

Robert Weintraub, Lev La'am, Summer, 2017

By the time you receive this edition of Lev La'am, we'll have conducted Bet Am Shalom's Annual Meeting.

It's such a pleasure, each year, to recount and celebrate the work and spirit of our community.

For those of you at the meeting who thought my words were eloquent (Marilyn?); or, for those of you at the meeting who were daydreaming as I spoke (many?); or, for those of you who couldn't attend; I encourage you to read the much-shortened adaptation, which follows...

Before Marilyn and I came to Bet Am Shalom, we were members of a small, Reconstructionist synagogue in upper Westchester, the Hebrew Congregation of Somers. For a time, I was the congregation's representative to the Reconstructionist Movement, and would attend regional meetings in NYC. I remember my first one, at which one of the topics was programming.

Representing Bet Am Shalom at the time was Cynthia Ehrenkrantz. When it was her turn to report, she took out a printed, synagogue calendar, which, to my astonished eyes, appeared like a gilded copy of War and Peace. I say gilded because its print had golden shades and it was so elegantly done, and War and Peace because of its size. I assure you my simile has nothing to do with the title of the book itself...well, at least there's no conscious connection.

That calendar has since gone online and, as the old printed version did before, serves as a treasure trove of ritual, educational, cultural, social and social action activities. In the handout for the Annual Meeting is another representation of that treasure trove: a list of over 70 committees or programs on which so many of you worked over the past year.

It is important to stop and recognize all the work we do here at Bet Am Shalom, year after year, faithfully taking Nehemiah's words seriously: "For the People's **Heart** Was in the Work"...and in the Play, for that matter.

Still, it's impossible in a speech or an article to give proper credit to all the volunteers and staff who feed and gird our beating heart – who maintain its health, who adorn its enclosure, who uplift its spirit. But, please, don't ever feel your efforts are taken for granted...

At the risk of nagging, I want to reach out to those of you who are taking the time to read this article but who haven't quite found a vein into this beating heart. At 60-years, we know we need fresh blood; yet, sometimes old valves don't let it flow as smoothly as they should. But, as so many before you have learned: if you attend and circulate at services or events; if you find a vessel of interest through which you can contribute; if you share heartwarming, lifecycle events, along with the stresses that test us all; you will experience a most gratifying, emotional connection with the soul of our community, and what makes us tick.

OK. OK. The metaphor is done (special apologies to the cardiologists among us).

To those who have served in leadership positions over the past year and are moving on, I thank you from the bottom of my...uh, I thank you very, very much.

To those who are taking their places, I look forward to joining you: to fill the calendar with diverse programs, to grapple with challenging issues, to execute new ideas, to serve both Bet Am Shalom and the broader community...to perform all the work of our people.