

Presidential Matters

by Steve Aronowitz



This may fall under the heading, “If you do something enough times (13 times to be specific), you stand a chance to finally get it right!”

I was flattered to be asked by more than a few congregants (family members and close friends not included) to reprint my speech presented on Yom Kippur. Rather than subjecting anyone to so much of me, I have chosen to share what I consider to be selected highlights:

“This morning, I’d like to speak with you about a concern I have and I believe you share. I am very worried about the strength and the presence of our Jewish community. This is not solely a L’Dor V’Dor issue; that would be easier to correct.

“You know it. We’ve talked about it. The demographics in this area show little promise for growth. Some will disagree. However, there is a difference in speaking from one’s heart rather than one’s head.

“Today, we have a higher calling. As many of you know we are considering another consolidation. We are at the very start of this long and complex process. Mitchell (co president, Mitchell) and I have met with representatives of two synagogues. These were introductory meetings. We are open to all possibilities. In spite of rumors to the contrary, we are just now approaching Step 1.

“This morning, I break from the theme I’ve followed in previous years. I have never stood before you asking for your contributions financially. We have always believed in preserving the sanctity of the holidays.

“Beyond our street address, I am concerned about the Jewish community wherever it is housed. You know that so many of the synagogues that were thriving just a few years ago are in the process of closing. That presents a crisis for all of us.

“Our response must be to contribute financially. By making a contribution to Congregation L’Dor V’Dor, you are saying, “Yes, Yes, Yes!!!” to our synagogue and our future in this community. Now is the time to reinforce our presence.

“If I were a marketer, I’d tell you about this great product we have to offer. It can’t be beat. Please know, however, that membership at a synagogue is not like membership at a country club. It is not goods for services. We join a synagogue because we believe in supporting Jewish institutions and promoting Jewish values. We join a synagogue because we care about the future of Judaism in our community. We understand that many may decide not to come to the synagogue much during the course of the year. However, despite that lack of attendance, it is membership that truly supports the institution. Perhaps there will come a time when you may need the synagogue. Perhaps not this year, but the next.

“Expand that horizon and look at it as membership in what I am calling the Jewish community. So, why make the choice to belong to a Jewish community? Why? I think it is because we are looking for a place that is welcoming, a place where we can build intimate relationships, a place where we are supportive of each other, a place that addresses profound spiritual yearnings, and a place where we can connect with Jewish tradition. We are looking for a place to call home, a community. I believe L’Dor V’Dor, whether it is here or a few blocks away combined with another Jewish center or perhaps two synagogues can become that place. A congregation is a place where people come together, where they congregate; a community is much more than that. It certainly has that – pre-requisites, if you will, but it is, perhaps even more importantly, a network of support and relationships. When we become part of the community, we become part of something much larger than ourselves.

That concept of community is best exemplified in programming. Each year, our congregation participates with other Jewish centers across the country in the Operation Isaiah, a massive food drive to provide products for those less fortunate. It’s a community event, hundreds of synagogues coming together. I know many of you were at synagogue a few weeks ago. This article gives me another opportunity to applaud the efforts of Rabbi Yaffe and Cantor Shron who practice the doctrine of community every day. It also provides the space for me to extend our collective best wishes to Edwin, Audi Acevedo’s son, who is making great progress recovering from surgery in Philadelphia.

“On behalf of my wife, Julie, and our son, Jordan, may you be inscribed in the Book of Life for a good year, a year of good health, happiness, and laughter.