

I recently returned from a three month sabbatical. I was free from all of my regular temple commitments and obligations. No meetings, no classes, no services or lifecycles. No emails or phone calls—no emergencies. After nearly thirteen years, this was a time to step back, to reflect, to rest and to focus on recharging my creative juices. It's interesting that the most commonly asked question has been, "so, where did you go?" I suppose there's a romantic notion that I would have taken this opportunity to luxuriate on the beaches of Bali, or maybe rent a small apartment in Jerusalem. No. I went to Hollywood. I chose to spend a large portion of my time in a small Hollywood recording studio—fulfilling my dream of finally recording my first album.

Most days, and many many... many late nights were spent together with the album's producer, Roy Zu-Arets, recording the music of Temple Emanuel's relatively new Friday night service, Shabbat B'Yachad. As this was my first album, I was pretty sure the process would be quick and painless. After all, I've been singing all my life, and I've been in the studio before.... This should be a piece of cake, right?

Well, the truth is I had never worked with an established producer like Roy. Not only is Roy a member of Temple Emanuel (his kids attend ECC and TEADS) but he's also one of the most accomplished and sought after producer and arranger/composers in Israel. With his wildly creative spirit, endless energy, and the keenest ability to bring out the best performance of any musician, Roy guided me on a musical journey of self-discovery and awareness. Roy showed me

that there's not just one sound, or one "color." He helped me realize that I am capable of creating many different textures and flavors with my voice, much like any other instrument. It turns out that I've been so caught up in "sounding like a cantor," that I haven't been as connected to the different timbres that I'm capable of producing with my voice. The Shabbat B'Yachad music is far from "cantorial." In fact it's completely the opposite. Roy encouraged me to free myself of my own preconceived ideas of what I am supposed to sound like and explore these other elements of my instrument; to ultimately uncover the sound that is at my core.

As you can imagine, this was not easy. Often times, it was quite painful. But I know that the results will be far-reaching and that they will bring a new quality and energy to my singing that I hope you will enjoy both in this album, which I can't wait to share with you all, and ultimately, in how I approach any piece of music. □

Although the Shabbat B'Yachad album was a huge part of my sabbatical journey, it was not all. At times, as clergy, it feels as though we do what we do in a vacuum. We rarely have the opportunity to see "how they do it" at other synagogues. I am thrilled that my sabbatical gave me the opportunity to attend both Friday night and Saturday morning services at other local temples. It was truly eye opening to learn from the many different and multi-faceted synagogues in L.A. From Reform, to Orthodox and everything in between, I was on a quest for connection. There are so many ways to connect: through the music, the

teachings, the sermon, and, the community. At services I attended, I was interested in finding these moments of connection. Often times I found it, but, not surprisingly, not a single shul does "it" exactly like another. However, each experience gave me food for thought—from prayer to Torah to connecting with our Creator. I know the experiences I had will always be a part of me as I continue to grow as your cantor.

I feel grateful for the gift of time and perspective, growth and change. I return to you with a sense of accomplishment, renewal and an energized passion to serve with my heart and my soul.