



CONGREGATION SUKKAT SHALOM

Bulletin

Cantor's Corner

by Cantor Ross Wolman

As the frigid snow of winter descends upon us there is a fond buzz when I talk with my colleagues. We are all looking forward to camp. Many summer camps have had registration open since October, but it's this time of year when the camp folks enter crunch time. Camp reunions are held, session registration is filling up, and we faculty members (rabbis, cantors and educators) are meeting to plan the lessons we will be teaching at camp.

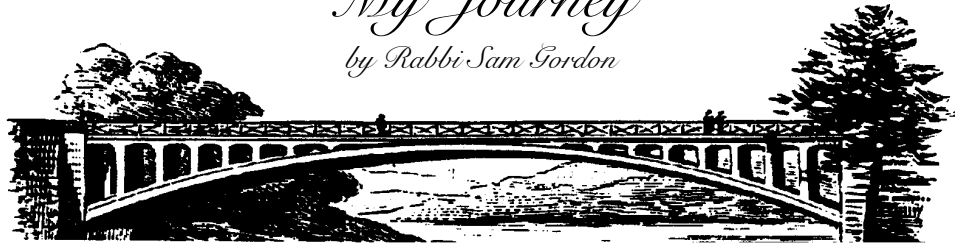
This summer will be my third time spending two weeks on faculty at OSRUI (Olin Sang Ruby Union Institute) and I am so glad that several Sukkat Shalom kids will be at camp during that time. I value the informal learning atmosphere that OSRUI provides and the incredible energy and enthusiasm that is evident in campers and counselors alike.

This year, however, registration has become much more difficult for everyone as the recession has affected us all. Tuition scholarship applications are at an all-time high and the amount of money in the scholarship pool is simply not enough to meet the demand. In response to this growing need, the American Conference of Cantors (ACC) has created a new initiative to raise funds for camp scholarships on both the local and national level. Cantors around the country have held concerts in support and, so far, tens of thousands of dollars have been raised.



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My Journey by Rabbi Sam Gordon



This newsletter has always published the personal journey stories of our members. This time I would like to share a bit of my own family's journey.

I grew up in Pittsburgh with a fairly narrow worldview. Until my college years, the furthest I had ever traveled was to Baltimore, Washington, New York or Cleveland. Even within Pittsburgh, most of my childhood was spent in the confines of the middle-class Jewish "ghetto" of Squirrel Hill. But I heard tales of a place far away from where my grandparents and most of my uncles and aunts had emigrated in the early years of the 20th Century.

My family had come from a *shtetl* by the name of Pliskov, not far from Kiev in the Ukraine. For some reason, most of the townspeople emigrated to Pittsburgh and my grandfather, along with others, established a landsmanshaft -- an organization of fellow immigrants from the same town.

The Pliskover Free Loan Association had, as well, a cemetery and women's auxiliary. My father spent a great deal of time at meetings of the organization and, more importantly, had a circle of friends based on the connections to that town. In some homes people were divided into Jew or non-Jew. In our family, it was Pliskover or not.

I remember those meetings of the association and the poker or pinochle games that followed. The second day of Rosh Hashanah, if it fell on a weekend, would be celebrated in a home with the Pliskover Torah, followed by a lunch of stuffed cabbage, chopped liver and a good bit of schnapps for the men. Later in life, when I read Maurice Sendak books to my children, I could recognize most of these old men and women in the illustrations.

I had never found Pliskov on any map. The name of the town is etched on a window memorial at the U.S. Holocaust Museum, and I found the name at Yad Vashem in the Valley of Lost Communities, but all I knew was that it was near Kiev in the Ukraine. In mid-January I joined a rabbinic mission to Kiev organized by Chicago JUF. For three very cold days, twenty Chicago rabbis visited sites in Kiev, Zhitomir and Berdichev. I never did get to Pliskov, but I was close.

On a bus ride from Kiev to Zhitomir I downloaded Google maps and found the town, plotted it against a detailed map of Ukraine and finally located the place that was my

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My Journey, cont'd

grandparents' home. I was about an hour and a half away, but supposedly there are no remnants of the Jewish past there. The town was wiped out by the Nazis on October 22, 1941, three weeks after the massacre at Babi Yar in Kiev.

But as we travelled the roads of rural Ukraine, it was easy to imagine the life of my grandparents and great grandparents. There were small villages scattered along the road. The houses were typical of the architecture of the *shtetls*. The harsh cold and ice made it very clear to me what their winter lives must have been like.

In Kiev, Zhitomir and Berdichev, we saw the remnants of what had been a vibrant and dynamic Jewish culture. There were the synagogues and study houses as well as centers of commerce, and the homes of Shalom Aleichem and Golda Meir. This area was home to Hassidic dynasties and secular industrialists as well as revolutionary writers and activists. But only a remnant remains. We stood at

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Babi Yar, read the poetic words of Yevtushenko and recited kaddish for the martyrs. One third of Kiev was Jewish in the 1920's. Today, there are 90,000 Jews still living there.

I visited the many social service and educational programs provided for the Jews of the Ukraine through the Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish Agency. The quality of the services was extraordinary. From early childhood programs to day centers for the elderly, the needs of the population were met with dignity and devotion. I met with young children, teenagers and adults of all ages. In so many cases, I felt that I was speaking with my own relatives who had once lived in this same area.

But most of all, I was reminded that I was very lucky.

My grandfather and grandmother left the Kiev area 100 years ago, and for that I am profoundly grateful. A month prior to my standing at Babi Yar, I attended the White House Hanukkah party and watched as the President and First Lady officiated at the lighting of the Hanukkah menorah. A choir from the University of Maryland sang *Maoz Tsur* and quartets from the Marine Band played Jewish music in the public rooms of the White House.

My grandparents could have never imagined such a scene.

Cantor's Corner, cont'd

I have been privileged to co-chair our local concert, presented by the Reform Cantors of Chicago, our local organization. On **Sunday, March 7th**, at 3 p.m., we will hold our concert at Con-

gregation B'nai Jehoshuah Beth Elohim, 1201 Lake Cook Road in Deerfield. The concert is entitled "Singing for S'mores" (in honor of the popular camp treat). Many area cantors have signed on

to participate in this family concert that will include camp-style music sung also by area youth choirs and camp song-leaders.

We are also holding a raffle with prizes! Grand prize will be a two-week camp scholarship to OSRUI or another Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) camp. Other prizes include a \$1,000 stereo speaker system, an acoustic/electric guitar and gift cards to many local restaurants.

For concert ticket and raffle info, please go to singingforsmores.eventbrite.com

Thank you for helping our effort to send kids to a great camp.

REFORM CANTORS OF CHICAGO PRESENTS
Singing for S'mores
FUNDRAISING CONCERT FOR OSRUI AND URJ CAMP SCHOLARSHIPS
SUNDAY, MARCH 7, 2010
CONGREGATION B'NAI JEHOSHUA BETH ELOHIM
1201 LAKE COOK ROAD, DEERFIELD
DOORS OPEN 2:45PM CONCERT 3-4:30PM

Participants include: area Cantors & Soloists, Rabbis, youth choirs, and OSRUI songleaders!

Raffle for TWO 2-WEEK SESSIONS AT OSRUI and more!

Tickets begin at \$18/adults, \$10/camp-age kids 7-17
Raffle tickets - \$10 each/3 for \$20
Tickets available for purchase at the door

For info and to purchase tickets go to:
singingforsmores.eventbrite.com

CHICAGO JEWISH FUNERALS
The Way It Should Be

Forging an Interfaith Partnership

by Rabbi Ari Moffic, Director of Family Education

To paraphrase a famous saying about the weather, everyone talks about interfaith partnership but few of us do anything about it. Well, not so at Sukkat Shalom.

I recently received an invitation from Pastor Bob Davis of Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Libertyville asking us to be part of his church's Confirmation Class Interfaith Day. He was planning a day for their 7th and 8th graders and parents to learn more about their own religion and to hear from representatives of the Jewish and Muslim faiths.

He asked if I would bring a family with middle school kids to discuss the role Judaism plays in their lives.



enrich the lives of those who participate.

This dialogue will give participants the opportunity to examine what we believe. We don't often take the time to think consciously about questions of faith, belief and practice. No doubt, friendships will be formed, new discoveries made and identities strengthened. We will find similarities across our faiths and come to respect our differences through increased knowledge and understanding.

When it comes to interfaith partnerships, we're not just talking; we're doing!

I immediately called one of our families to see if I could convince them to bring their three kids (from 3rd to 8th grade) to join me. The parents and I have had many interesting conversations about the role Judaism plays in our lives, what we believe about God, how to explain being "cultural Jews" and the importance of emphasizing the notion of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world) as a central tenet for liberal Jews and a path toward spirituality and meaning.

For one hour with our Holy Cross audience, we tried our best to convey an overall picture of Judaism while also focusing on the approach we embrace at Sukkat Shalom. The ensuing discussion was fascinating. One church participant asked how to be more sensitive and attuned to people's differing practices during the Christmas season. Another asked what we believe about eternal life. She was intrigued that the Jewish emphasis is on life in this world rather than the afterlife.

All in attendance agreed that we should establish a partnership so that our middle school students could have the chance to communicate with each other about the major questions of life and to learn from each other's faiths. Consequently, Pastor Davis will be bringing his students to a future Friday night service at Sukkat Shalom. After the service, Rabbi Gordon will discuss the experience with the church group.

In April, we will be bringing our 7th and 8th graders to a Sunday service at Holy Cross Lutheran Church. Afterwards, Pastor Davis will explain what they experienced and bring it into context for our students.

Our Congregational Mission Statement states that Sukkat Shalom celebrates diversity. "We welcome the intermarried, the unaffiliated, and those searching for a meaningful Jewish life." Undertaking this partnership affirms who we are and will

Reaping the Reward of Sharing the Harvest

November 15th was a cold and blustery day, but our congregation brought warmth and kindness to the community through our third annual Share the Harvest! The creativity and generosity of more than 40 congregants provided 46 families in need with a wonderful Thanksgiving.

Marlene and Norm have participated in Share the Harvest from the onset. Their baskets are always beautifully assembled and overflowing with goodies!

As Marlene points out in her reflections on this year's program, what better way to perform *tikkun olam* than by using a "one-day event" to drive year round *zedakah*? The excitement of the day of delivery is unmatched, but it is that continuing effort that makes the biggest difference. Many of the families who have nothing to eat at holiday time face the same predicament throughout the year. These one-time efforts to help our neighbors are most valuable when they lead to an ongoing commitment.

Once again our congregation came together in the true spirit of the season. Whether your contribution was large or small, it is huge to those we serve! We thank each and every congregational family that participated for providing those in need with joy, hope and warmth during the holiday season. We look forward to your participation in future community service events.

Many Opportunities to Help Repair the World

If you joined Sukkat Shalom in hopes of putting your beliefs into action, I invite you to help our community pursue social justice by volunteering your time or making a donation. Whether you help serve a meal in a homeless shelter in Chicago, build houses in Zion or stay overnight in a Wilmette church with homeless families from our area, we have an opportunity for you and your family to help "repair the world."

The following list describes our current social justice efforts and invites your participation. Feel free to contact me or the people who are spearheading our efforts in each area. You can reach me at (312) 420-7292 or Kraus@sw.com.

Family Promise (North Shore): This national organization has recently established its 152nd network of local congregations that provide shelter and other services for homeless families. The Chicago North Shore network is just getting started and consists of about 10 churches and synagogues that are willing

Repairing the World by Thinking Creatively

For my husband Norm and me, Share the Harvest is an opportunity to use our creativity to help families receive a meal for Thanksgiving and some basic supplies for a few weeks.

We enjoy shopping for warm winter items for each member of the recipient family: gloves, hats, scarves and sweatshirts. I've now begun putting aside cosmetic samples from department store promotions to put in the baskets.

I get samples of toothbrushes and toothpaste from dental visits; the dermatologist supplies samples as well. Hotel soap and shampoo always come home unopened when we travel, and we ask friends and family to save such items from their travels. Gathering and collecting for Share the Harvest has become a year-round activity.

I am sure that our baskets of food and special little surprises make the holiday more enjoyable for families that desperately need help. It also makes our family's holiday celebration even more enjoyable knowing that, as we gather at a full table, there are others who are doing so as well.



Tikkun Olam: Repair the World

by Ken Kraus, Social Justice Chair
to host about three families for a week.

Because we do not have a building, we are partnering with First Presbyterian Church of Wilmette, located at Ninth and Greenleaf. We are hosting families during the weeks of May 2-9 and July 4-11. Together with First

Presbyterian, we need to fill a total of 35-45 volunteer slots for a host week, including two overnight slots on each of the seven nights. Most of the volunteer slots are for two hours in the evening, either from 5 - 7 p.m. or 7 - 9 p.m. To get involved, contact Ken Kraus. For more information, go to www.familypromise.org.

Connections for the Homeless (Evanston): This overnight shelter and day center for homeless people came to our attention through Rabbi Ari Moffic and our seventh grade teacher Ari Zamarippa. Ari Z. took his class there in January. The students also went shopping on a very limited budget at Jewel to learn about the difficulty of feeding a family.

The shelter houses about 20 overnight guests and can accommodate about 50 weekly guests during the day. The organization needs a number of volunteers to help with Outreach & Customer Service, Entry Point Services, Cage Crew and Food Crew (sorting clothing and food donations), Client Support, Tutoring, Groups & Special Skills, Research, Professional Services, On-Call Volunteers, Clerical Help and Development (fundraising). To get involved, contact Ken Kraus. For more information, go to <http://cfthinc.org/>

Acts of Kindness Cabaret: Congregant Caryn Caffarelli is a board member and performer in this group that puts on shows for charitable causes. Look for a show sometime this spring or summer to support one of our charitable organizations. For more information, go to www.aokcabaret.org

Good News Community Kitchen (Chicago): We have been sending volunteers on the fourth Sunday of each month to this soup kitchen in Chicago's Rogers Park neighborhood for some time. They run a tight ship and serve about 150 people every night, 365 days a year. Volunteers dish up the food, take it to the tables, bus the tables and do the dishes. A two-hour stint is good for your soul. We need a congregant to permanently coordinate our volunteer efforts. To get involved or coordinate, contact Ken Kraus. For more information, go to <http://www.gnck.org/feeding.html>

Many Opportunities to Help Repair the World, cont'd

Habitat for Humanity (through Glencoe Interfaith Builders): Congregant Stuart Barnett remains our enthusiastic liaison to GIB, which is about to start fundraising for its sixth house -- in either Waukegan or Zion. Members of eight congregations (mostly in Glencoe) and Sukkat Shalom are welcome to volunteer their time at the building site under the supervision of skilled tradesmen. We are currently seeking donations to build the next house. To get involved, contact Stuart Barnett at (847) 822-8889 or sbarnett@barsteelcorp.com. For more information, go to <http://gib4habitat.org/>

Howard Area Community Center: Congregant Marilyn Silin is a regular volunteer at the Family Care Center. She works with the preschool kids as an observer, assesses the kids with problems and meets with the director and the teachers. She goes on Monday mornings and then often on another day to meet with staff. The Family Care Center also includes a Head Start program, a pre-Kindergarten program and other curricula. To get involved, contact Ken Kraus. For more information, go to <http://www.howardarea.org/index.html>

Maot Chitim: Rabbi Moffic coordinates our efforts with this Chicago-area organization that distributes food packages to needy Jewish families on the High Holy days and at Passover. Our Family School seventh graders help at the High Holy days and the second graders help at Passover. To get involved, contact Rabbi Ari Moffic at (312) 550-5665 or ariposter@gmail.com. For more information, go to <http://www.maotchitim.org/>

Greater Chicago Food Depository: Rabbi Moffic is also our liaison to this organization, which has a huge warehouse on the Southwest Side of Chicago. Due to its location, we are limiting our participation to Family School outings. Our fourth grade class is volunteering this year to pack food. For more information, go to <http://www.chicagosfoodbank.org/site/PageServer>

Night Ministry: This group provides counseling, health services, food and other services to teens and adults in Chicago's Ravenswood neighborhood. We usually have one day per year in which a family from the congregation buys food and prepares a bag lunch for 300 people and is reimbursed by the congregation. We still need a family to chair the event this year. To get involved, contact Rabbi Moffic. For more information, go to <http://www.thenightministry.org/>

Project Linus: Our Family School classes help make blankets for this national organization that distributes them to kids who are critically ill, traumatized or otherwise in need. We are scheduled

to work on the blankets in our second and seventh grade classes on February 21st. For more information, go to <http://www.org-sites.com/il/projectlinuschicago/>

Luggage for Freedom: This group provides towels, sheets, toiletries and children's toys to abused women and delivers them in gently-used luggage. Congregant Eileen Levy and her daughter Stephanie Barsotti are the principal participants in this effort, launched six years ago by the National Council of Jewish Women. To get involved, contact Eileen at (847) 945-7353 or chcknldy5@aol.com. For more information, go to http://www.imakenews.com/jewishwomeninternational/e_article000396258.cfm?x=b11,0,w

Share the Harvest: The mother/daughter team of Eileen Levy and Stephanie Barsotti is also in charge of this program, which provides food for needy families on Thanksgiving. Donors can give gift cards and let someone else do the work or prepare an entire meal, with flowers and other extras, and deliver it themselves. To get involved, contact Eileen Levy.

Beth Emet Soup Kitchen: The soup kitchen is part of a consortium of congregations in Evanston that run a daily program. The Beth Emet Soup Kitchen takes place every Wednesday evening, although we have been limited to one date per year to volunteer. To get involved, contact congregant Jane Rothschild at janeroths@aol.com or (847) 328-8314. For more information, go to <http://www.bethemet.org/socialaction.php>

New Israel Fund: We had a visit at the Social Justice Shabbat in January from Jeryl Levin, the Chicago director of this national organization that pushes for democratic reform in Israel. Jeryl brought Amos Gil to speak at the shabbat on his years leading Ir Amin and the Association for Civil Rights in Israel. We plan to continue working with New Israel Fund, inviting speakers that they provide and possibly raising funds for them. For more information, go to <http://www.nif.org/about/>

American Jewish World Service: This international group functions as the "Jewish Peace Corps," working in underdeveloped communities throughout the world. We are considering a congregational AJWS trip to Uganda in the Spring of 2011. To get involved, contact Ken Kraus. For more information, go to www.ajws.org

The Ark: The Ark provides free social and medical services to help distressed Chicago-area Jewish families return to self-sufficiency. For the last few years, we have promoted The Ark's Hanukkah gift program through which Sukkat Shalom families buy a small Hanukkah gift for those in need. The Ark does the work of communicating directly with donor families. To get involved, contact Ken Kraus. For more information, go to <http://www.arkchicago.org/>

Message from the President of Sukkat Shalom

by Jesse Peterson Hall

I want to briefly update you on a couple of items on which your board has been working.

Since I last communicated with you on Rosh Hashanah, your board has continued to seek a facility arrangement that best meets our current and future needs. We have yet to finalize our analysis and continue to review a number of options including: a) entering into a shared arrangement with First Congregational Church of Wilmette; b) entering into a shared arrangement with Community Church of Wilmette and; c) purchasing our own building.

We hope to bring the long-term plan for our facility needs to you in the next several months. In the meantime, we will continue to worship in Community Church of Wilmette, educate our families in the Wilmette Community Recreation Center and administer our congregation from our offices at 444 Skokie Boulevard in Wilmette.

In the spring, we are planning a congregational engagement forum in which we will hear from congregants on what aspects of Sukkat Shalom matter most to you. The knowledge and insights we gain from this important forum will help guide the board as it undertakes a strategic planning effort in the fall/winter of this year. We will be sending out separate communications on this and I invite and encourage your active participation.

Please feel free to contact me with questions or comments at jphhall@aol.com or (847) 251-6048.

Sukkat Shalom Running Group in Formation

Many of us are looking for spiritual fulfillment and opportunities for giving. So here's an idea: a Sukkat Shalom Running Club.

The idea took shape as I was running along the lakefront. The weather was perfect, my breathing slipped into an easy rhythm and, before I knew it, I had run seven miles. By the time I finished, I had this idea about a congregational "running club." At the peak of my run, I decided that we would create the largest congregational running group in North America. Then I remembered the truism that the longest race begins with a single step.



So I began thinking about choosing a race to run this spring. We would announce it in the newsletter and see how many fellow congregants join in. We might run one or two others over the summer to see if we could generate enough interest in a regular Sukkat Shalom running group.

I looked up road races scheduled for Spring 2010 and found an 8-kilometer race that looks appealing. It's a fundraiser to fight Leukemia on Saturday, May 8th in Crystal Lake, Illinois. This race demonstrates how we could combine the idea of a congregational running club with supporting different charities - in effect, repairing the world while we run. The link for the race is: <http://www.kic-leukemia.org/events.html>

If you're interested in joining with fellow congregants to enter this race, please email Judy Buckman at JJBuckman@aol.com.

Let's lace up those running shoes and show 'em what Sukkat Shalom is made of!



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