

From the President, Spring, 2017

A Time and a Space to De-Frazzle

There's something we all know well, but that needs to be restated periodically: We want to do more for our community but we only have so much time and energy.

I retired after 38 years at IBM in order to devote myself to the job of president of Bet Am Shalom – and I still feel I'm behind in my work, unsure of my day's priorities, not giving family and friends their due, and, at times, frazzled. And, I don't have kids or parents around who need a lot of care. And, I'm in pretty good health.

So, first of all, much thanks to so many of you who manage to find the time to participate in the work of our community, in all its multiplicity of forms – ethical, spiritual, educational, cultural and social. I hope you find, as I do, that the rewards far exceed the time and effort.

But another aspect of the filled and fragmented lives we lead is frayed communication. We just don't seem to have the time and energy to listen enough, to say what needs to be said, and to be thoughtful enough in the process.

Often, I find myself in conversations where I assume someone knows what's happening across the synagogue, only to realize later that they couldn't have known. I never stopped to tell them. Often, I hear from someone who assumes I know their concerns. But I couldn't have known. They never stopped to tell me. These kinds of miscues are common in any event, but even more so when we're frazzled.

More discomfiting is when stunted communication affects our friendships. I have always found BAS to be a petri dish for caring and nourishing relationships. Sure, I fall short. Sure, I hurt others. And, sure, others hurt me. But, every time – truly, every time – a “Bet Am other” and I have taken the time to explore what went wrong, fences have been mended. I think that's because of the values – Jewish values – we share as members of the Bet Am community.

I hope this message hasn't come across as either romantic or pedantic, or, frightfully, both! Recent conversations with a number of you have brought these matters to the top of my mind. If your goal, as mine, is first to be a *mensch* and, second, to dwell in a community of *mensches*, then you need to find the time and space to de-frazzle and commune. And, I don't know a more desirable time than now, or a more desirable space than Bet Am Shalom.

And, more personally, if there's anything you want to know about what's going on at BAS, please ask me. If you have any concerns, please tell me. And if I appear frazzled and unresponsive, ask me, tell me, again. I really want to communicate like we should.

Robert Weintraub