

# Rabbi Fox's Message for Temple Beth Shalom's Sivan/Tammuz 5767 (June 2007) Newsletter

## The Story Goes on Forever

During a recent viewing of the movie "Stranger than Fiction," I found myself deeply moved by one character's simple words of wisdom. Dustin Hoffman's character, a professor of literature, tells the protagonist played by Will Ferrell, "I'm sorry, . . . but it is the nature of all tragedies: the hero dies, but the story goes on forever."

Both literally and figuratively, this statement is a great truth of life. People come and go. They travel in and out of circles of connection; personal, social, familial, political, and even religious. And so it is with synagogues. People move to a place and move away; they join, or at least engage with, a congregation and then they leave. It is the nature of Jewish life in America for the last 60 years, at least, that few people remain members of any synagogue community for more than 15 years. It is a blessing, then, that Temple Beth Shalom has so many members who have stayed with the congregation for as long as they have, especially when you consider the dynamic changes that have occurred within our shul by the sea over the last 15 years – from JCC only to shul and from lay-only to Rabbinic leadership.

And as your new"-ish" Rabbi, I think it is time to take stock of where we've been and begin to look with excitement and joy at where we are headed. To that end, several months ago I suggested that TBS hold a "Weekend of Renewal and Renaissance," as I called it, to recall fondly our community's past and to explore our exciting future. Temple Beth Shalom has been very fortunate to have had such giving members and such distinguished Rabbinic leadership to guide it to this day and I am looking forward to partnering with each of you to help ensure that our future is even brighter than our past.

That is why I am inviting you to join us during the weekend of July 13-15, when we hope to have an interesting speaker on Friday evening, a special Shabbat service and luncheon on Saturday, and a social function either Saturday evening or Sunday afternoon. During and after our luncheon, I will lead those present in a discussion that will better help us build a shared vision for Temple Beth Shalom as we move forward. Your input is not only helpful but it is essential. As anyone who has contributed to building a family or a business or an organization knows well, to arrive at where we'd like to be in two years (or even five years) requires us to begin planning and moving on those plans today.

Separate from this special Shabbat weekend in July, I encourage you to join us for services each Friday evening this Summer, as I begin an informal education series to help those who have forgotten a Hebrew letter or two or never learned a single one. Each week's services will be "sponsored" by letters from the Hebrew "Aleph Bet" and we'll take a few moments during services to learn together those letters, a few words, and some fascinating ideas.

Who knows where this exciting venture will lead us? Let us keep in mind that what we do in life may not always make us the hero, but we can always be a part of the story. Whether it is learning a little Hebrew or offering ideas or spiritual support to your fellow Jews, "the story goes on forever," both for the Jewish people and the community of Jews from Brigantine and beyond!

It is my hope that you will join me either now or in the future as we learn from each other, grow with each other, and “setz” (sit awhile) with each other.

May each of us be blessed to know the comfort of contributing to and belonging to such a righteous endeavor!

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