

Rabbi Lewis' Message for Summer 2008

Now and then, something happens at the Jewish Center that makes me step back and think, "This is what it is all about." I had such a moment on May 4 when we celebrated Yom HaAtzma'ut in our [Religious School](#). We wanted to do something different that would help the children appreciate Israel's importance. Based on something they learned in a teachers' training program last July, our teachers decided to create a school-wide game.

Mike and Sally Weiner devised the game itself, which included dividing the school into multi-age teams and rotating them around different "stations" in the Temple. Post-b'nai mitzvah students and other adult Temple members staffed the stations. As they arrived at each station, the teams had to answer questions from relevant Jewish categories. Sometimes they had to act out their answers (e.g., demonstrate the correct body movements for a particular prayer).

There was even a question designed for the youngest students alone. When the team got a correct answer, they received a piece of a giant puzzle. When all seven teams had completed their rounds, each team had seven pieces. The students gathered in the Simcha Room where they (with a little parental assistance) all helped in putting together the puzzle. As the puzzle pieces began to fit together, it became clear that the puzzle was becoming a map of Israel (lovingly painted in advance by Jane Kunzman).

Since the puzzle had 50 pieces in total, I held the final piece without which the puzzle could not be completed. That piece became a symbol of how important it is for us to make ourselves part of that giant puzzle we call the people Israel. Then we all sat down to an Israeli breakfast prepared by our PTO.

That morning, everyone who participated felt what it is to be part of our Temple community. All ages were involved. The older students were the leaders who helped the younger children answer questions. Adults staffed the stations with the older students. We even grabbed some Temple members who had nothing to do with the school but who were around the building that day and asked them if they would help. There was a wonderful feeling of being part of something bigger, something transcendent.

That is what being part of a community is about, creating something as a group that would not be possible for any one person to create alone. That is the meaning of a congregational meeting. Yes, we meet to make financial decisions and to voice our recommendations about Temple priorities, but what we are really doing is carrying out the responsibility that belongs to each of us. "All Israel is responsible for one

another," say the sages, and we attempt to live those words in a small rural outpost in northwest New Jersey. Every now and then, you are blessed with a moment where you can see it all come together.

May your summer be filled with blessed moments.

Rabbi Ellen Lewis