

President's Perspective. . . What Have We Learned This Year?

It's the end of our school year and almost the end of our program/fiscal year at Anshai Torah. What better way to end the year by reviewing some of the things we have learned! I have noted some of the things that I think I have learned as your president. Actually, I may have known some of these before, but being president for the past year has solidified some of my theories and observations. This may sound familiar to you who attended our annual meeting a few weeks ago, but for those of you who did not, they are worth repeating:

I've learned that we have more dedicated members than I could have imagined. Sometimes we have problems finding the well hidden talent or match talents with volunteer opportunities, but motivated members always seem to appear when something needs to be done.

I've also learned that my strengths do not necessarily include talent recruitment. I'm a little shy in that regard. So I am happy to hear from any of you who want to volunteer in any way.

I've learned that I really enjoy being president of this shul. It has its moments; it's a little time consuming; sometimes I feel like I'm herding cats; but it has been a great experience and I wholeheartedly recommend it to you who might want to do it someday.

I've also learned that a president does not know everything that goes on at the shul and no president will ever know everything as much as we would like.

I've learned that one has to have patience to become president as well as a sense of optimism. As my dear wife of almost 40 years is fond of saying, my track record as an optimist is not well established. But who could not be optimistic with what we have here. I'm not sure I would have had the patience to hold this position 5-10 years ago. While I am reminded constantly that I have not emotionally matured with my age, I think I have become more patient and intellectually mature, and more willing to incorporate as many viewpoints as I can into a decision.

I've also learned that there is always room for humor in what we do and say; but there is always a fine line between humor and stupidity (or nonsense) as I find out every Shabbat when I do announcements.

I've learned that our rabbis are so dedicated and focused on what is best for our shul. Do they get everything right? No, but they get just about everything right. They are not infallible. If you want infallibility, go to Rome. If you want rabbinic leadership, stay here.

I've also learned that as good as we think we have it, we are always creating opportunities. We don't rest on our laurels. We are pressing on with our Strategic Planning process, ramping up new programs and learning initiatives, beautifying our sanctuary, planning a world class playground for our youngest members, and eventually building an education facility that complements our sanctuary.

I learned (or at least confirmed in my own mind) in our adult education class that there is a power (God, if you will) that created the universe – not just this dinky planet -- and that spark of creation is in all of us to do good.

And finally, I've learned that as a community of faith, we must have faith in our leaders – lay and rabbinic – to do what is right. However, "healthy" faith cannot exist without uncertainty. We see in the Middle East what happens when blind faith becomes dogma. We Jews have developed our spiritual and ethnic personality because we have always been uncertain – we have always questioned and argued with God and with each other. Uncertainty keeps us on our toes and it will keep this congregation moving forward into the future.

Have a great summer. See you back here in August.

Howard Rubin