

**August 1, 2008**

***From the Temple Israel August 2008 Keshet Newsletter:***

*My two weeks serving on faculty at Crane Lake Camp offered me an opportunity to witness one of my favorite aspects of such a communal setting (Jewish, in this case!): moments of “spiritual overflow.” Some might say that it is possible to see this phenomenon at Fenway Park (and for me, Kaufmann Stadium and Arrowhead Stadium). Sports enthusiasm may be similar to what I see in campers who stand up, clap with rhythm and volume, move to the beat, and sing their favorite songs “at the top of their lungs.” What is different, however, is the message, as demonstrated by the companion expression to the campers’ exuberance: putting their arms around each other and singing on slower songs that, they know, teach the value of community. Friday night song and Israeli folk dance sessions featured some of those special moments. I enjoyed being able to join in with the campers and staff on the dances I know well. It was another way for me to be a part of the camp community.*

*Some of those moments of “overflow” at camp are echoes of the spirit I see in the sanctuary at Temple Israel, whether we are clapping to “Hallelu” at the end of the Renewal of Spirit Shabbat service, moving to Craig Taubman’s “Lecha Dodi” to welcome the Sabbath bride or simply joining our voices together in song or in meaningful words that voice our beliefs and values. All of those expressions inspire me when my “spiritual overflow” takes the form of music and lyrics. While I was at Crane Lake Camp, both last year and this year, my presence in a context of learning and community based in the Jewish heritage led me to turn a worship text into a song. Last year, several months of exploring Psalm 97 (“Light is sown for the righteous”) resulted in the creation of the “Or Zarua” melody that I have shared at several Shabbat services throughout the year. This year, I went to camp without a text in mind, but a reading on Shabbat and High Holy Day mornings, “though our mouths should overflow with song as the sea” (called the birkat shir—blessing of song), which is also in the Pesach Haggadah, caught my attention. Sometimes I will try to “construct a melody,” but the best songs, in my opinion, don’t emerge from such a contrived approach. I thought of the traditional chant for this prayer, and began to “play” with a tune. From there, it was a matter of letting the “overflow” flow through me, much as if I was standing on the shore of a nearby beach at a moment when the waves would surround me as they came in. I might say I am the songwriter when a song is complete, but I also see myself as a conduit for the thoughts, feelings and spirit that come from our heritage, from community, and from the oneness (and Oneness) that connects us all. I know we don’t all experience or respond to this oneness (or Oneness) in the same way, but being part of a community means positively sharing and learning from our various modes of spirituality.*

*So whether we best express ourselves in song, in words, or in silence, may we continue to seek new ways to unify our “spiritual overflow” that will bring us all closer together as one congregation and community.*

**-- L'shalom,  
Rabbi Larry K.**