

As our congregation marks a significant anniversary, I've been asked to share some thoughts about looking forward and looking back. I too have reached a significant anniversary this year: a new decade that I am calling That Seventies Show which has also occasioned a bit of looking forward and even more looking back. Anniversaries prompt introspection - the high holidays have us ask how we spent our year and how we wish to spend the coming one. New Year's eve find us making resolutions. My round numbered birthdays and new decades have always led me to consider where I am and where I want to be and on a few occasions - what was I thinking?

I grew up in an apartment in Albany Park with a whole lot of family that included my parents, grandparents, an unmarried aunt, my brother and a dizzying rotation of cousins. It was a kosher house, Shabbos was a weekly event and my brother attended Hebrew school every day. I, on the other hand, did not have one minute of Jewish education. Seriously, not one. Not even camp. My only obligation to the Jewish community seemed to consist of my marrying a nice Jewish man, preferably someone with a profession, like maybe, an orthodontist. Possibly one who lived in Skokie. My mother could get pretty specific. Passover seders were conducted by my grandfather totally in Hebrew of which I understood not one word. It was not until 1956 when we all dressed up and went downtown as a family to see the movie, The Ten Commandments, that I even knew there was a Passover story to be told. Thank you Cecil B. DeMille.

My association with Temple Beth Israel changed all of that. Here, I learned the meaning of holidays, the structure of the prayer service, enough Hebrew to make it possible to participate, enough music to create nostalgia. How did that happen? It started as many of us did with enrolling my son in the religious school. But to my surprise, it continued - not through my ADD inability to sit through a meeting or work with a committee, to sing in the choir, play an instrument, or organize anything, or read a spread sheet, or, God forbid, bake.

I was allowed, even welcomed, to participate as much and as little as I wanted to in ways that I was comfortable with and that I felt I could uniquely offer the congregation. That included teaching art classes at Sunday School, the pleasure of creating the Big Book for family services with Rabbi Weinberg, painting the little ark, creating posters for fundraising events,

decorating the Sukkah with student's artwork, and for enabling the sublime goofiness of the Purim Shpiel by constructing a giant matzo ball Death Star. So, thank you Lori and Rabbi and Michael Lorge, and thank you, all of you, who each bring your talents and time to this congregation.

I love being part of this vibrant, diverse, warm and welcoming group of souls and hope that association continues for decades to come. Shabbat Shalom.