

President's Message January 2005

Sometimes during the holiday season we find ourselves feeling a little depressed for one reason or another. We all have things about our family that we wish were different and that we could change if we could.

My mother has a sister, who at age 18 ran off with a married non-Jewish man in the early 1940s. The family story goes that my grandparents actually sat shivah for her. They never spoke with her again, even though she tried to make peace with them at least one time that I am aware of. My grandmother passed away over the summer and my mother was able to reconnect with her sister after almost 60 years. It turns out that they only live a few miles from each other. They are feeling their way through a relationship that they have not known their entire life. As for me, I have never met my Aunt Gloria, nor her family. I am making my plans to go and visit them early next year. This is an exciting time, but also lends me to wonder who we are, and what makes families get so angry at each other that they could exile someone in that manner.

I think that this is one of the reasons that I have moved towards the Reform stances of Judaism. Anything that can tear families apart is reprehensible. I also believe that people teach you how to act all the time by their example, some show you the correct way of doing things and others show you things to avoid. I think that most of us have both qualities that we show the world.

My wishes for you this year is to try and mend fences with your families and to treat your families with all the love and respect that they deserve. As Rabbi Lewis tells us, you never know if the person you are dealing with is the Messiah.

Shalom
Howie Hirsch