

# A Rabbinic Perspective *By Rabbi Seymour Rosenbloom*

Reprinted from the February 2003 Adath Jeshurun Newsletter

## Letters



I often receive letters that are particularly gratifying. In that vein, I want to share with you excerpts from two letters I recently received that speak for themselves about our congregation.

The first comes from a visitor to the synagogue who came for the Klezmaniacs concert on November 17:

*I am writing you a note to thank you for the kindness of your congregational members that were so kind and compassionate to me and my friend. We were two retired, disabled women on walkers trying to attend the Klezmer concert Sunday afternoon. Your executive director, a fine young man, was extremely kind to us and helped us in getting into the concert area with our walkers and canes. A fine young lady helped him also to get us settled.*

*After the concert, your cantor and his wife helped us get to our car. What a beautiful day, and what a beautiful experience.*

*Thank you for your kindness. Life is beautiful when all this happens to you when you are old and disadvantaged.*

As you may recall, the concert culminated our Mitzvah Mania Day, an extraordinary program organized by Rabbi Fredi Cooper and Neil Wise, which assembled hundreds of AJ'ers to do *mitzvot* in the community. This act of *gemilut hesed*, loving kindness, was truly in the spirit of the day.

The second letter comes from a young member who was able to relate a report he heard on National Public Radio with my teaching from the pulpit.

*On November 11, I was listening to NPR and a report came on about a public employee who had the day off, went to a casino and won \$1.8 million on the slots. The reason he had the day off was because it was Veteran's Day. The report went on to point out that many people would be using this day off to go shopping and take advantage of the Veteran's Day sales.*

*I instantly felt a strange sensation. I started to think how much I/we take for granted each day. The fact that we have the "freedom" to go shopping or to the casino, or go about our daily work routines, is taken for granted. The fact of the matter is, the "Veterans" have paid our price for our freedom and it should not be taken for granted. Our lives are too fast-paced and the feeling that life seems to get in the way of "living" prevails. We need to slow down the speed of life to the speed of living and feel the present moments where life takes place. We need benchmarks in our lives to help remind us and make us aware.*

*We need our leaders to remind us and make us aware at every opportunity. It is with this in mind that I offer my gratitude to you for your teaching. You have pointed out how our Jewish tradition offers the benchmarks throughout our life cycle, throughout our calendar year and through the holidays and Shabbat to remind us to slow down to the speed of life and be aware, and not be a person who takes God's gifts for granted.*

*Sir John Templeton once said that gratitude is the antidote for fear. I appreciate the richness I feel in being an active member of our Jewish community and heritage, and I offer my gratitude to you for being a leader to me within our community.*

Letters like these are great sources of encouragement to me and my colleagues. They indicate that our teaching makes a difference, and that we are successful in creating a community where kindness and compassion are extended to all.

Thank you!

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