

then when true misfortune befalls us, we will be better able to keep in perspective that the misfortune will pass and happiness and beauty will return.

RJ: How do you feel about Reform synagogue worship as it's practiced today?

Laurence Kaufman: When Reform worshipers began wearing *tallitot* and *kippot*, I continued bareheaded and bare-shouldered, partly on the grounds that if it was okay yesterday it was okay today, and partly out of respect for my rabbi, who wore neither. Even when new clergy began wearing them, I did not, except when I was a *bimah* guest in another congregation where it was *minhag hamakom* (local custom). Even when my wife began wearing them, I did not.

That all changed during an emotional worship experience in Jerusalem during a World Union for Progressive Judaism convention. As I looked around the room I was struck by the preponderance of those wearing *kippot* and *tallitot*. I told my wife after services that as soon as Shabbat was over she could buy me a *kippah* and *tallit*. I didn't need them to connect me to God, I explained, but to connect me to *k'lal Yisrael*, the community of Jews worldwide.

Martin Graffman: I would like to participate more in religious services. I don't because the prayers express an infantile view of God, praising Him when He does not need it and begging him for "stuff" when He does not grant it. Too frequently, rabbis and cantors put on a show; and the rabbi, with or without quoting the sages, tells us what we should believe. On the positive side, I feel "spiritually uplifted"

THE RABBIS SPEAK

"We bring Torah into the world when we seek to sanctify the times and places of our lives through regular home and congregational observance..."

—A Statement of Principles for Reform Judaism, CCAR, 1999

when the rabbi or the texts teach me how to "be" better.

Judy Fisher: In my early years of belonging to a synagogue, when I was



The Motzi Touch: Members of Congregation Tikken v'Or in Ithaca, New York follow the custom of having everyone touch the challah, or touch someone touching the challah, as they say the blessing. This was the first motzi at the congregation's new synagogue, July 24, 2005.

unhappy about a given practice I tended to complain on the sidelines. Eventually I realized that to affect the kinds of change I wanted, I needed to become part of the change process. So I joined the board. About five years ago I realized my own spiritual needs weren't being met, something was missing...and again it was up to me to remedy the problem. For my own Jewish growth I began learning to chant Torah and got involved at our regular Saturday morning lay-led *minyan* where we take turns leading the service, chanting or reading Torah, and giving the *d'var Torah*—all things I'd never done before and now do regularly. My Jewish knowledge and spiritual growth have widened and deepened. In some ways, I feel that although I joined the synagogue for my family and for my kids, I have stayed a member for me as well as anyone else.

Marge Eiseman: I struggle with change at my congregation—sometimes it just doesn't go fast enough for me. What I push for, and long for, are

substantive changes—a willingness to embrace new music, delight in the new prayer book (and I would encourage people to add to it with readings and sharing). Has my congregation been

a safe place for me? Yes, and sometimes safety is boring.

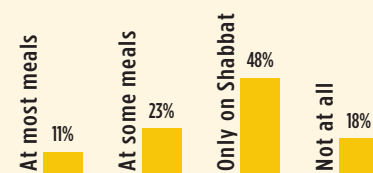
Joan Pines: I am pleased with the direction of Reform synagogue worship: more Hebrew, more congregational involvement, less formality, more personal connection, and participatory—as

opposed to performance—music. For me, music is one of the most important elements of the worship service; good Jewish music is my pathway to God. Also, before certain prayers and readings, our rabbi has a way of interjecting personal elements to which most congregants can relate, which helps to establish a prayerful mindset. He works diligently to infuse our regular services with emotion and spirituality. This departure from the old pattern of reciting prayers by rote has made the service more relevant to our daily lives.

Also, having been raised a Conservative Jew, I have little problem

A BIGGER PICTURE

Do you say "Motzi"?



—THE RESEARCH NETWORK, 2007