

TBI Centennial Comments
Gary Zimmerman November 2017

Shabbat Shalom,

I am very honored to address you during f Temple Beth Israel's centennial year. I rise to praise TBI. It is challenging to put into words how much this congregation has enriched and deepened my life over the past seven years.

I was originally introduced to TBI approximately 50 years ago through CFTY and also a woman I dated. Our dates often consisted of davening alternately at Beth Israel and my shul, (Temple Emanuel) followed by chatting over coffee. I recall being impressed by Rabbi Lorge's sermons.

40 years later, after spending decades in the wilderness, I was reintroduced to TBI by another woman was (and is a member). I quickly grew to value and appreciate many aspects of Beth Israel, particularly the inspiration almost mystical effects I experienced during worship and learning with Rabbi Weinberg, Marla Bentley and this holy congregation. When I was first introduced to Rabbi Weinberg he told me that he remembered me from CFTY the reform movement's high schools' youth group. I was pretty amazed. The meaningfulness of these experiences continues and increases.

I was moved by Helene Levine's sales pitches/announcements (I was sold) as well as her genuine welcoming spirit. I also appreciate(d) the warmth and sense of belonging extended to me by so many of you. Thank you.

I am profoundly inspired by TBI's decision to help sponsor a refugee family. The work and commitment by the leadership of this congregation is truly valuable. I feel honored to play a small role in this process.

Marla attempted to teach me how to chant Torah, I was a slow learner. Sorry. I also heard Marla claim while recruiting new members for Koleynu that she could teach anyone who could read music to sing. I brashly decided to challenge this claim by joining. While I still can't sing, my experience with the choir has been remarkably meaningful.

Being allowed to participate during worship and finding small ways to be of service fill my heart. It is beyond nice to feel as if I belong.

On Wednesday after Rabbi Weinberg solicited speakers, I contacted him and said I would be interested and honored to speak. I wanted a chance to share these thoughts with you. The Rabbi wrote back and asked, "what about this Shabbos? After saying yes, I realized that I had an excuse if I was not fully prepared.

In the guidelines for speakers there was a request to speak of TBI's future. My response and my hope is: Change nothing. Thank you.

Shabbat Shalom