

Beth Israel Center at the Crossroads

Our High Holiday Services were well attended this year, but the large crowds of past years were not present. Our school is in full swing, but the classes are smaller and the prospective pupils are even fewer. People move into the area, and they leave, join Beth El, or stay home, while attrition reduces our numbers.

But, we are a going concern. We are largely self-sufficient, and we appear to be able to operate, if not in comfort, at least in adequate style for the needs of most of us.

Is that where we are? And can we stay there? Or are we really at a crossroads, where we must choose between the high road and the low road?

If we continue to keep a low profile, to hold on our course, to wait for developments, we are on the low road. The cost is low, not too many of us have to work at it, we can relax and let age take its course, as we see it happening in many of the older schuls of the area. It's easy on the low road.

The high road has its ups and downs. The effort is greater, the cost may also increase, and the outcome is not as certain. We can invest in attractions for our younger people: a rabbi, a nursery school, social activities. We can develop the kind of swinging Center that we had 15-20 years ago, when the now older people had these needs; when the Center expanded to its greatest size. But the times are different. Mt. Lebanon is now a thriving area for our people. A Jewish Center is developing there. Beth El is no longer the struggling rival; it has grown and developed its activities as we have shrunken and released ours. The challenge of the high road is more exciting, but the work of competing is also greater, and there is an element of chance on the high road.

Where do we go? Do we push to excel? Do we dare to compete? And who does the work? Who bears the cost? This is the crossroads for Beth Israel Center as we proceed with our New Year. Which of us will accept the challenge of the high road? And will the rest of us follow?

E.W.