

Rabbi Lewis' message for February 2004

My rabbinical students at Hebrew Union College were pondering a classic rabbinic question this week: What is it that brings people to services? Is it the worship itself? Is it the feeling of community? Is it habit? Is it obligation? Is it the sermon? And they also asked the flip side of the question: What keeps people from services? Is it the time? Is it the length? Is it competing priorities? Is it the weather? Is it sheer end-of-the-week exhaustion? Is it the worship itself? (Is it the sermon?)

Every congregation, no matter the size, should ask itself these questions. If the answers were simple, we would have figured it out by now. All I know is this: People tell me that, when they do come to services, they feel so much better afterwards that they themselves wonder why they don't come more often. You might say, Rabbi, of course they tell you they enjoyed coming. You might also make the argument that people would be unlikely to confess to me, the rabbi, if they regretted coming to services. You would have a point. On the other hand, I am exactly the person to tell.

So tell me, either in person, through the mail, on the phone or via email. What brings you when you come? What keeps you away when you stay away? Be anonymous if you prefer, although knowing the name behind the opinion makes the opinion more valuable. Whatever I learn from you, I will share (anonymously) with the congregation in a sermon (unless that is what keeps you away) and in this newsletter.

We have always been a worshipping congregation. It is always good to understand our successes so we can build on them. It is also good to discover where we could benefit from doing something differently. The more input from you, the better picture we will get of our Temple community.

Remember, after winter comes spring.

Rabbi Ellen J. Lewis
February 2004