

Rosh Hashana 2011 (5772) - Lisa Kantor

I am a Jew by birth. I was born to two Jewish parents, raised to believe what is written in the Torah, and fairly traditional in the way I observe holidays and life cycle events. I believe in God. I pray often, mostly using my own words, but I believe that prayers are powerful, at least in the comfort they bring to me. I spend a lot of time as a volunteer here at TAS, trying to improve our community and assure that a Jewish presence in the San Fernando Valley is preserved for future generations.

My husband was also born to two Jewish parents. If you ask him, however, he will tell you that he is an agnostic. He frequently tries to bargain with Rabbi Lutz for passes out of services, for prayer makes him uncomfortable. He merely tolerates the time I spend as a volunteer. But he can recite all the stories in the Torah by heart, believes that they teach us lessons about how we should live, and would tell them as bedtime stories to our children. And he dedicates his professional life to the needs of the disabled, is always available to and generous with family and the many friends we have made in this community.

We are, as most of you who know us can confirm, a very odd couple. And yet, we are curiously representative of this wonderful, eclectic community we call our home. When I think of what binds all of us together here at TAS, it is not our birthright or our upbringing or even our view of God. Rather, one thing comes: a commitment and passion for living a life of Jewish values. For Glenn and me, we find that we simply cannot be observers; we have to step in and solve problems, or volunteer time, or donate money. (Okay, I donate the money, and he lets me do it). But the point is, we simply can't help ourselves – we care. Each of us, in our own way, lives a passionate, Jewish life. For me, that means making sure that this precious community is maintained and cherished for those who come after us.

We fit in here so well because so many of you are just like us. Sheila Reback is passionate about how the Onegs and receptions look, so she spends hours making sure everything is beautiful for you in the social hall. Marc Zev is passionate about the beautification of our grounds, so, among other things, he moved the beautiful Ahavat Shalom gates to the front of the school building for all to see. Lloyd Cutler is committed to the improvement of our IT system, so he works tirelessly to bring it up to speed. Ron Saritzky was committed to improve

parking at High Holy Days so he proposed a solution which we are trying this year. Ken Miles and Steve Mermell are committed to keeping our finances in check, so they work each month to tweak our budget. Barry Krowne is passionate about making sure our mortgage is paid off and our capital campaign promises are kept, so he works countless hours following up with donors. Bice Recht is passionate about our new members, so she makes sure they are properly welcome to our community. Mel and Les Birken. . . well they are just passionate about everything TAS, and I think there may be three generations of passionate Birkens here to prove it.

The list could go on and on. My question is – are you on the list? Our Board will be spending the upcoming year analyzing what defines our community, what sets us apart from the rest, what is the one thing that we do better than any other synagogue. I think it just might be our ability to capture and give voices to each of our members' passion.

So, during this week of contemplation between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, I welcome you to think about your passion, about your commitment and send me an email or drop me a note. We have room here at TAS for all of our passions. It just takes a commitment by you to take some risks, expand your horizons, decide to care. I promise you that, along the way, you will meet some amazing people, your soul will be re-energized, and, whether you believe in God or not, you will be doing God's work.

L'Shana Tova.