

President's Message January 2009

As I write this I am flying from Chicago to Jackson, WY on 12/25/2008. That gave me the topic for this message: What to do on Christmas Day. For me, here are some of the things I have done on the 25th of December in years past. So actually, visiting China, Israel or Dubai may be one way to spend the day.

Go out for Chinese food, maybe even kosher Chinese food. This is easiest done if one lives in a real city, I am thinking New York, Chicago or L.A. I have been fortunate enough to have done this in each of these venues. Another possibility is to go skiing. This is great early in the morning since there are very few other skiers, except for the staff dressed up in a variety of costumes. I would like to be politically correct here and will not describe the ethnicity of most of the people who are out skiing at 9AM on this day, but I will say that most are speaking a language that I cannot follow. By noon, everyone has opened their presents, and the ski slopes are back to their normal capacity of crowds.

Many couch potatoes (oops, is that politically correct?) can watch football on TV with the rest of the population. Watching Notre Dame or Brigham Young University playing football on this day makes me wonder. Maybe I saw other schools, but that event would be cause for concern. Another possibility is to go to a movie. Now does one have to be concerned about whether the movie is rated G, PG, R or something worse?

Here is a good one. One can celebrate Chanukah. That is the case this year, as we will light 6 candles on the menorah that we brought from home. Now since our original plane left Newark 5 hours late on 12/24/2008, we missed all connections from Chicago to Jackson on that day. When we asked about the whereabouts of our checked luggage, the friendly American Airlines staff said that "they did not have a clue where our luggage was." Next time our menorah will be in carry-on! And we paid \$25 extra to check baggage. I believe it will be difficult to buy a menorah in Jackson, but maybe not. They have a Congregation, Jackson Hole Jewish Community, www.jhjewishcommunity.org/.

Some other possibilities include getting one's taxes ready so that they will not take up time next year. This however, can be particularly depressing when you realize that you owe money to the government. At least you know that by eating canned food between now and April 15th that you may be able to pay the taxes. Another possibility would be a work out at the Jewish Community Center. I would also assume that the usual Thursday mah-jongg game would be going at this venue. For me, it is always some type of hedonic pleasure to be swimming inside and viewing lots of ice, snow and miserable weather outside.

One could go to Atlantic City or Las Vegas. Actually, at O'Hare Airport, the planes were full to Las Vegas. There were no planes going to Atlantic City. What the passengers to Las Vegas did not know is that when they get to Las Vegas, it will be like visiting a ghost town. In addition to the holiday, the country is experiencing the worst economy since the Great Depression. And there is no end in sight. In Las Vegas, most, if not all, of the high roller clubs have been closed. Perks are only provided for those whom the casinos deem

the chosen few. The rest of us have to pay a lot for a little. Maybe the rooms cost less, I have not asked.

One could spend time with friends. They may even have a tree decorated for the holiday. If you have young children and they ask about the tree, make certain you have an answer ready. One could listen to the radio. There is no doubt that the most played song will be "White Christmas," written by Irving Berlin (nee Israel Baline).

Please let me know what I have missed. I am sure many of my fellow Congregants have great items to add to the above list.

Shalom,
Jim Arvesen

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