

L E T T E R S

What Your *Oneg* Says about You

What Your *Oneg* Says about You” (Fall 2011) included stories of a woman and a man who were left to “flounder aimlessly” at the *oneg*. Sadly, I too have experienced this in larger congregations, most often in Northern cities.

Perhaps there is something more to our Southern hospitality beyond the legend of movies and books. At the three Southern congregations where I’ve attended services, people are warmly greeted, made to feel very welcome, and engaged in conversations—and all three are thriving. At B’nai Israel in Jackson, Tennessee, when we enjoy our rabbi’s monthly visits, services include an *oneg* Shabbat filled with traditional Jewish and Southern delicacies

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and lively conversations with all the visitors and prospective members that have blessed us with their presence. Other Fridays we have an early service and everyone is enthusiastically encouraged to join us for dinner as “a family” at a local restaurant.

When my family visited Temple B’nai Sholem in New Bern, North Carolina, a member immediately got to know us by playing “Jewish Geography.” Within five minutes we discovered that we had only two degrees of separation! She knew my first cousin; their kids and hers had attended school together and belonged to the same large congregation in St. Louis. We then exchanged contact information.

When it comes to making new people feel welcome, we small congregations are doing so much right.

*David E. Cohen
Jackson, Tennessee*

At Temple Beth El in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, ushers determine if visitors have loved ones who are ill or otherwise troubled. We place those names on our *Misheberach* list, in alphabetical order, just in time to be read from the *bimah*. And if we identify a person in mourning, an usher joins him/her in standing for *Kaddish*, and from time to time places an arm around the mourner’s waist. Visitors are impressed with our concern and grateful for our style of welcome.

*Charles K. Zamek
Waterford, Michigan*

At Temple Sinai in Sarasota, Florida, we give members name tags and visitors identification pins on a flower along with a guest name badge. An “Ambassador Corps” makes sure everyone is engaged in



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