

FROM THE EARLY YEARS
Bat Mitzvah Speech - 1985
by Diane Hoffman

In the Fall of 1983, a group of Temple members met with Rabbi Frazin in the library for one semester of "Beginning Hebrew." What began as a 6-week course, not only continued for 18 months, but evolved into a Bat Mitzvah class for Susan, Erica, Michelle and myself.

To describe this Tuesday night class - would border on the impossible - strictly, a - "you hadda be there" situation. When we finally finished Book I, Rabbi Frazin informed us that tradition dictated that we should celebrate this completion with wine. Not wanting to deny our heritage, we celebrated and then celebrated some more. In fact, we decided we enjoyed celebrating so much, this soon became our weekly ritual. And so, the flavor of our class rapidly transformed into a warm, wine-tasting, food sharing - news informing, caring and sharing group. Fun, food, friendships and feelings became the Shema! As we became more proficient in reading our prayers, we also grew closer. I know, for me, Tuesday night became THE highlight of my week! Holidays and class cancellations were not a welcome hiatus!

I believe we all became fascinated with the dynamics of this class. We rationalized, we analyzed, we theorized. We found excuses for partying that were so far-fetched - from birthdays and mitzvahs of our children, to preparing nourishment for our hungry Rabbi who had been too busy teaching Confirmation Class to stop for dinner.

We had expert guidance meetings, in the form of Laurie Horowitz and Dan Silverberg. They, together, combined and single-handedly, not only provided comic relief, they were simply our class clowns. They were the heart-beat of our humor and pulse of the group we had become. Thank you, Dan and Laurie, for making us laugh.

Each person brought something unique to our nights. For, even with this frivolity and belly-laughing, we learned. We learned our letters, we learned our vowels and we learned our prayers. We learned. And what made this experience so special for me, is that we LOVED while we were learning.

Thank you, Rabbi - for as we stand here today, we are a testimony to that learning, and that love.