

My Years at Strathfield Synagogue

I first came to Strathfield for a tryout during Shavuot 1982, and then eventually came before Rosh HaShana of the same year to take over from my brother, Rabbi Mordechai Gutnick. During my tenure we had on average about 15 to 20 kids at the Sunday cheder and we almost always had a minyan three times on a Shabbat, as well as every chag, even when the chag fell on a week day. I do not recall us ever missing a minyan on a chag. Seuda Shlishit was a very special time when the minyan who gathered sang shabbat zemirot and usually enjoyed some delicacy made by Arthur Kohn - the Strathfield Shule master pastry chef.

Some special events that I especially remember were the bar mitzvahs of Ronan and Daniel Lutman, Avi Lemberg and Ricky Merten as well as weddings in the Schneider family. The donation of a brand new Sefer Torah by the Moses Family which I specially picked out was another special event . Communal seders were had every year with an attendance of between 70 to 100 people. I remember one Purim Fancy Dress Party when the costumes were extraordinary . The costumes were colourful and varied and I remember John Philips came dressed as the Pope and we had the whole range of costumes all the way to someone dressed as the devil himself.

The President of the shule during all the years of my tenure was the wonderful Sam Steif - a man of absolute integrity devoted to the shule, the community and the Land of Israel.

Looking back these were very enjoyable times for me and my family personally. I and my family were very young and we felt as if the older members of the shule had adopted us. The families that stand out in that regard were the Steifs, Kohns, Lutmans, Schneiders and Fitchmans and of course there was always Rosetta Meinrath, the shule secretary and Ian Prosser - and there were many more. The shule had a wonderful family spirit - each member bringing their own unique flavour and character. While we were a small congregation the devotion and dedication to community and Israel was exemplary. At the end of 1987 I was appointed Rabbi of Mizrachi Synagogue and my successor was Rabbi Aryeh Leib Solomon. As you can see I look back very fondly on my five years at Strathfield.

All the best

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March, 2014