

Beginning the Conversation
Modern Jewish Families in Their Own Words

REBECCA AND FAMILY
THE “NEW KIDS” ON THE BLOCK

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in a new city is the local synagogue.*

Due to my husband’s profession, my family has moved around quite a bit. Having grown up attending services regularly and participating in synagogue activities and youth groups I figured that the best place to feel at home and find friends in a new city is the local synagogue.

When we first moved seven years ago, I found the closest Conservative synagogue and attended services, on that occasion alone because my husband had to work. I was disappointed that no one said hello or made me feel welcome. After services I introduced myself to the rabbi who responded “nice to meet you” and that was it. I went to my car and cried a little. I was newly away from my family and looking for friends. My mom came to visit me a few months later and we tried another Conservative synagogue in the area. This time my mother too was disappointed at the lack of welcoming. In the synagogue where I grew up I was used to my rabbi seeking out any newcomers and welcoming them, but I think that does not always happen in any other synagogue.

Several years later we relocated – our experience was a bit better in a Reform synagogue where we had some friends. We first tried the Conservative synagogue, but it wasn’t very lively, so we did end up joining the Reform synagogue there. But even there, the rabbi was not friendly or welcoming.

It was on our next move when our experiences as newcomers changed. We arrived just before Passover. Not only did the rabbi welcome us warmly, but he invited our family for both seders! It was incredibly nice considering we had just moved into the area and had no family or friends there. We joined the (Conservative) synagogue and I took my son for their music and tot Shabbat programs which he loved.

We have since moved again. I will be joining the synagogue next month. I have signed my son up for preschool for the fall and we attend the once-a-month tot services. I have yet to meet the rabbi, but the staff and people we have met thus far have been very friendly and welcoming. Hopefully this will be another great experience, but unfortunately, it is never guaranteed.

