

## What's Happening...thoughts from the Congregation Manager

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One wouldn't think that spending a week in Cincinnati in the heart of the summer would be considered an exciting adventure.

However, several years ago, that is exactly what I did, participating in the Para-Rabbinic Fellows Program at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. You could ask, why would the Temple's Congregation Manager (then the Executive Director of

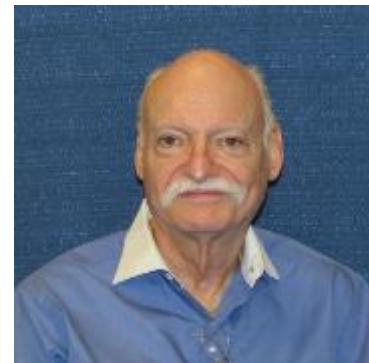
Temple Beth El in Boca Raton) attend? Well, I'll tell you. Growing up in Brooklyn in an Orthodox Jewish home, the direction of my life was set!! It was planned that I would attend Yeshiva High School and University and become an ordained rabbi. Fate had other plans for me. There is a *Yiddish* expression...*mensch tract und Gut lacht*, loosely translated as "people try and plan their lives and God sits up in Heaven and laughs, understanding that it's good for people to plan ahead, but what God has in store, written in the Book of Life, will actually happen. My father passed away when I was 10 ½, and changed my life, but not my desire.

In 1989, I jumped at the opportunity to move from private industry into Jewish Communal service, when I joined the Jewish Community Relations Council of NY and the NY Coalition for Soviet Jewry as their Chief Financial Officer. That road eventually led my family and me to South Florida, and subsequently back to New Jersey. What the additional knowledge obtained at HUC-JIR enables me to better understand the role of our clergy in the performance of their duties here at Temple Har Shalom. As a Congregant, many of you are unaware of the time, effort and commitment undertaken by both Rabbi Musnitsky and Canter Berman in providing the plethora of services day in and day out. As a member of the staff, I want to express my appreciation and heartfelt thanks to both of them by saying "*Yasher Koach*".

With *Rosh Hashanah* coming in a few weeks, it is a good time to think about some of its important lessons. The High Holy Days are a time to evaluate our relationship with important people in our lives. We ask their forgiveness, they ask ours, and if there is regret for past faults and insensitive acts (tradition calls them sins), we lend forgiveness to others, and they to us. **If I have offended anyone in our Temple family, I ask their forgiveness and forgive those who ask my forgiveness.**

*Rosh Hashanah* is also a time to think about our relation with our Tradition, with Judaism. It is the Jewish New Year, and a time to reexamine where we stand with regard to the faith/culture/civilization we call Judaism. Those reading this column have already taken significant steps toward solidifying their Jewish connections by joining a *synagogue*, coming to religious worship, and doing many other Jewish things in their lives. Take a few moments—even a few hours to think about, and to discuss your Jewish values and priorities with your loved ones and intellectual sparring partners. How can you deepen and strengthen your Jewish ties and commitments in the coming year?

Perhaps that is why we are bidden to hear the sound of the *Shofar*. Why do we use the horn of a ram on *Rosh Hashanah*? The *Talmud* tells us that God is saying to us that if we blow a horn from a ram, that God will be reminded of the act of ultimate faith performed by Abraham when he was ready to carry out his demand, even though a ram was eventually sacrificed in place of Isaac. The merit of Abraham will reflect merit on us, his descendants. In fact, when we blow the



*Shofar*, God will remember the Binding of Isaac and will attribute to us, the merit of having bound ourselves to God.

It is time to think about how we bind ourselves to God, about our Jewish boundaries, the ties that bind us to our Jewish past. Let's think of how our ritual lives can be enriched and enhanced with more song, custom, prayer and ceremony. Let's think of how we can share ourselves with more Jewish causes (Israel, Jewish education, our Temple), and how being Jewish can help bind and tie us to the needs of humanity (the environment, the needs of our community, the eradication of poverty, hunger, and injustice).

Eileen, Joshua and I wish each and every one of you a year of good health, of joy and fulfillment, of the opportunity to perform *mitzvot*, and to bind ourselves to God and the teachings of our *Torah*.

*L'Shanah Tova u'Metukah.*