

## **Centennial Shabbat Remarks**

Shabbat Shalom. My name is Nina Henry. My husband, David, and I have been members at Temple Beth Israel for over 26 years. I am honored to have this opportunity of speaking to you about the enormous impact this temple community has had on our lives.

Memories spanning over a quarter century do not come in a linear way. Nor are they always crystal-clear or, for that matter, accurate. For me, memories of TBI come in little snapshots. There are way too many of these snapshots to recount all of the images, so I will view just a few of them with all of you.

The first snapshot dates back to 1991, when David and I began our synagogue shopping. My sister, Janet, and her family were already members of TBI and I had met Rabbi and Jody previously. For me, TBI would have been the immediate choice, but David had grown up in the Conservative tradition and I felt it was only fair to consider other options that might have been more comfortable for him. However, our first visit was to TBI. It just so happened that the news of Arafat's first gesture of peace to Israel had occurred during the week prior to this visit. Some time during the service, Rabbi addressed the

congregation. “Given this momentous news about Israel,” he said, “I think we should have a conversation.” David, under his breath, groaned. I didn’t understand why, but shrugged it off for the moment. Rabbi did indeed lead a conversation about Arafat and Israel. It was a robust discussion and later, at the oneg, we felt warmed by the lovely welcome we received. When we were leaving, before we ever got to the car, David exclaimed, “We don’t need to look any further. We should join this synagogue.” I was delighted, but asked what had prompted the groan earlier in the evening. David explained, “My whole life, whenever a rabbi said, ‘Let’s have a discussion,’ it would never happen. Instead, the rabbi would always pontificate from the bima. Rabbi Weinberg led us in a *real* discussion. That’s the rabbi I want!”

Needless to say, we never visited another synagogue and Becca, our older daughter, began religious school that Fall. The next snapshot is of those Sunday mornings while Becca was in religious school. This is before the Nosh Café had become a Sunday morning feature. David and I would spend those Sunday mornings at a table just outside the TBI office on the lower level. Sitting with us were many good friends – Helene Steen, her sister, Jacqui Barrientos, Sue Schneider, and many

others. There would sometimes be Dunkin Munchkins and coffee, but most of all, there would be friendship and laughter.

Two more snapshots to go: The first one took place about 5 months prior to Becca's bat mitzvah. We had just finished Shabbat dinner and I recall my mother-in-law had joined us. We began discussing who would be on the guest list for the celebration. We began listing numerous fellow TBI members. At some point, I glanced over at Becca and saw that she was in tears. When we asked her what was wrong, she exclaimed, "But I don't know any of those people!" I said, "But they know you, Becca, and here's what I know about them. If anything good or bad happens to us, these are the people who will care. These are the people who will show up for us and for our family."

Fast forward to the last snapshot: The shiva for my mother-in-law two summers ago. Just as I had told Becca seventeen years previously, all of you were there for us, just as I had known you would. What an incredible example of what community means. I am so grateful to the TBI community for always being our extended family and for teaching my children the importance of a support system.

So, let's all take a snapshot – all of us – here together, supporting one another. Smile – Say, "Cheese!"