

My tenure as B'nai Chaim's rabbi covered a decade of B'nai Chaim's total 25 years. 2000 to 2010 were exciting years of growth and relative prosperity in nearly every aspect of congregational life. Prosperity was evident in more than just our financials. We bought a building!!! We matched an anonymous challenge of quarter million dollars!!! We dedicated that facility, and later, acquired and dedicated a second sefer Torah along with the finials and Torah mantels which today adorn both of our sacred scrolls. We propagated a thriving religious school, attempted a pre-school from which graduated kids most of whose families, today, are integral members of the congregation. We weathered and survived the construction of the neighborhoods that surround us and the landscaping which directed almost all the Spring rains into our basement...to the tune of at least 5 significant flooding events. We coped with and overcame an unresponsive Jefferson County licensing department when we were attempting to build our moat and avoid yet another disastrous Spring flood. We recovered \$50,000 in damages from the home builders. We purchased new prayer books.

As a congregation, with the help of Ted Ruskin, we sang, studied, and prayed our way forward through those years.

Some of the things of which I am most proud include our Youth Group and their participation in the local and regional opportunities. As important...or perhaps even more so... is the fact that we sent so many deserving kids to Camp Rainbow, where they were coupled with kids suffering from cancer. The impact of these experiences revealed itself in the maturation and insights these peer counselors attained. Many chose to write about what they learned in their college application essays.

I also want to mention our Highway Clean-ups. As frustrating as it was to pick up the litter that consistently appeared along the roads we policed, it demonstrated our commitment to our community and to what we could accomplish when we put our backs into a challenge.

Speaking of challenges, perhaps the most fun and most hands-on, productive time we took on was the Paint-up, Fix-up, Cleanup day. It attracted more folks than any other B'nai Chaim endeavor, save High Holiday services and Shabbat-in-the-Park. Ah yes, Shabbat in the Park--- our annual outing to Clement Park wherein we challenged God and the weather to bombard us with violent thunder storms and even hail stones, even as, some years, we witnessed breathtaking sunsets and glorious views.

For me, personally, I enjoyed teaching. Whether it was “A Taste of Judaism,” or about Israel and its strategic position in the Middle East, or about the Book of Genesis or the sessions we had to prepare our B’nai Mitzvah students and their parents. We innovated by having a couple of multi-session get-togethers with intermarried couples; by our attendance at Synagogue 2000; by having different musicians and groups come to entertain us, and by reaching out to Habitat for Humanity and the annual Pumpkin Patch fund raiser.

You’ll note that many things that I’ve mentioned are going on still today. I am excited by what we did in the past, but only as it has continued and evolved into what B’nai Chaim is today and as it will grow into its future.

I believe that the people who were involved in the congregation benefited by that involvement. For me, B’nai Chaim always has been about relationships, connections and community. Our location isn’t the bastion or center of the Jewish population or wealth in Denver. We are an island, as it were, for Jews who want and need a Jewish place to come to and like-minded folks with whom to relate at these foothills of Western Denver. Sometimes we have come, sadly, to commiserate and, at other, more frequent times, thank God, we came to be able to celebrate life and its special, sacred occasions.

One final word. Congregations repeat their histories. B'nai Chaim was founded by people and families who wanted to experience and share Jewish communal life. Its membership has always demonstrated a loving graciousness and kindness, welcoming and open to all sorts of people, ideas and experiments. At the heart of this congregation is a willingness... no, a drive.... to associate. Whether at Board training, Newcomers' Welcoming Dinners, Succot, Purim, and Passover celebrations or outings to restaurants, films and other events, it was and is about being a caring community.

God has blessed us over the past 25 years. We've learned, experienced and grown a lot. But I see our past as only the prelude to what is to come, as we go forward to celebrate the future. Mazel tov to us all for having reached this significant and incredible milestone!