

What does the Maccabee Leadership Academy mean to me?

I want to talk to you about connections to people and places the most human of experiences. When I got the call from Ilayne Finkelstone so many weeks ago to enroll in the Maccabee Leadership Academy I could not imagine for one minute that I would be here speaking to you tonight from the bima. I had some trepidation at first as I had no idea what would be involved but soon Ilayne's words of encouragement soon put me at ease. So I accepted her offer. Ilayne told me that only 15 people were chosen to be asked to enroll and what a honor it was. Or so I thought ! (Pause for laugh) For at the end of the last class Ilayne came up to me and said I quote " Hey Ben you're a lawyer you like to talk a lot why don't you address the congregation" but I digress.

So What does the Maccabee Leadership Academy mean to me? Connections, connections. As they say timing is everything and I had been interested in getting more involved in Temple activities so being asked to enroll in MLA was a natural progression. This progression began 5 and a half years ago when my wife and I and our 15 month old daughter Gabrielle moved from Hollywood to Coral Springs. My wife being the through researcher that she is had researched, what seemed like every child care in Broward County, and then decided to look at TBO's ECC. We were impressed with the warmth and dedication of the friendly staff of the school. We knew Gabrielle would have a loving, safe and enriched, Jewish environment here, and she did as her little brother Jakob does now. As I took Gabrielle to and from daycare I would meet members of the congregation. We found you all to be always warm and inviting. More connections. We enjoyed the Kotonton services where we got to know Rabbi Gross and in my business he would be called the closer, so we joined the Temple. It has been a wonderful experience being members here and has enriched our lives and helped us get more connected to our culture and given us a community to belong to.

My interest in being more involved with the Temple started recently a few months ago on Mitzvah Day when my wife (always smart observant one) says "it's Mitzvah Day at the Temple why don't you go and help out" and I thought ok it gets me out of the house! So I went and I was supposed to help out with the religious school class where Gabrielle was that day. When I got there it looked like they had plenty of help so I went

looking for something else to help out with around the Temple. So I wandered outside and saw a group of people digging up the grounds by the school drop off and I asked one of them what they were doing and if they need help. I ended up helping them setting in the path stones through the hedges, we fixed pot holes and some other things that were in need of repair I had a great time and in the process met a great group including my future Maccabee school mate Arnie Wiener. There's those connections again. By the end of the day I found myself on the Building and Grounds committee! I have a feeling that someone I met that day had nominated me for the MLA..

The Maccabee Leadership Academy has enlightened me as to how the Temple provides all it's services to us and to selfless service of the board and committee members . That this is truly a labor of love from keeping the lights on to Jewish education of the young and not so young. I am grateful for this opportunity to learn how the temple works and what I can do to help give back to the Temple for all it has given my family. Connections.