

Standing taller - Temple Beth-El Las Cruces

Newsletter article for February 2014

On January 12, our Religious School community planted a new tree just outside the playground. As I looked at these trees of different sizes—small and new, to “medium” to “taller” — I thought about how they represented life, growth and continuity.

They are all at different points in their life cycle. The new tree is like a child who is beginning to write his or her own “book of life” with deeds and experiences, accumulating what will be a wealth of memories, represented by the two trees flanking it.

The newest tree has a wooden stake beside it to provide stability, which is necessary for the winds that blow strongly in Las Cruces. The taller trees have a stronger foundation and are more rigid, but they can endure the wind because they are also flexible. We have that possibility in our lives as well. Over the years, we establish our personalities and our values, our perspectives and our interests. We might think that we necessarily become set in our ways, but that may not be the case. Even the tallest tree in the photo can bend. It still grows and can change its shape. We can emulate that possibility for growth as we move forward in our lives, one year to another, and one decade to another.

These trees can also represent our relationships. The smallest tree signifies the beginning of a friendship, community connection or a family bond. The neighboring trees demonstrate how relationships can deepen as we engage in interactions that nurture the many aspects of fellowship and partnership that can hold us together.

As has been announced, I will be continuing as rabbi of Temple Beth-El for another three years. As I look at those trees outside the playground, I think about how they represent the ties that Rhonda and I have developed with many of you and will continue to sustain along with you. I think about how we have, in many ways, grown together through sharing celebrations and challenges, study and worship, beginnings and endings, achievements and new opportunities. That is the essence of community. We look forward to continuing to grow together with you, as those trees will grow, in the coming years.