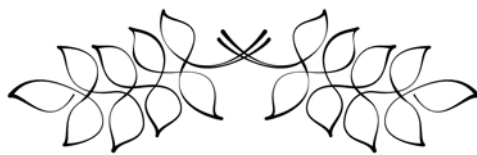


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CONGREGATION
SUKKAT SHALOM
Bulletin

Rabbi's Message

by Rabbi Sam Gordon

The concept of "Exile and Return" has been among the central themes that I have returned to during my years as a rabbi. I have always thought that the Diaspora experience has helped define Jewish life for more than 2,000 years. I have discovered a great flowering of intellectual, economic and theological ideas born in the demands of being a global and cosmopolitan people.

"...we are commanded to know the plight of the stranger -- no matter their origin or background."

I believe Judaism has responded to the challenges of being separated from a specific homeland. I have disagreed with some Zionist thinkers who deny the validity of the Diaspora experience. That does not mean, in any way, that I denigrate the value of the great miracle of the Jewish State of Israel. But, at the same time, Judaism has prospered throughout the world.

Our core story is that once we were strangers in a strange land and, because of that experience, we are commanded to know the plight of the stranger -- no matter their origin or background. The theoretical concepts of "exile" and "outcast" became very real for me on a recent trip to Berlin. In early August, I was one of 15 Reform rabbis who went on a very short study mission to Germany organized by IsraAID, a remarkable organization focusing on disaster relief throughout the world. IsraAID is a non-governmental, independent organization. It has responded to recent crises in Nepal, Japan, South Sudan, Sierra Leone and elsewhere.

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My Journey by Samantha Gordon



When people ask me why I converted to Judaism, I have a difficult time answering. It seems ridiculous to say that I always knew I would. Even before I met my Jewish husband, I was drawn to the Jewish religion. When I told my best friend from college (who is Jewish) that I was converting, she said something to the effect of, "Finally making it official, huh?" And that's how it felt -- that I was finally making official what I had known all along.

But how do you tell people that without it sounding crazy? So I usually give an easy answer: "Well, our oldest was getting close to Bar Mitzvah age and I wanted to present a united front."

The truth is so much more complicated.

I've always been a spiritual person. I'm not sure there is a higher power, but I want there to be one. More importantly, I am an ethical person and I want my faith to reflect that. I grew up in the Mormon Church, which, although it has many flaws, always placed a strong emphasis on family and community. Yet, I was dissatisfied with its "rules to get into heaven" that so many religions embrace.

What I observed about Judaism was that heaven and hell are side issues (if they exist at all). What was important was following God's commandments -- not

because it is our ticket to heaven, but because we promised we would. Like a good Reform Jew, I have selectively chosen which commandments I'm going to obey. There are 613 of them, for goodness sake! I'm not sure if I've worn clothing made of mixed wool and linen (#367), but I'm not worried about it. I know fundamentalists would disagree, although I suspect they aren't keeping all 613 commandments either. But I believe that following the spirit of the commandments is sufficient.

For me, that means trying to be the best person I can be every day. It means putting others before myself -- not to my own detriment, but to the extent that I can ease someone else's burden or simply make them feel like they were seen and heard by another human being. Then I have kept my covenant with God.

Similarly, when people ask what the process of converting to Judaism was like, I give a standard answer: "It was really interesting and I learned a ton." And then I'll make a joke about how I know more about Judaism than my Jewish-born husband. It's much easier to talk about the interesting conversations with the Rabbi, or the two years spent taking Melton Jewish education classes. Because to give the real answer -- to say that it was life-altering -- seems too intimate.

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Rabbi's Message, cont'd

In Berlin, IsraAID is working on a number of fronts offering vital continuing aid and support for the Syrian refugee community and for those who serve them. I learned many things on this mission, and I plan to speak with you about them in greater depth at Rosh Hashanah. In addition, Yotam Polizer, IsraAID's Program Coordinator, will be our guest speaker for Shabbat on October 28th.

I very much look forward to the opportunities we will have to explore the many issues surrounding this humanitarian crisis of massive immigration, what it means, and what we might do to be of help.



Members of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and IsraAID staff at a center for LGBTQ refugees in Berlin.

Journey, cont'd

How do you tell someone about all of the soul-searching and questioning that happens during the process? I had to think about and reflect on all of the things that Jews who are "born Jewish" spend their whole lives taking for granted. How do you tell someone that when you said the prayers in the mikvah, you got so choked up you could barely speak? Or how when you spoke to the congregation, and you looked out at your father-in-law fighting back tears, you completely understood what he was feeling? Or how when you stood on the bimah and held the Torah for the first time, you felt as though you were home?

"How do you tell someone about all of the soul-searching and questioning that happens during the process?"

And the truth of the matter is that the process isn't over. Sure, I'm "officially" Jewish (by some standards -- but that's a conversation for a later date). But the "conversion" is ongoing. It's the simple acknowledgement each day that I'm Jewish, and then setting out to demonstrate my "Jewishness" in the way that is most meaningful to me -- being kind, thoughtful, and compassionate toward others.

So next time you see me and want to know why I converted and what the process was like, set aside some time so we can get a cup of coffee or a glass of wine. And then I'll give you the real answer, not the easy one.

Hands of Peace: The Host Family Experience

by Larry Friedman, Kim Sterling and Eli Friedman

"Hands of Peace" was founded in 2002 with an idealistic mission statement. It seeks to "empower young people to raise their voices as leaders of change" in the ongoing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. To do this, the organization brings together teenaged Israelis, Palestinians (from both the territories and within the State of Israel) and Americans to meet, engage in social activities and "dialog" about the conflict.

The simple idea is that if the teenagers become friends, learn to trust one another, and get to appreciate each other's perspective, they will return to their communities and become a voice for understanding. If they influence others in their families, schools and larger communities, they become a force multiplier for long-term peace.

This year, we became a local host family for Yoav Braude, a 16 year-old from Sha'ar Efrain, a moshav not far from Netanya. This was his first year participating in Hands of Peace and our first year as a host family.

A Hands of Peace (HOP) host family has two basic functions. First, it provides a safe place for the participant to live during the 18-day program. Since the HOP schedule is packed with activity from morning to night, this basically means a place to sleep and have breakfast. And because we are dealing with teenagers, many of whom are away from home for the first time, it helps to have a good Wi-Fi connection.

The second major component is providing transportation to and from HOP events. That usually meant getting to the Glenview Community Church, but there were also events at Sukkat Shalom and the Islamic Cultural Center in Northbrook.

During the course of the program, we had a few opportunities to organize our own activities. We took Yoav, who is a musician, to a free concert at the Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park and a morning at Navy Pier followed by an architecture tour from the river and lakefront. We also took a really interesting bus tour through Greektown, Chinatown, Pilsen and Bronzeville. The tour included a brief discussion of the history of Chicago's Jewish community, particularly as it relates to the Maxwell Street market.

What Yoav wanted more than anything was to see an NBA game, but the summer timing was not good. Fortuitously, the U.S. Olympic basketball team was playing Venezuela in Chicago, which created an opportunity for us to see what was effectively an NBA All-Star team.

Providing a safe and stress-free environment did not offer many opportunities for us to discuss the actual substance of the HOP dialogues, which is how HOP seems to want it. For us, some of the most enlightening times came while shuttling Yoav and a young Israeli woman to and from Glenview. With just enough English to be polite and, occasionally, to ask for an opinion from the driver, they engaged in heated debates over the politics and his-

tory of the conflict -- as well as where to find the best burger in Tel Aviv.

Our experience with HOP was almost entirely positive. There was a bit of a dustup when the Palestinian delegation gave a provocative presentation to the collected participants and host families. While it was uncomfortable for everyone, it provided an opportunity for continuing dialogue.

After meeting in Chicago, the HOP participants can continue to meet and talk through HOP-sponsored events in the U.S. and Middle East. Alumni can stay in touch through HOP, even when borders make that difficult. Some alumni have started peace-building programs at home.

It is easy to see this as a simple exchange program allowing Israelis and Palestinians to spend time in the U.S. with host families. But by bringing together Israelis, Palestinians, and Palestinian citizens of Israel in a way that facilitates an open dialogue, HOP is working to build a grassroots peace movement. We were happy to be a part of that



Yoav Braude (left) and Eli Friedman on the shores of Lake Michigan.



Rabbi Gordon speaking to Hands of Peace participants during Shabbat at Sukkat Shalom.

Stumbling Over the Past Gives Us Hope for the Present

by Beth Gomberg-Hirsch

[In the Spring newsletter, congregant Beth Gomberg-Hirsch wrote that her husband's ancestral home in Germany was to receive a Stolpersteine – literally, a "stumbling-stone" in the street to document that its Jewish occupants had to flee during the Holocaust. In this follow-up account, Beth writes about attending the dedication ceremony this past May.]

About two years ago, a high school class in Gross Gerau, Germany, was researching their town's history with the Holocaust, and came across the title to my husband Austin Hirsch's grandparents' house.

Apparently, in 1935 the Hirsch home was sold very cheaply, which raised a red flag. After poring through records, the students determined that the house was sold by a Jewish family that felt the need to leave because Germany was becoming a dangerous place for Jews.

This finding comports with our family's known history. Austin's father Burt -- or Bruno as he was formerly known -- had moved to America but returned to Germany to visit and was horrified at the changes he saw. He convinced his family that they had to leave immediately. They left Gross Gerau in 1935, spent several months in Frankfurt waiting for papers, and emigrated to the United States in 1936 -- where Burt was able to help them settle into a new life in Chicago.

Records showed that the house in Gross Gerau was bought by the Hoeffel family, which still lives there. The students also found that, in 1945, a modest reparations payment was made to the Hirsch family. And that's where the story ended -- until now.

This past May, our family -- including our two daughters and baby granddaughter -- arrived in Gross Gerau and

was met by Herr Prawtich, the pastor of the ecumenical council who has made the remembrance of the Holocaust in his community something of a cause. He took us straight from the train to the high school.

The school stands on the former-site of a Jewish-owned factory, so the school has a Stolpersteine in front of its main door. In a nod to the building's history, the clock from the factory graces the main foyer. If you were to envision what a high school class in Germany looks like today, the stereotypes would not apply; Germany has become a melting-pot, and the students



The Stolpersteines for the former-occupants of the house at 11 Walter Rathenau in Gross Gerau.

reflect that.

We were shown a synopsis of the students' project on the Hirsch family, given a light lunch and a tour of the school. From there, we set off to see what was left of Jewish Gross Gerau. We were shown the site of the former synagogue, which is commemorated with a plaque, and walked through the town to see the ten homes that already had received

their Stolpersteines. Ours was in a group of three more, which would bring the total to 13. There are still 220 sites left to be commemorated.

We were the only family members present from the three new sites, and felt a bit like celebrities. There are now three generations of the Hoeffel family connected to the house at 11 Walter Rathenau Strasse. The father who purchased the home is dead. His son, grandson and great grandsons attended the ceremony in which the stones were laid, but the mother and daughter did not attend.

Understandably, this is a hard thing for the Hoeffel family to deal with -- having their part in a nefarious past put on public display. However, it was the grandson who actually paid for the stone honoring Burt. Stolpersteines in Gross Gerau are paid for entirely by private citizens -- in our case, by teachers and church members from the town. Each stone costs 120 Euros, so it is not an inconsequential act of kindness.

At 9 a.m. on Saturday, May 21, 2016, a small crowd of about 60 people showed up in the courtyard of one of the homes being honored with its Stolpersteine. Gunther Demning, the artist whose life's work has become the installation of Stolpersteines, began preparing the sidewalks for their stones while Herr Prawtich, the students, a government of-

ficial, Austin and daughter Bruni all made remarks.

The entire ceremony, with the exception of Austin's remarks, was in German (Bruni's being in both German and English). I have no idea what was said other than recognizing the list of concentration camps, but I am sure it was an homage to the importance of remembering the

cont'd

Shabbat “Greeters” Help Build Community at Sukkat Shalom

[Last year, Sukkat Shalom began a program to provide “Greeters” at Shabbat services and other congregational activities. Below are some of their stories. If you would like to become a Greeter, please email Lesley.Peters@gmail.com.]

Miles Paris: “One of the defining, core values of our community is that our congregation is based on relationships. I’ve often heard Rabbi Gordon talk about his definition of our success as a community: If one of us is in need of help or support, we would feel comfortable reaching out to a fellow-congregant. My personal involvement with our congregation has

deepened over time, and I’ve been blessed by making many valued friends over the arc of my relationship with Sukkat Shalom.

“That reality is never more evident than when I’m serving as a Greeter. It gives me a chance to warmly welcome old friends that I haven’t seen in awhile. Or, perhaps, I am able to meet some new congregants. Most importantly, it gives me a sense that I’m involved in the life of our congregation. But be careful when I greet you -- you just might get a hug.”

Sarah Miller: “As with most volunteer opportunities, one receives more than one gives as a Sukkat Shalom Greeter. For a couple of Shabbat services each semester, I attend when I probably would not have done so -- even though I am always glad when I go.

“I greet a few congregants that I know, meet some that I’ve never seen before, and help out wherever needed. Thus, I become more solidly a part of the Sukkat Shalom family -- without having to worry about a long-term commitment that would be difficult to keep. Lesley Peters and Judy Buckman make it easy by planning the schedule months at a time. I hope they will keep me in mind when they plan for the future.”

Claire & James Meyers: “Serving as Greeters at a Shabbat service was a wonderful way to experience Sukkat Shalom. We greeted each person with “Shabbat Shalom,” and were able to welcome “regulars” as well as those we had not yet met. The evening we were there was the Shabbat before a B’not Mitzvah. The large, extended family was present and made up of many different religions, including Muslims. We were so proud to watch the service and the guests’ reactions to being with us. This is why we love Sukkat Shalom: We welcome all!”

Marlene & Norman Carl: “Being a Greeter for Shabbat services is an enjoyable way to be an active part of the Sukkat Shalom community. Providing a welcoming smile, greetings, and exchanging pleasantries with congregants you know is very nice. You also have a chance to welcome members you have not met previously, and say hello to new members, which is an important part of who we are as a congregation.

“Sukkat Shalom is more than just a place to go to worship; it is a place of caring, education, fun activities and fellowship for all who wish to participate. Following the service, you have a wonderful opportunity to chat with new members and folks you have just met, which adds to the rewards of the evening. Being a Greeter is like welcoming friends to your home.”

Stumbling Over the Past, cont’d



Townpeople and family members gather after the dedication ceremony.

past. Afterwards, we walked over to the former Hirsch home and took many pictures with the high school class.

One of the pictures we had sent to the class for their project, and which had made the local newspapers, was of Ella, Burt and baby Austin in Hyde Park. We took a similar picture in front of 11 Walter Rattenau with Austin (named for his grandfather August), Bruni (named for her grandfather Bruno/Burt) and baby Ella (named for her great-great grandmother Ella). It was extremely moving to see the namesakes stand in front of the house where those whom they were named after once lived. Life does go on.

The Hoeffel family in its entirety joined us for the photographs -- even the daughter who was ambivalent about this Stolpersteine program. People asked us if we were bitter or angry, but those were not the emotions we felt. Austin and our daughters had been given a piece of their history they had never known about.

The fact that everyday citizens -- total strangers to us -- researched and paid for this commemoration revives one’s hope in the goodness of humankind. This little event in this small town in Germany makes one realize that there are moments in life that can take our breath away. A simple brick with a name, a date of birth and a departure date bears witness that a person lived -- and will live on.

Discovering the Surprising Jewish History of Shanghai

by Caryn Caffarelli

My multi-cultural, multi-ethnic family and I love to travel. We've honored our Jewish-Christian, Italian-Russian, French-Canadian, and Chinese heritage through our trips -- making connections between our family's past and present. This summer we visited Shanghai, Nanchang, and Fengxin, China.

The history of Shanghai is fascinating. This vibrant city has been at times a melting-pot born of necessity. We met friendly people, ate delicious food, toured ancient sites adjacent to some of the world's tallest skyscrapers with state-of-the-art technology, and enjoyed world-class entertainment. And we were touched to learn about the history of its Jewish community.

"Today, there are an estimated 3,000 Jews in Shanghai."

Jews came to China as early as the 8th Century from areas in Iran and Persia along the Silk Road. Many settled in the city of Kaifeng. Over the centuries, through assimilation and intermarriage, its Jewish community has all but disappeared.

In the second half of the 19th Century, the first wave of Jewish immigrants arrived in Shanghai. They were from Iraq and included the Sassoon and Hardoon families who played a big part in developing trade. Later, Jews from India came as traders, Ashkenazi Jews from Europe came after World War I, and Rus-



Jewish refugee memorial sculpture in Shanghai, China.

sian Jews arrived to escape the pogroms. The Jewish communities established schools and synagogues and contributed to the local economy.

By the start of World War II, Shanghai was an open-trade city with no restrictions on immigration and no visa required for entry. It quickly became a safe haven for thousands of Jews escaping Nazi Germany, Austria and Poland. Life in Shanghai was complicated and, with the Japanese occupation, became ever more difficult. After the war, most Jews emigrated to Israel and the West.

Today, there are an estimated 3,000 Jews in Shanghai. On our visit we toured the Jewish refugee memorial and synagogue. At the entrance to the museum there is a sculpture of a family of Jewish refugees and an impressive, bronze wall listing



Home of the historic synagogue serving the Jews of Shanghai.

the names of the Jews who lived in the area. The small museum houses many interesting artifacts, shows an intense informational movie, and operates a small gift shop. Everything is presented in both English and Chinese.

The synagogue is located across the small courtyard. Inside are a lovely ark and a Torah, donated by the Federation of Local Authorities and Mayors of the State of Israel as an act of friendship between the Israeli and Chinese people. We were told that, on occasion, the synagogue does hold services.

Discovering the history and remnants of a Jewish community in Shanghai was an eye-opening experience. We look forward to a return trip and to making more connections.

Young Sukkat Shalom Congregants Win Interfaith Leadership Awards

Two members of Sukkat Shalom recently received 2016 North Shore Interfaith Leadership Awards sponsored by the Wilmette Interfaith Leaders Organization:

Jake Biales of Glenview has been active at Sukkat Shalom as a teacher's assistant and a Family Retreat teen leader. He also participated in NFTY and has been a loyal URJ Olin- Sang-Ruby Union camper.

Jake graduated from Glenbrook South High School and is attending Tulane University, where he hopes to pursue film production, history and philosophy in his desire to be a storyteller.

Jordyn Greenbaum of Highland Park was a dedicated teacher's assistant at Sukkat Shalom. She attended the Religious Action Center's L'Taken program in Washington, D.C. and spoke passionately for social justice in the Senate and House offices on Capitol Hill.

Jordyn spent most of her time in high school involved with the Congressional Debate team, both as a speaker and as head of the research team. She is attending Haverford College, where she plans on studying neuroscience and Spanish.

Mazel tov to these two fine leaders. We wish you continued success.

Hineinu: We Are Here for You!

Here are some excerpts from letters our Hineinu Committee has received for its acts of lovingkindness toward members of the Sukkat Shalom family:

The Shabbat Bag was such a welcome surprise. The baby is doing great. Thank you for your thoughtfulness.

The soup was very comforting and reminded me how much our congregation cares about its members. Thank you.

What a lovely surprise! The bag of Shabbat goodies and baby books from the Hineinu Committee were delicious and so appreciated. After reading the information about the committee, I thought that maybe it would be something that I could help with, too. I'm not sure what my free time will be like, but I can always bake and shop!

Shalom and Best Wishes for a Sweet New Year

by Rabbi Carlie Daniels, Director of Lifelong Learning

The Hebrew month of *Elul* marks the beginning of the High Holy Day season, a month for self-reflection and preparation before Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The High Holy Days offer us a new beginning and a chance to return to our best selves.

What an exciting time it has been for me as I settle into my full-time role here at Sukkat Shalom. I feel honored to be part of such a vibrant and caring community, and I am looking forward to the year ahead. I am so thankful for the warm welcome that my husband, Ryan, and I have received from this community.

I have enjoyed meeting many of you at Shabbat services, Family School and individual meetings inside and outside of the temple building! I hope to meet many more of you over the High Holy Days, as well as at future community celebrations and services. If we have not had a chance to meet yet, and you have a free moment during the week, I would love to meet you for coffee or for a chat on our sofas in the building. You can reach me at the office—(847) 251-2675—or email me at cdaniels@sukkatshalom.org. I look forward to connecting with you soon!

As the High Holy Days approach, may this new relationship we have forged continue to grow and flourish. May this be a season of renewal, growth, and sweetness for us all.

Shanah Tovah U'metuka—May this be a sweet New Year!

Musical Notes: Meet Our New Cantorial Soloist

by Ken Lyons,

My name is Kenny Lyons, and I am your new Cantorial Soloist! I cannot express deeply enough how excited I am to be a part of your (now our!) congregation. The community here is welcoming, warm and caring, and I am thrilled to call myself a part of it.

I was born, raised, and schooled in Madison, Wisconsin, but both of my parents called Chicago home for many years. (In fact, my mom is a New Trier graduate and lived in Wilmette.) I come from a very musical family. My dad is a professional pianist and plays in the Madison Symphony Orchestra. My mom graduated from the Goodman School of Theater and acted in musicals for most of my childhood. Their love of music was not wasted on me; I went on to pursue and obtain a Bachelor of Music degree in

classical voice.

While at UW, I started singing in parts of the High Holy Days services when the synagogue I grew up in went through a transitional period between cantors. My involvement grew until I was performing weekly at Shabbat

and B'nai Mitzvah services, as well as through the entire High Holy Days by my senior year of college. As I thought about what I wanted to do after graduation, it dawned on me that becoming a cantorial soloist would be perfect for me. It allows me to combine my passions for both music and education. It also affords the opportunity to give back to the Jewish community that helped shape the person I am today.

At Jewish summer camp, my counselors encouraged me to major in music in college. At synagogue in Madison, the education director praised my teaching ability and planted the seed that would develop into my pursuit of education positions in the Jewish community. At Hebrew school and Sunday school, I met the people that would become my best friends in the world.

Now, as I join the Sukkat Shalom community, I realize what an important posi-



tion I am in! As I get to know more and more of you, I hope to become that same source of inspiration and encouragement that others were to me -- whether from the music I help to provide at services, the various classes and private lessons I will teach, or simply from a conversation we might share.

I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to the entire Sukkat Shalom community for welcoming me so completely into your fold. It took only one service for me to feel as though I were truly at home.



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Learning the Lessons of a Spiritual Radical

This Fall, Rabbi Gordon and Rabbi Daniels will be leading a three-session class on the writings of Abraham Joshua Heschel. Heschel was one of the leading Jewish theologians and philosophers of the 20th Century. He was a scholar of Jewish mysticism but also a leading activist in the American Civil Rights and Anti-Vietnam War movements. He marched in Selma and was the prophetic voice for progressive American Judaism.

Heschel has been called a "spiritual radical." He was the author of some of the most transformative works of Jewish thought, including: *God In Search of Man*, *Man Is Not Alone*, and *The Sabbath*. We will be reading essays from his book, *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*.

Classes are at 7 p.m. on October 17th, November 1st and November 10th. Please RSVP to sukkatshalom@sukkatshalom.org if you plan to attend.