Sophia Milner-Gorvine

"If you think you know what you will find, then you will find nothing. If you expect nothing, then you will always be surprised.” Rabbi Lawrence Kushner

I see the biggest value in Judaism as education, asking questions, and pushing boundaries. It is thanks to my Judaism that I am so prone to being intellectually and socially curious. I have always thrived in situations where I am challenged. I flourish in places where I can engage in discussions or activities that allow me to see or understand a situation from a new perspective.

It is not until recently that I have begun to seriously question my Jewishness. From mezuzahs on every door frame, to High Holiday services and weekly Sunday school, Judaism has been a constant in my life.

I honestly dreaded going to Sunday school. The content never interested me, and I was constantly questioning religion. Despite this, for the past four years, I have been a *madricha* for the kindergarten and first grade classes at Beth Emet. I hope to teach these young minds the beautiful aspects of Judaism that I was taught to love. Values such as, welcoming strangers and taking care of one’s community and environment are crucial to the Jewish faith. Those are aspects of Judaism that I cherish and carry with me.

Beth Emet has taught me more than just about Judaism. It taught me about social justice. It has taught me about acceptance. And it has given me a community that I can trust and always fall back on.

Beth Emet is a unique synagogue. We learn and we discuss things that most synagogues wouldn’t. Beit Sefer wasn’t just about learning Hebrew and ancient Jewish history. It was also about introspection and making room for us to discover our own beliefs. We weren’t constrained to one belief or value system.

A few weeks ago at our final KT class. We had the chance to just sit and ask Rabbi London questions about her own beliefs and experiences. We talked about G-D and the afterlife and her experience being a woman in the rabbinical community. During this class, I realized that Beth Emet would not be the place I value without Rabbi London. She is the reason I feel comfortable enough to interrogate Judaism and my beliefs. During our classes and throughout my whole life Rabbi London has always fostered an environment where we could raise challenging questions without judgment.

I am able to find my own Jewish identity and path BECAUSE I feel accepted in the Jewish and more particularly the Beth Emet community.