

## **President's Message May 2011**

Sometimes you get to spend Shabbat in your temple with your friends and family. Sometimes you get to spend Shabbat at home with your family. And other times, you are in the middle of nowhere and you are the only Jew.

During my travels to Australia and New Zealand this past month, I found myself in the latter position. Shabbat occurred for me as the sun set, where I was 30 miles offshore on the Great Barrier Reef just outside of Cairns (pronounced like tin cans) Australia. As the sun was setting, instead of reflecting on G-d's love for us, I was simply left to reflect the beauty of our world. I was able to see a sunset completely unencumbered from anything in the modern world, except the boat we were floating on.

The sun came down and the sky lit up with color. Watching the sunset with nothing but water around you is an amazing sight. After the sun set, I was able to go scuba diving and see the beauty of the reef after dark. In the dark, under water at night, you really understand what tunnel vision is. You can only see where you or someone else shines their light. A foot out of your light, you have no idea what is next to you. Some people find this terrifying, others find it exhilarating. But it also makes you believe that there is something more powerful than humans involved in this planet. The varying array of life on this planet simply astounds me. When I first started scuba diving, I thought I wanted to see beautiful fish in tropical environments. While I still want to do this, my favorite part of diving has now become the different coral formations, sponges and other seemingly inactive life forms that come to life at night.

My hope for you this month is to be able to sense what is around you, without actually knowing it is there. Become comfortable with your place in the world, how you fit in, and what you can do to make our planet and our community a better place.

Shalom and Love,  
Howie Hirsch