

Wherever You Go...

*Wherever you go there's always someone Jewish, You're never alone when you say you're a Jew
So when you're not home, And you're somewhere kind of 'newish'
The odds are—don't look far— 'Cause they're Jewish, too. - Rabbi Larry Milder*

With all the strife and tension in the world, It is reassuring that we can walk through the doors of any synagogue and know that we are at home.

In February, Lois and I celebrated our recent marriage with a trip to Puerto Rico. We stayed at a quirky B & B in the community of Ocean Park in San Juan. The Dreamcatcher is very zen and laid back. Rather than staying in a big resort hotel, we chose to stay at The Dreamcatcher so we could be in a smaller neighborhood. We wanted to experience the local neighborhood to have an opportunity to get to know the people living in the community.

The B & B provided a hand-drawn map and suggested walking as an alternative to other transportation, so walking we did! We wandered, we walked, we stumbled upon interesting sites ... roosters and chickens in the park, beautiful homes, and even a Holocaust Memorial near the government buildings. By night, Uber was our best option. People were friendly and glad to see tourists supporting Puerto Rico by spending money!

One of the more memorable moments was attending Friday evening Shabbat services at Temple Beth Shalom in San Juan. The temple was within walking distance - great. Per Beth Shalom's website, I emailed the temple to let them know we would be attending and attached our ID's. Yes, even in Puerto Rico there is security.

As we approached the temple a few minutes before services were to begin there was much ado at the entrance. Apparently the homemade oneg cake had arrived! The security guard was carrying the cake from the congregant's car into the temple. I guess protecting the cake is one of the responsibilities of the security personnel. Lois and I were greeted with a warm welcome as we entered, we were checked off the list and made our way to our seats in the sanctuary where we joined the congregation in joyful song and prayer. A quick game of Jewish geography led us to realize that a part of our extended family was at the oneg, friends of the bat mitzvah ... talk about a small world ... now we were truly a part of this larger community!

I've been thinking a lot about *kehillah*, community, and what it means to be part of something bigger than ourselves. Am Yisrael, the people of Israel is what we call ourselves. We are people who place community over everything else.

Like we were so warmly welcomed in Puerto Rico, I know that guests to BHSS feel the same way. I am proud of our tradition of being gracious to all that come through our doors.

As we are shortly entering the Passover season, a time when families may travel away from BHSS to celebrate, my wish is that you feel, not just welcome, but embraced, wherever you go, and that you always return to us, your spiritual home.

Chag Pesach Sameach,
Judy Teich, President