

But There's a Blizzard Outside



We have now concluded the most intensive holiday season of the Jewish year. We have observed the solemnity of *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*, and celebrated joyously on *Sukkot*.

But now, as the year truly begins, increasingly many of us will find more and more reasons why we will not be able to be in the synagogue for *Shabbat*. Knowing that, I would like you to take a moment to consider the following short article by a colleague of

mine, Rabbi Bernard Lipnick of Congregation B'nai Amoona of St. Louis, Missouri:

When it comes to *shul* attendance, parents are as easy on their children as they are on themselves. If one seeks, one can find innumerable reasons for not attending and for allowing the children to do likewise.

That this tendency is short-sighted and wrong is indicated by the following personal testimony of Rabbi Louis Finkelstein, of blessed memory, the former Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America:

"When I was a young boy, I used to go to the synagogue to study at 5:00 in the morning. . . One day when I got up, I discovered there was a blizzard. . . My father, listening to the storm and seeing me about to leave, said, 'Don't go to *shul*, you'll catch a cold.'

"That was hard. . . I wanted to go; and yet, obviously, I could not. Fortunately, my mother awoke. She heard what my father said, and asked him, 'Did your father spare you in a blizzard? Was he more worried about your catching cold than being ignorant? Let him go!'

"And I went. It was one of the great experiences of my life. For, if I had not gone then, I might not have gone the next day because of the rain; and the next day after that because I was sleepy; and sooner or later I would have stopped going altogether."

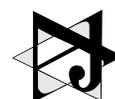
So many people often say to me "I really should come to the synagogue, but. . ." "There are so many good "reasons" for not attending regularly. Blizzards in the winter, heat in the summer, regular tee-off times and bowling leagues, beautician and orthodontist appointments, tennis and ski lessons.

But during the holiday season, we are reminded of the ephemeral nature of all of these endeavors and we are urged to place ourselves in contact with the life-giving ideals of our tradition. Regular prayer on *Shabbat* morning is a wonderful expression of the Jewish soul and gives it both depth and understanding. It is a time for us to affirm community and strengthen the connections we have with other members of our congregation.

So why not make this a year for reaffirming *Shabbat* attendance? Why not make *Shabbat* attendance a regular part of your schedule? You will find it a retreat from the frenetic course of daily life, and a time for spiritual nourishment that will help set our lives on a meaningful course for the week to come.

I look forward to seeing you.

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