

This week's Torah portion of Emor begins with the immense requirements placed upon the priests in terms of their daily lives. Because they are engaged in holy work, they cannot come in contact with the dead unless they are an immediate relative, they can't shave their faces, and who they can marry is exceptionally small. Throw in the fact that only descendants of Aaron can serve as priests, and you have a small group of people doing a job that comes with many challenging requirements.

I think, for many, there is a false impression that synagogue leadership is similar to the above: a small group of people with challenging requirements placed upon them. This couldn't be farther from the truth. We want as many people involved meaningfully with the congregation and overwhelmingly it is a positive experience for all involved.

One challenge that often stands in the way of deeper synagogue involvement is not knowing what opportunities for leadership are available. That's why we launched this year our Sulam for Emerging Leaders Program (based upon a curriculum from USCJ), which invites newer members to gain leadership skills, study Jewish texts on the theme, and engage with the past, present, and future of the synagogue. For our inaugural cohort, we invited 12 people to participate in the program, and everyone said yes! We cannot wait to get this program started this week cofacilitated by Dorothy Stern and myself. By the end of the program, the objective is for each of these participants to find their first leadership role within the congregation. I cannot wait to see the ways that they will all enrich our congregation.

If you are looking to get involved with the synagogue or would like to learn more about our congregational efforts at this time, please let me know. We'd love to find the right way for you to participate meaningfully in synagogue life as well. The more the merrier and the better it will be for everyone.