knowing that we are shaping the world for a better tomorrow. Being Jewish is great because of the endless possibilities we have for an exciting future.