

President's Perspective . . .

A Message about Messages -- The Penultimate Message

July 1 slowly approaches and my term as President of Anshai Torah comes to a close. Probably the most gratifying experience I have had over these two years is writing these columns. They generate the creative juices and sure do beat writing legal briefs and motions. I was going to do a retrospective of some of my greatest hits (and misses), but as I skimmed through them, it occurred to me that a summary of old articles would be boring (ok, I know what you are thinking – “what else is new?”). But seriously, I hope you have been entertained, informed and maybe moved to action to make our shul a better place.

Let's do a very short review. We've discussed money, politics, Conservative Judaism, humorists and comedians, shul governance, parties and galas, Hillel, holidays (don't forget April Fool's Day), optimism, the plight to Jews in Europe, and growing old(er). I've made attempts of humor, recounted some things I learned at our Jewish education sessions, and discussed strategic planning. You even got to see my army of rubber ducks!

But I go back to my original Kol Emet message in August 2014 where we generically discussed the building of a community--constituencies, common experiences, common heritage, giving of time to the community, etc. However this experience as president has brought me to a greater appreciation of what we call the Jewish community.

Recall the community of Israelites whose story we just recounted at our Seders and who we are presently studying as we move through the Torah -- a group bound by the shared experience of slavery, ethnicity and proximity; and developing a system of customs and beliefs. Think back to the European shtetel where peoplehood, religion and geographical proximity were pretty much synonymous. Consider the great migration of Jews to North America where up to the middle 20th century we still had closely knit geographical Jewish communities.

As years went by, we Jews spread out into suburbia. We migrated into other interests. We gradually ceased joining Jewish communal organizations. A new Jewish community morphed from the freedom to assimilate and the tearing down of religious and ethnic walls. So, what is left for us? I submit it is the synagogue – the shul – this shul. Think about it. . . just about everything we do at Anshai Torah is geared to building community. We have our religious practices and customs, but our mission is to create a place for us to socialize as individuals and with other families, learn with each other and, if we choose, develop a deeper spiritual sense.

Whether we call it the Anshai family or Anshai community, we are a microcosm of a town. We govern, plan, collect and spend funds, argue, entertain, socialize, comfort, laugh and pray. Every year about this time, we test this concept when our staff, board and budget committee has to decide where to direct our dues and donations – what projects, initiatives, and programs can we create; and which constituencies in our shul should benefit. Every time we go through this process, someone reminds us that whether our interests lie in pre-school, religious school, governance, committee work, Men's Club, Sisterhood, Hazak, Kol Rina, minyan, or whatever, we are all one community and whatever benefits one constituency benefits all of us.

It is my sincere wish that you believe there is value in belonging to this Anshai community and when the time comes for you to renew your commitment to Anshai Torah, you do so knowing that we all can benefit from the financial support and hard work of each other.

Next month – All Good Things Must Come to an End.

Howard Rubin