

As we are looking towards the summer (you, know, that thing that follows winter in Iowa) and we are taking summer vacations, we can use this space to reflect on what has been a busy, productive time. Summer in the Jewish calendar has traditionally been a quiet time, probably because going anywhere and doing anything in the heat of the Land of Israel was a tall order: and that sounds like good advice in the Midwestern heat too. The summer calendar lists the 17th of Tammuz (remembering the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem by the Romans) and Tisha b'Av (the 9th of Av which is the date that the Romans destroyed the Second Temple in 70 CE) so it has been tempting to see this quarter of the wheel of the year as reflective, contemplative and even a little contrite as we prepare for the High Holidays. While we are not facing the historical challenges that our ancestors did in the Land of Israel, it does make psychological and emotional sense for us to use this time to take stock. As for me, I've already started thinking about the High Holidays and the theme I would like to bring to our community as your Rabbi. The theme, which I will talk about more in future articles over the next few months is 'Be a Blessing': in what way

a musical Reform Shabbat morning service with some more great words of Torah from Rabbi Mejia, while in the afternoon, we buckled down to play Dungeons and Dragons at the synagogue: a 'pilot' project to perhaps bring in more gaming and games afternoons into the Shabbat afternoon slot. On Sunday morning, Rabbi Mejia brought us insights from his emerging Jewish communities from Latin America and on Sunday afternoon, we got to enjoy the silver-tongued Dr. Cargill in his capacity as Auctioneer at a wonderful, fun, family-friendly Auction to raise funds for our security system. I myself might have spent a bit of money on a gorgeous sterling silver Tiffany dish – I couldn't resist and it was for a noble cause. It is only appropriate to recognize the many volunteers and staff members who pitched in behind the scenes to make the Auction go without a hitch. Thank you all for your incredible hard work. All in all, it was wonderful to see our congregation come together for this wide range of events: the spiritual, the communal, the social and the intellectual.

As summer pushes on, we are starting to complete the cycle of the year. This year's Bar and Bat Mitzvah