

Dear Friends,

A few weeks ago, I had the privilege of attending the URJ Biennial in This past weekend, I joined four of our teens and almost a hundred others at NFTY-TOR's Winter Conclave in San Antonio. While these weekends are exhausting (yes, they make us adults work!), they are also invigorating, uplifting and extremely gratifying. It is a joy to watch our teens pray and play and learn together. Yes, learn. We engaged in spirited conversations about Israel and its importance, its challenges, and its place in modern American Jewish society. On Saturday, we discussed inclusion, gender identity, and acceptance of people who may be different from you. Then the teens participated in team building exercises, went on a scavenger hunt in downtown San Antonio, exchanged "white elephant" gifts, and ended the day with Havdalah and a pajama party. These kids are developing lifelong friendships, and they are also forging lifetime relationships with Judaism.

With that introduction in mind, let me speak to all the parents out there: The next opportunity to let your kids participate in youth group is coming up this April! Kids in 1st through 8th grades can participate in Spring Camp the weekend of April 3-5, and for teens in 9th through 12th grade, Spring Kallah is April 24-26. If you have any questions about these two events, please give me a call!

If you believe in the value of camp and youth group but you don't have school age children, then I encourage you to share in the joy of camp by making a donation to the Adler Camp Fund or to the Rabbi's discretionary fund and asking him to earmark your donation to support our youth.

I would also like to encourage everyone to attend our special Shabbat service at the JCC on Friday, February 14th. Norma Levens and our friends at the JCC are planning a special evening and dinner for our community, and I look forward to seeing many of you there. Remember, we will be at the JCC – there will be no services at the temple that evening!

We also have two more movies in this year's Grossman Film Series. Please join us on February 9th and February 23rd for the screenings of "Rosenwald" which sounds fascinating and "Dough" which should be hilarious! Please show your support for the Grossman Film Series, and enjoy these two great movies.

Finally, I would like to announce that we have renewed Rabbi Emanuel's contract for another three year term beginning in July. Rabbi Emanuel, thank you for your spiritual leadership and your service to our community. We are glad that you are here!

L'Shalom,  
Greg  
Gregory Marks  
President, Congregation Beth Israel