

## President's Message January 2010

There are times in the life of a congregation when we have special events that make me feel proud to be a member and a leader of this congregation. One such event took place on the last night of Chanukah. In our neighboring town of Long Valley, where many of our members live, they light a Chanukah menorah at the Splash Restaurant. This year, Debbie Fesinstine arranged for our congregation to light the last night's candle. She arranged for her and her daughter, Jill's, Girl Scout Troop to sing some Chanukah songs afterwards. We also had Stephanie Tarlowe (on keyboards and vocals), Grace Weiner (on vocals), Leah Nagorsky (on vocals), Debbie (on acoustic guitar and vocals) and me on congas (no vocals), all led by Cantor Coyot.

We were singing and dancing and having an absolutely wonderful time. There had to be close to 60 people in the restaurant at 4:30 in the afternoon to celebrate Chanukah. My daughter, Allison, mentioned that she was getting a little claustrophobic due to the large number of people in the restaurant, which made me feel very happy. Afterwards, many of us remained for dinner at the restaurant and then proceeded to synagogue for another celebration of Chanukah and Shabbat.

The sanctuary was more crowded than it had been in a long while for this service, where we began by inviting families that brought Chanukiah's with them to the bima. The glow of the Chanukah lights and the fullness of the sanctuary led to a wonderful service, with Cantor Coyot leading us in some celebratory melodies and some special Chanukah songs as well.

I left the sanctuary that night feeling so good and I was looking forward to all of the activities that we had planned for the weekend -- special Saturday services, [Purim Spiel](#) practice, a Havdalah service on Saturday evening, Sunday school and all of the activities scheduled for Sunday morning as well as the next practice of our Temple band (which we hope to debut on January 22nd). But Mother Nature had other plans.

We decided to cancel all activities for the weekend. I want you all to know that the reason we cancelled services was to ensure your safety. When making decisions on whether or not to cancel activities at the temple, the overriding goal of the Board is to keep our members safe. If we cancel an event because we are not sure it will be safe to travel by the conclusion of the event, your safety will be the reason. Sometimes I feel a little cautious when making these decisions, but I will always err on the side of caution as opposed to having you drive in conditions that may be unsafe.

May you enjoy the New Year with good health, happiness and the love of your family and friends.

Love,  
Howie

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