



CONGREGATION SUKKAT SHALOM

Bulletin

Rabbi's Message

by Rabbi Sam Gordon

"When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."

Leviticus 19: 33 and 34: *Kedoshim*

Remember—*Zachor*. We are commanded to remember that we were slaves in Egypt. We are told to remember the Sabbath day. We are instructed to remember how Amalek attacked the Israelite tribes wandering in the desert. We observe *yizkor*—a day of remembrance.

Why do we need always to remember the past? The cliché is that those who fail to remember the past are doomed to repeat it, but the Jewish requirement is slightly different. We are to remember

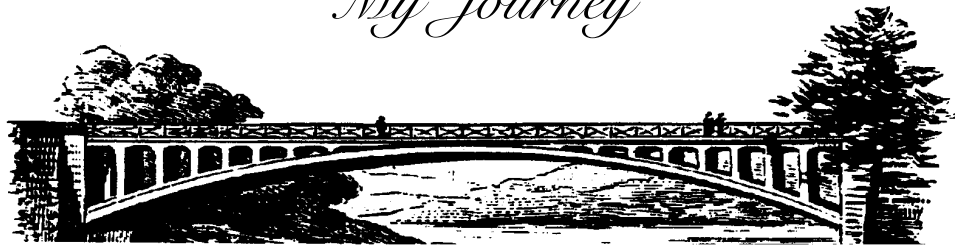
"This is a good time to remember that we were once immigrants in America."

the past in order to insure that we do not repeat the injustices that were done to us in the past through our own actions towards others today. We were slaves in the Land of Egypt, therefore we should always know what it feels like to be a slave or an outcast or oppressed. "Never oppress the stranger or the poor, for you were strangers in a strange land."

History reminds us that, no matter what level our current comfort or prosperity, we too once shared the plight of those who are, today, outcasts. This is a good time to remember that we were once im-

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My Journey



On my 13th birthday, my mom wrote me a note for my bar mitzvah: "As a Reform Jew," you will have the freedom to select and choose those ideas and ideals you can live with and live by. There is no doubt in our minds that you will be a very good human being—and that's the best one can hope to be, regardless of profession or anything else."

During the service, my dad told me to consider the words of the prophet Micah: "To do justice. And to love goodness. And to walk modestly with your God." I don't remember much else about my bar mitzvah (except dancing a lot with my girlfriend Liz Kavief and, later on in the evening, trying to kiss Helene Charnow with no success), but those words had a lasting effect.

For my affirmation three years later, my older brother Steve gave me Martin Buber's *I and Thou*. Steve wrote: "I hope that you will keep thinking about your values and beliefs, and continue to use your powers of reason." (I couldn't make heads or tails of the book at the time, but I loved Steve's inscription.)

So, for me, Judaism has always been characterized by reason and responsibility, justice and goodness, choice and values. And family, of course. And while I've learned a bit more about being Jewish since my teens, these ideals still capture the essence of Judaism for me.

Trish came into the picture much later. Is it possible that a beautiful Lutheran girl from Wisconsin had even more to teach me about being Jewish than what I had already learned? You betcha. In fact, she helped me become a Jew by choice rather than just by default.

Trish and I joined Sukkat Shalom right after our first son was born, in 1998. And in a preposterous turn of events a couple years later, I dropped out of corporate life and we moved to Israel so I could start rabbinical school.

It was Trish's idea, to tell you the truth. I was getting bored in my career and was exploring the non-profit sector. Over a glass of wine she blurted out: "Why don't you become a rabbi?" I guess she thought Rabbi Gordon's job looked cool, or maybe she was just kid-

"Is it possible that a beautiful Lutheran girl from Wisconsin had even more to teach me about being Jewish?"

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My Journey, cont'd

ding. But, somehow, that's what we did.

Moving to Israel with our two young boys was an adventure. As I said in an article I wrote for Sukkat Shalom at that time: "Leaving behind a successful Chicago-based consulting firm (where I was president) to become a rabbinical student at the Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem (where I'm in Hebrew 101) may not have been the most rational move of my life, but it's been one of the most exciting."

After a year in Israel, we moved to Cincinnati for four more years of rabbinic training. I became a student rabbi for congregations in West Virginia, Indiana and Ohio, and was a chaplain at a local hospital. It was pretty strange at first -- praying with the sick and dying, celebrating life-cycle events with new couples and new babies, counseling folks from all backgrounds on all sorts of issues. Sometimes I felt like a phony -- like a kid playing grownup. Other times I couldn't believe the impact I was able to have; the lives I hope I strengthened.

While I still do a bit of "rabbi-ing" now and again—funerals, weddings, workshops on ethics and public policy—I've focused my career for the time being on merging Judaism and business. After ordination I stayed in Cincinnati to become the CEO of the Cincinnati JCC, and last year we came home to Wilmette where I've become the COO of JCC Chicago.

We love being back in Chicago and being part of the Sukkat Shalom family once again. I'm not sure where the journey is going next, but I hope and trust it will continue to be guided by reason and responsibility, justice and goodness, choice and values. And family. Always family.

Rabbi's Message, cont'd

migrants in America. The current illegal immigration debate is a complicated one and there may be no easy answer. But we, who were once immigrants, should know in our very souls what it would feel like to be stopped on the street, asked for our papers and, if things were not in order, to be subject to deportation.

The State of Arizona has chosen to deal with its very real problem of illegal immigration in a way that denies the basic rights of decency and respect that all people are afforded by American law and tradition. A person can be stopped if there is a suspicion that he or she is an illegal immigrant. One can easily imagine the skin color of those who will be suspected of being undocumented.

"There is something in our own collective memories that should be deeply troubled by this action."

There is something in our own collective memories that should be deeply troubled by this action. We, as a people, recall enslavement in Egypt. We, as a people, remember what it was like to be asked by police or soldiers for papers and documentation. I know that the Jewish community is actively involved in fighting the Arizona law. You may want to be in touch with the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs in Chicago (www.jcua.org) or the Religious Action Center of the Reform Movement in Washington (www.rac.org).

We, as a people, remember what it was like to be new immigrants to a strange land. The Torah teaches us how we should treat others who are oppressed. *Zachor!* Never forget!

Cantor's Corner

by Cantor Ross Wolman

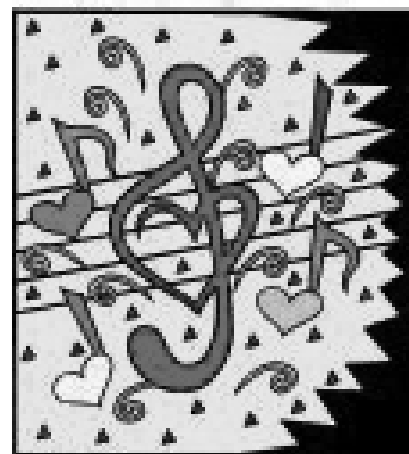
Each time of year has its seasonal music. There are holiday songs and memorial songs, songs of celebration and songs of cultural heritage. Each season we anticipate the music we will hear. These songs build a cultural connection along with seasonal foods and colors. Summertime brings a unique palette of sounds and songs as we venture out into the world of summer concerts and festivals.

In the coming months we may hear music at Ravinia and Grant Park, Blues Fest and Jazz Fest. Some will even reclaim their youth by attending Lollapalooza, the three-day festival featuring more than 100 groups and artists.

These music festivals are part of our summer and our city. Every other year there is also a festival for our people. The Greater Chicago Jewish Festival returns in 2010, celebrating its 30th year. The Festival will have something for everyone: world-class musicians on four stages, an art fair run by local artisans, a hands-on area for kids including a petting zoo, Jewish food vendors selling everything from hot dogs to falafel.

The Festival will be held on Sunday, June 13, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Cook County Forest Preserve on Oakton Street, west of Lehigh Street in Morton Grove. There is plenty of free parking and a shuttle to the main gate. The website for the Festival is www.jewishfestival.org. If you have any questions or need more information, you can reach the Festival at 847-933-3000.

See you there!



The Greater Chicago Jewish Festival: A Life-Changing Experience

Trick question: where can you expect to find 30,000 Jews laughing, eating, viewing works of artists from around the world, singing and dancing to music, debating politics and generally having a great time? Outside of Israel, it is right here in our own backyard.

For the last 30 years, a group of volunteers led by Michael Lorge, a Chicago attorney, has hosted a huge Jewish festival in the forest preserves just outside Chicago. The festival features world-famous as well as local musicians, artists, writers, organizations and kids' activities. Both the attendees and the participants represent a wide Jewish spectrum. You are as likely to sit next to a large Orthodox family enjoying falafel and listening to a Klezmer band as you are a group of North Shore teenagers discovering kosher sushi while checking out their friends' high school band.

Why would these volunteers work so hard to put on this great party for just one day? Because of the deep sense of community that it creates and the satisfaction that stems from being a part of something that is found nowhere else in North America. How do I know? I have been on the Steering Committee for the Greater Chicago Jewish Festival for the last dozen years.

Being a part of the Festival has been a tremendous experience for me and my children, allowing us to experience the fun of being Jewish in a large, inclusive group and introducing us to a wide array of under-the-radar leaders in the Jewish community. The Festival is also where I met my husband, Mick. Here's the story:

About 15 years ago I was a single mother with a rudimentary knowledge of Judaism, trying to raise two very spirited toddlers. Our synagogue *chavurah* consisting of other families with preschool kids decided to spend the day at the Festival. We spent a beautiful day making Star of David paperweights at the kids' tent, listening to music at the Family Stage, checking out the book shuk, and relaxing in the shade with a warm slice of pizza and a cold drink.

For the next Festival (they are held every two years), I signed up to help out. For six months, my sons, Brian and Daniel, attended every meeting with me, bringing coloring books to entertain themselves as we sat on the basement floor at Michael's house to plan the Festival.

The day of the Festival was a blur. We all had been given specific jobs, but everyone helped where they could. Brian and Daniel handed out programs and entrance stickers. We worked with the sound guys to wire the stages, set up miles of snow fencing, prayed for sunshine, moved picnic tables, tested the generators and sinks, directed dozens of organizations to their booths, stocked T-shirts and water bottles and prayed for sunshine once again as we waited for people to show up.

And show up they did. That particular Festival had a record 35,000 attendees with Peter Himmelman and Debbie Friedman playing with 25 other acts. The sun came out and we danced, sang, ate and had a great time. It was a fabulous, exhausting, exhilarating day.

“About 15 years ago I was a single mother with a rudimentary knowledge of Judaism, trying to raise two very spirited toddlers.”

Several years ago, I couldn't help but notice a tall, dark, handsome man at one of the meetings who, although a doctor by day, was a self-described Festival 'shlepper.' The day of the Festival, I was working at the Family Stage and he was loading 2-by-4s into a truck. Not a very romantic setting, but it worked for us. Both of us had always been involved in volunteer work and never expected anything in return. However, as Mick put it once we were engaged, "who knew not-for-profit work could be so profitable?"

Last Festival, I invited Cantor Wolman to be part of the Entertainment Committee, given his love for and knowledge of Jewish music and his high degree of energy. The picture (above) says it all: we're still smiling after a long, hot day in the sun surrounded by 30,000 of our friends! We can't wait for June 13th and the chance to do it all over again.

Congregants Can Race Against Hate

The Sukkat Shalom Running Club is planning to enter the Ricky Byrdsong Race Against Hate (10K run and 5K run/walk), which is being held this year on Sunday, June 20th. For more information about the race or to run with Sukkat Shalom, please contact the office.



Hineinu Committee Offers Joy of Connection Through Caring

Being a member of Congregation Sukkat Shalom has brought many gifts into my life, including a strong sense of community, friendships, a sense of religious tradition for my children, and comfort with a religion and culture I did not grow up in. Most important, I have discovered the common theme between my religious background (Catholicism) and Judaism, as well as with other world religions: a sense of unity and community is achieved by sharing in the joys and sorrows of others and offering care and support to those in need.

I learned in my childhood that Jesus taught us to "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Both the Old Testament (Leviticus 19:18) and the New (Mark 12:31) teach us to "love your neighbor as yourself." These words have been the guiding force in my life. Thus, it was natural for me to join our Hineinu Committee -- a "caring" community providing support during challenging times, whether due to illness, the loss of a loved one or the joy of a birth.

For the past year, I have enjoyed the special task of preparing and delivering Shabbat baskets to congregants who have experienced illness, loss or birth. This task has proven to be both enlightening and empowering, and a lesson in the joys of giving and receiving. The process begins with the simple yet comforting act of gathering the ingredients and assembling the Shabbat baskets: buying and wrapping the challah; tying the Shabbat candles together; writing a note for each of the recipi-

ents related to their specific event; then placing in each basket the wine, challah, candles, laminated prayers, note, and -- saving the best for last -- a special, sweet treat made lovingly by a fellow committee member, Tristian Berry.

I find this task therapeutic, as it begins the integral process of connection. After mapquests are done and delivery routes determined, it is always a mystery as to who I will encounter along my journey and the stories they will share. Oftentimes, I find no one home and leave the basket in a safe place. But often I have been invited in to share a cup of tea or coffee with wonderful conversation and new friendships. Always, I have felt a sense of fulfillment in bringing comfort to others. I have been pleasantly surprised by gracious voicemails thanking me for the gesture of reaching out, the sense of a caring community, the giving and receiving.

This little assignment has truly been a gift from God for me, as this past year has been one of significant personal and financial loss. This task of delivering Shabbat baskets has been the bright spot on a clouded horizon; a light in a dark tunnel. In

the giving of baskets, I have learned to receive more graciously. I have learned from their recipients how to accept the care and support of fellow congregants with grace and gratitude. I have learned to hold at bay my need to immediately repay the generosity of others, especially when both they and I know that I am unable.

Thank you, dear Shabbat basket recipients, for teaching me this invaluable lesson! I am truly blessed to be a member of this caring, sharing community; this shelter of peace.

Good News About the Good News Community Kitchen

I recently had the opportunity to attend the First Annual Meeting of the Good News Community Kitchen (GNCK), one of the organizations through which members of Sukkat Shalom have performed Tikkun Olam. The meeting began with a social hour at the facility, where I met Kelly Quackenbush (President), Rev. Marilyn Pagan-Banks (Executive Director), Rabbi Bruce Elder from Congregation Hakafa (Board Member) and many other board members and partners.

We then moved next door to GNCK's new offices. While their space is small, it has allowed them to expand the services they provide to the community. Members of the board reported the following information on the GNCK's activities during the past year:

continued



Tikkun Olam: Repair the World

Dear Friends:

The past year has been difficult for our family. We have lost two very important family members. My mother passed away in mid-August after a long illness. My husband's father passed away in early-January. You think that as an adult you are ready for these kinds of changes in your life, but that is not true.

The support of our family and friends meant a lot to us. This includes our Sukkat Shalom family and the members of the Hineinu Committee. Having a member stop by and bring the Shabbat basket (not once, but twice!) was a wonderful surprise. The fact that Suzanne could sit and visit for a while was heartwarming. How nice to find a new friend to share the good memories of our loved ones.

On behalf of our entire family we want to say thank you for being there.

Sincerely,

Good News, cont'd

- ♦ Served more than 52,000 meals (an average of 142 per day). Unfortunately, the demand is increasing. Since GNCK is located close to the "L", its patrons come from all over Chicago. Unlike other shelters, GNCK serves a meal every day.
- ♦ Logged 11,000 volunteer hours. (The ideal number of volunteers is 15 per meal.)
- ♦ Served 53 tons of food.
- ♦ Hosted a holiday party for 30 families.
- ♦ Held a health-screening day in their new space, and a separate dental health day.
- ♦ Changed the method of serving patrons from cafeteria-style to restaurant style, which has been a big improvement and is loved by the patrons.

While they are proud of their work in feeding the community, GNCK wants to put itself out of business by addressing the reasons their patrons need food. With this in mind, they have begun:

- ♦ A mortgage foreclosure mediation program, which has received \$3.5 million in funding.
- ♦ Created a rental improvement fund to encourage apartment owners to continue to provide affordable housing.
- ♦ Conducted leadership training for their patrons.

As an indication of their broader mission, they have renamed their organization: "A JUST HARVEST, breaking bread, ending hunger." They devoted a lot of time and thought to re-branding themselves. The logo that accompanies the new name is attractive and meaningful.

The organization will host its annual fundraising event on 10/10/2010 and hopes to raise \$101,010.

All in all, this organization is run by an impressive and devoted group of people who have support from more than 30 passionate partners and 2,700 volunteers. The challenges before them are great, but the support behind them is even greater. I believe they can harness that support and continue to make a real and meaningful difference in people's lives. I hope that members of Sukkat Shalom will continue to lend a hand.

Family Learning Can Extend Far Beyond the School Year

by Rabbi Ari Moffic, Director of Family Education

What is a mensch? It literally means a man or a human being. It has the connotation of being the best person we can be in terms of kindness, compassion and integrity.

During our morning assembly this year we have been discussing various attributes that make for a mensch. We have been tying these characteristics into stories and holidays. We have passed out "mensch cards" for families to take home to serve as prompts for spotting and cultivating these values in ourselves and in our children. Here are some characteristics:

Shema- Listening; heeding the call the action

Haporeis Sukkat Shalom- Creating a shelter or sukkah of peace and being welcoming to guests and friends

Emunah- Faith in God, our tradition and our power to change the world

Tzedakah- Helping to make the world right, fair and just

The next time we sit down for a family meal, or tuck in younger children, or go for a long car ride, we can take the opportunity to tell our children what characteristics we think they have that celebrate the beauty of humanity. We can also talk about ourselves, about who we are and who we strive to be.

We call our Sunday program Family School because the whole family comes for learning. We are not a family school because parents and kids are necessarily learning the same subject or learning in the same room together. We are a family school because we try to pave the way for lasting and meaningful family learning, which happens organically in the home and in our daily lives. We try to give tools, knowledge, books and excitement to bring Jewish tradition alive in a variety of ways. This is organic family education because it is natural and stems from the real questions of our children.



Over the summer, think about reading and discussing your favorite Bible stories as a family. The Reform Movement's website (www.urj.org) has Torah commentaries for adults and table talk guides for families with young children. Think about taking a nature walk and discussing Jewish attitudes towards the environment. (See www.coejl.org for lots of great information.)

Volunteer at Good News Community Kitchen or another soup kitchen and use resources from www.mazon.org to deepen the experience. Try saying Hamotzi as a family for one meal a day. Saying this one-line prayer will help us slow down and appreciate our blessings -- and our responsibility to help those who are hungry. Try saying the Shema at bedtime as a way to relax and go to sleep feeling safe, connected, protected and loved. Come to our Shabbat on the beach services and bring a picnic dinner!

There are so many opportunities for family learning each day of the year. Summer can be a special time for pursuing our love of learning while bonding as a family.

Facilities Search Moving Forward

by Jesse Peterson Hall, President

I want to update you on your board's efforts to establish a long-term facility arrangement, especially for worship. Since the last newsletter, there have been two significant developments:

In late March, First Congregational Church of Wilmette (FCCW) determined that their church could not appropriately support the programming needs of both congregations. Therefore, as we previously disclosed to you, we will not be able to resume sharing space with them. However, we will continue to do the joint programming with FCCW that has been a hallmark of our relationship.

Recently, the existing church property in Wilmette that we had investigated last year lowered its asking price. At the same time, we have received indications from lead donors in our congregation that there may be sufficient financial support for a capital campaign to finance the purchase, renovation and operation of our own facility.

As a result of these factors, the board has asked its Exploratory Committee to perform more rigorous due diligence over the next 60-to-90 days on the congregation's ability to raise philanthropic support sufficient to purchase and renovate an existing church property in Wilmette. The committee also will explore the ability of this property to support our congregation's activities once certain improvements have been made.

The financial feasibility of purchasing and improving the building without incurring long-term debt or a traditional building fund is one of the key elements of our due diligence. Congregation Sukkat Shalom has been fortunate to remain a strong, stable congregation with a balance sheet and membership size that have withstood the recent economic downturn. Maintaining this stability is a key objective of any recommendation for a facility purchase that would be brought to the congregation. We will provide further communication to the congregation once our due diligence is completed.

Please note that our current arrangement with Community Church of Wilmette continues to provide us with sanctuary space and can do so for the foreseeable future.

I want to take this opportunity to thank our outgoing board members, Cathy Korzon, Kathy Freedman and Andrea Pauls Backman. All three have been invaluable members of the Sukkat Shalom board and have given much time and effort on behalf of the congregation.

I also want to acknowledge the commitment of Pamela Richardson to our congregation in light of her great work in organizing and implementing our congregational engagement effort, which is now underway. We are looking forward to the important feedback from congregation members.

Please feel free to contact me at any time with your comments or questions at the temple office.

In My Old Age

the silence of sundown
blossoms into song
and I can only decline
the other side
the underside
of song

at five my hair was yellow and curly
I was thin as water
and beautiful as
wildness in an unblighted field

today my hair is whiter than
a wildness of snow
and I'm as unbeautiful
as vanished wisdom
seeking tomorrow
in yesterday's songs

I've gone from here to there
in the space of a breath
between songs
between measures of song

I almost hear
the silent songs of yesterday
and the humming of
tomorrow's songs

but today
today I bless the present
that dies
with each new exultation
of song



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