

IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 From the Rabbi's Study
- 2 Executive Commentary
- 3 Executive Commentary
- 4 Features
- 5 News
- 6 Auxiliaries
- 7 Committees
- 8 Committees
- 9 Schools
- 10 Temple Life
- 11 Community Matters
- 12 Contributions
- 13 Contributions
- 14 Contributions
- 15 Calendar

LOBBY DONATION BOX: THIS MONTH'S DONATION DRIVE

Back to School Supplies

The Children's Aid Society provides services to NYC's underserved children and families, including cutting-edge programs in community centers, camps, public schools, and family courts. Please drop off pens, pencils, markers, crayons, school folders, pen/pencil holders, and book bags in the donation box in the Temple lobby.

"Your children are your builders."

(Talmud)

For Whom the Shofar Sounds

Rabbi Robert N. Levine, D.D.

FROM THE RABBI'S STUDY



A woman in our congregation once shared with me her first High Holiday experience. Brought to Rodeph Sholom by a very good friend, she was totally unprepared for what happened to her. When the shofar sounded, tears filled her eyes. Turning to her left, she instantly sensed her friend's intense emotional engagement as well. Walking out of the sanctuary, they compared their experiences of the shofar. "You know," her friend said, "when I hear the sound of the shofar, I am instantly transported back to the time when I would stand in the congregation with my grandparents. Every time the shofar sounds, I relive my family history and it feels wonderful."

"We were both deeply affected by the shofar experience, this new congregant told me, but, honestly, my experience was totally different. This was my first High Holiday. I am not a Jew and therefore had no backlog of memories to summon. In my mind I was being called by God that day to be someone different, something more than I had been before. In a strange way I knew that shofar call was for me."

Our congregation is filled with serious searchers. Some indeed were born Jewish and want to figure out what this history, heritage and faith mean to them. Many are not born Jewish. Some come seeking a spiritual life and want to know if Judaism can provide an answer. Some are thinking of converting to Judaism, whether on the road to marriage or not. Many other members have not converted, but have made a true commitment to raising a Jewish family and want to know whether they are truly a part of this Jewish community.

Look around carefully during the High Holiday Services. Hopefully, you will see a number of people that you know, comforting familiar faces from year to year. Notice, as well, how many new faces there are and think about what this High Holiday experience might mean for them. If they do not have a multigenerational tie to the Jewish people, if they do not have an ancestral Jewish family, chances are that they will relate to their experience on purely religious terms. It is quite likely for some that they will come looking for their God, for what it is that God expects of them and therefore be somewhat puzzled by those Jews whose primary associations are more ethnic and cultural than religious. What they certainly will want to know is whether this congregation, this spiritual community, can be home for them. Will they be welcome? Can they, who have decided to be a

part of the Jewish community, truly be embraced as members of that community?

As your rabbi, my hope is that all of us, clergy and congregation alike, will do everything we can to embrace those who have stepped forward and shown a willingness to make Congregation Rodeph Sholom their spiritual home. The Torah has a clear term, *ger*, for someone who enters the Jewish community and, in word and deed, decide that they wish to be a part of the faith and fate of Israel. The Torah says there shall be one law for the *ger* and for the native Jew because they truly are a part of our community.

Surely you have noticed that those members of our synagogue family who indeed are members of Jewish families have been welcomed in our congregation, welcomed to stand before the Torah as well. But we will need to make concrete policy where conviction and instinct has held sway. Nancy Solomon, our Chairman of the Board and immediate past President, will chair a special by-law committee on the role of the non-Jew in Congregation Rodeph Sholom. Appointed by our president, Roger Meltzer, this important committee will ask the question of who can be a member of Congregation Rodeph Sholom and what are the rights and

"I knew that shofar call was for me."

prerogatives of such membership. For example, can all members be buried in our Union Field Cemetery?

Questions like these and many more will be raised and answered, as we seek to become a community that is as embracing of its members as its members have been of us.

The midrash asks the question, "How could six hundred thousand people stand at the foot of Sinai, each individually claiming to hear the commandment, I am the Eternal, Thy God?"

The midrash answers: *it is as if God were a mirror. A thousand people can look into it and each one see and hear something a little bit different. On Sinai all felt that God spoke to me personally and all heard according to their capacity.*

We will all stand together this year to hear words of Torah and to listen to the sound of the shofar. All of us will hear them together, but they will resonate differently for each of us. May we all be sensitive to that, as we try to build a true community of those who are not so much the chosen people but rather, the choosing people.

Gina, Judah, Ezra and Maya join me in wishing you a healthy and fulfilling 5768.

B'Shalom.

REMEMBERING 9/11 • SHABBAT SERVICE
Friday, September 7 at 6:00 PM • In the Sanctuary