

Receiving the "Curious"



An article caught my eye in a recent issue of *The Jewish Exponent*. The title was "A 'Long-Lost' Shul Gets Lots of TLC." It described the discovery of a synagogue in the Eastern State Penitentiary that was built between 1913 and 1924, and closed with the prison in 1971. Buried under a collapsed ceiling, it is now being restored at the prison which is now a museum and tourist site.

What caught my eye was the final observation in the article, that it is expected that the restoration will be completed in the Spring, by Passover, "so the synagogue can begin to receive the curious."

"Receive the Curious." What an interesting function for a synagogue. It sounds strange, but not so strange at all. I am always a little surprised when friends come back from a trip abroad, and make a point of telling me about the synagogues they have visited on their journeys. The *shuls* were not on any itinerary. They had to go out of their way to find them. The pilgrimage had clear meaning for them. But these same good folks rarely seek out their own synagogue for *Shabbat* worship.

Receiving the curious. We look for the unusual, the exotic, the extraordinary, the beautiful.

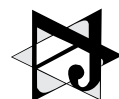
But a synagogue should not be for curiosity seekers. It should be for Seekers of God and Jewish Community. It should be a place of comfort and inspiration. A place for expressing the Jewish spirit. A place for Jewish yearning.

And so I write this article to encourage you to put our synagogue on your itinerary. Not out of curiosity, but to seek Jewish spiritual fulfillment. Regular *Shabbat* attendance anchors the week, and grounds our perspective in life in the soil of our ancient, but constantly-renewed tradition. It ties us to Jewish prayer expression, Jewish learning, and Jewish community. It is where we nurture our Jewish souls, hungering for spiritual sustenance and love.

Come to *shul* to enrich your life and give it meaning. Now more than ever, each of us needs the spiritual nourishment the synagogue has to offer.

We are always ready to receive Seekers. Make AJ your *Shabbat* destination.

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