

RABBI'S MESSAGE

Pop Over and Be Fulfilled

The last time I visited New York, my friend took me to one of her favorite restaurants on the Upper West Side. It's called "Popover Café." The restaurant, not surprisingly, is famous for its signature creation, the "popover." Prior to dining there, I had never heard of a popover. It's basically a kind of roll made with egg batter, often cooked in a muffin tin, and it can rise to six inches high or taller. When it first came on the side next to my egg white omelet, I wondered, "How can anyone eat that whole thing?" But when I cut my butter knife into it, I saw that it was all crust, and inside was completely empty. It tasted good and, like any concoction of flour, water and egg, was certainly filling...for a while. But I knew it was empty calories — pretty and tasty, but hardly nourishing.



We are approaching the New Year in a new way. Those who have been part of Temple Beth Torah in the past are experiencing something like never before. Thirty years ago, our founding members worshipped in living rooms before the community grew too large. Then we were the recipients of the kindness of our Christian neighbors who let us pray in their churches. We were finally able to open our own building in 1989, but needed to rent out classrooms and office space during the week. Now, Temple Beth Torah stands alone as a Jewish synagogue, threatening to burst at the seams.

And so, we did the makeover, and it truly is beautiful. We're no longer crowding in narrow hallways, waiting to use a single toilet and hoping it doesn't overflow. We have an impressive gathering space to share our bagels and our hearts. The same old art is on the walls, but somehow it looks different. From floor to ceiling, it's a touch of class. Without losing our "down to earth" feel (yes, you CAN walk on the floor!), the building feels less like an institution or a series of rooms connected by a hallway; it feels like a spiritual home. Those who shared the first Shabbat in the newly remodeled sanctuary and social hall felt it. Many commented that the joy of Shabbat was contagious. Those who experienced Cantor Robbi Sherwin's amazing concert at the Open House felt it. There was a sense of newness as we prepare for a new year. There was an acknowledgment of potential. What seemed like a remote possibility was real. And it became real because of the many people — donors, volunteers, workers, planners, visionaries and dreamers — who collaborated to make it happen.

What's our next challenge? Make sure it's not a pretty but empty crust. Fill that beautiful space with a beautiful spirit. Engage with each other. Look out for those who look like they need a friend. Absorb the spirit of the New Year, of Shabbat and of community. And take that spirit with you when you exit. Call each other for lunch or coffee or mah jong or volunteering or book clubs or golf or shopping or sharing photos of grandchildren or play dates with young children. Find out who would like to ride with you to the next service or educational function you attend. Carpooling isn't just about helping the environment; it's about developing friendships. The synagogue isn't just about worship and learning; it's about relationships. The paint on the walls does not matter as much as the love in our hearts.

This is our chance to create the filling that will be fulfilling. Welcome to a New Year, a new space and a new spirit. Let's fill it with sweetness.

Shana Tova,
Dan Gordon