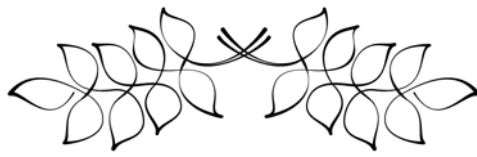


Volume 17 – Issue #1
Winter, 2012
444 Skokie Blvd, Suite 300
Wilmette, Illinois 60091
tel: 847/ 251-2675
fax: 847/ 251-6002

www.sukkatshalom.org



CONGREGATION
SUKKAT SHALOM
Bulletin

Rabbi's Message

By Rabbi Sam Gordon

I had once thought that the words "Jewish extremism" were an oxymoron. I was naïve. Recent reports from Israel have told a story of ultra-Orthodox (Hareidi) actions that might remind us more of the Taliban than of a modern, enlightened Judaism. In the town of Beit Shemesh and elsewhere, the Haredim are attempting to impose their rules of "modesty" on others in the community.

"Elsewhere in Israel, public buses are segregated by gender, with women forced to sit in the back."

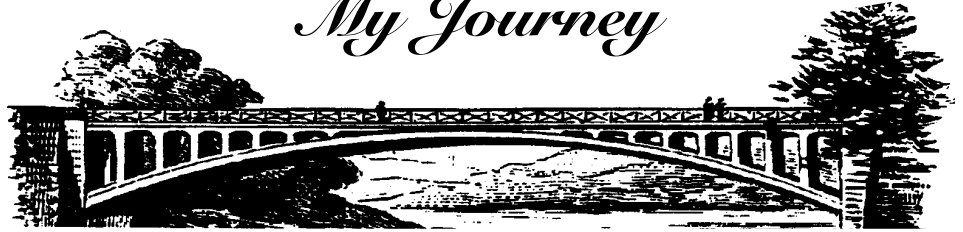
In one of the most egregious cases, an eight year-old Orthodox girl, dressed covered from head to toe, was harassed and spat upon by members of another ultra-Orthodox sect. In parts of that same town, women and men are expected to walk on separate sides of the street. Elsewhere in Israel, public buses are segregated by gender, with women forced to sit in the back.

The Israeli Defense Force has begun to limit the role of female soldiers, particularly in public assemblies. Women physicians have been excluded from medical conferences because Orthodox male doctors won't sit in the same room. When there have been attempts to limit this harassment, the Hareidim have staged protest demonstrations with children dressed in concentration camp garb. They have denounced the Israeli police as Nazis.

These events are both shocking and not surprising at all. The Israeli political system relies on coalitions that give

please turn to page 2

My Journey



I was raised by parents who were ambivalent about their Judaism. My childhood rabbi was an atheist and the founder of Humanistic Judaism. It was not uncommon for me to be told by my Jewish peers that I was not a "real Jew" because of where my family belonged. My father always stressed the importance of having a "strong Jewish identity," yet I was totally confused about what this meant. As a result, I turned away from Judaism for many years.

Ten years ago, as I was well into my own spiritual searching, I joined Sukkat Shalom. I was drawn to the openness, the search for meaning, and the large number of interfaith families. I felt that I had found a place where I could start to learn from the beginning and be surrounded by many of the rituals and cultural parts of Judaism that I really loved. What I didn't realize then was what a perfect match I had found to eventually bring home a child from a different culture.

On every birthday after turning 30, I began to calculate how many childbearing years I had left. I developed a "Plan B": if I turned 43 without a mate, I would adopt a baby on my own. In truth, this "plan" was nothing more than a way to calm my anxieties about being single, as my biological clock was beginning to tick in my ear.

Shortly after my 37th birthday ("tick, tick, tick; six years until 43"), in a moment of true despair, I had an epiphany: I could adopt a child on my own, and I could do it NOW. While I was terrified by the implications, I felt so clearly that this decision was right for me. Adoption stopped feeling like a consolation prize, but rather like a wonderful opportunity. I began to feel incredibly empowered to take charge of becoming a mother -- something that I valued so deeply.

"What I didn't realize then was what a perfect match I had found to eventually bring home a child from a different culture."

After much research and soul-searching, I decided to adopt from China. The journey was a long and frustrating one. After a "paper pregnancy" that lasted years longer than I expected, I was referred a beautiful, 22 month-old girl. From the moment I saw her information, I knew it was true *b'shert* that we were coming together. I still get choked up when I tell people about the synchronicities that ultimately led to our being paired with one another.

My mother and I traveled to China and met Allison Mei Yu a few weeks after her second birthday. The moment Allison was brought into the room and handed to me was one of

please turn to page 3

From the Rabbi, cont'd

unwarranted power to small interest groups. The ultra-Orthodox parties have been able to hold consecutive governments hostage to their demands for theocratic control of family life and personal status. Now, those same groups are insisting that the general public conform to their social norms. Too often, the government acquiesces.

I have often written about the political extremists in Israel. They are the settlers who believe that all the Land of Israel is a land grant from God and that Jews have the exclusive right to control

“The general Israeli population does not want to be held hostage to a small group of religious extremists.”

and govern its territory. According to this ideology, the borders of the Land of Israel were established by God in the Bible, and that sacred testament trumps all other claims. The ultra-nationalist religious groups have been indulged and entitled by successive Israeli governments, but at least those same governments officially reject the claims of “Greater Israel” and accept the goal of a two-state solution.

Now, religious extremists have moved further into the social dynamics of the state. Walking along the boardwalk of the Tel Aviv beaches, one would never imagine that there was any possible limit to immodest dress. But there are really two Israels—one secular and one ultra-Orthodox. The Hareidim are now imposing their standards on the rest of the population.

The secular Israeli public is beginning to fight back. They do not want their society to be run according to medieval standards. They object to the financial support given to the ultra-Orthodox that permits them to avoid both national service and general employment. The general Israeli population does not want to be held hostage to a small group of religious extremists. We can help the efforts of Israelis to insure an open and progressive Israel by supporting the New Israel Fund and the Religious Action Center of the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism.

Save the Date

On Wednesday, May 23rd,

Rabbi Gordon will be honored by the Avodah

Corps as one of three 2011

“Partners for Justice.”

The event will take place from

*6-8:30 p.m. at Nacional 27 restaurant, located at
325 W. Huron Street in Chicago.*

*All congregants are invited to attend. Tickets are
available at: www.avodah.net/annual-events/*

Cantor's Corner

Looking for the Mensch in the Mirror

by Cantor Jason Kaufman

Purim has always been one of my favorite Jewish holidays. I love the sheer campiness of it all! Leave it to us to somehow take a story about potential disaster and transform it into a wild and fun celebration.

Jews throughout the world celebrate Purim through the creation of original Purim shpiels -- theatrical shows that tell the story of Purim in an updated, satirical and oftentimes musical way. Congregation Sukkat Shalom has a long tradition of creating fun and exciting Purim shpiels, setting the story of Purim to modern shows and composers.

I'm happy to announce that this year's Purim shpiel will be set to the music of ... Michael Jackson! I couldn't be more excited! Accompanied by beloved melodies that span Michael Jackson's entire career, starting with the Jackson Five, we will recount how Mordechai and Queen Esther saved the Jews from a near-certain fate of destruction.

I'm not looking at the “Man in the Mirror” ...I'm looking at YOU! Whether you have participated in the Purim shpiel for years and years or this will be your first time, we want you to participate. So the question is: “Will you be there?” Are you prepared to make this a “Thriller” of a good time?

We need singers, actors, dancers, set designers and, most important, adults of all ages who just like to have a good time!

Below is the list of rehearsal and performance dates. All meetings will take place in the basement the Community Church of Wilmette, 1020 Forest Avenue. If you are interested, please contact Cantor Kaufman at: jasonrkaufman@gmail.com.

Sunday, Feb 26th at 3 p.m.

Sunday, March 4th at 1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 7th at 7:30 p.m.

Performance: Saturday, March 10th at 7:30 p.m.



Journey, cont'd

overwhelming joy. Ironically, this same moment was one of my daughter's most frightening and heartbreaking ones, as it was then that she lost everything she'd ever known.

I would be lying to say that our transition was an easy one. Allison coped with the changes by clinging to me for dear life. She didn't let me put her down for the first month, and could only sleep when on top of me. She was afraid of many things that we

“Our family looks “different,” and we have found ourselves in a community that makes room for “different” within its core values.”

don't even think about twice: the feeling of grass or snow under her feet, stuffed animals, and

much more. I learned how to help her feel safe and slowly we began the journey of attaching to one another.

Three and a half years later, you would never know that this was the same child. Allison has faced so much, emotionally and medically, in her young life and yet she now approaches each experience with curiosity, enthusiasm and joy. She truly exemplifies the word resilience. Like all loving parents, I have many dreams and hopes for my daughter. My hope is that Allison will grow up proud of her Chinese heritage, and I am working hard to learn about it and expose her to whatever I can. It is also hugely important to me that my daughter always feels at home within the Jewish community.

Our family looks “different,” and we have found ourselves in a community that makes room for “different” within its core values. Over the past few years, we have enjoyed many special milestones and moments at Sukkat Shalom. Allison loves attending services and participating in Family School. I see how we are both beginning to grow strong roots in the Sukkat Shalom community. Through these experiences, I feel hopeful that my daughter will grow up with a strong Jewish identity and a clear sense of belonging – the very things that eluded me for so long.



Learning How Every Voice Can Make a Difference

by Alissa Zuchman, Director of Family Education

How do Jewish values shape our commitment to living an ethical life?

That was the question for three of our high school students who attended the L'Taken program through the Religious Action Center of the Union for Reform Judaism. Natalie, Annie and Maddy recently traveled to Washington, D.C. as part of a delegation of 300 students from across the U.S. The program focuses on how to effect positive change within the legislative process.

These three teens worked hard to come up with their answers. I watched them explore complex social and political issues such as homelessness in America, bullying in our schools, and the need for campaign finance reform. Each of them ultimately chose an issue that meant something to them personally and wrote a memo that they shared verbally with staff members from the offices of Illinois Senators Richard Durbin and Mark Kirk and Representative Jan Schakowsky.

Annie talked about the Dream Act; Natalie spoke on reproductive rights and the Comprehensive Sex Education Act; and Maddy shared her personal quest for an America with clean air and water. Here are their thoughts on the experience:

Annie: *“I had such a great time in D.C. and learned so much on this trip. Not only did I gain a deeper understanding of controversial laws and how Congress works, but I learned that I can make a difference in this country by sharing my opinion.”*

Natalie: *“This trip to Washington was an amazing and enriching experience. I learned so much about the lobbying process and the impact it can have on the course of legislation. The L'Taken Social Justice Seminar really opened my eyes to many political issues and the difference my voice can make in my congregation, community and country. I am really glad I went.”*

Maddy: *“I worked on a memo about the Clean Air Act. My wish is to have air that is healthy for all to breathe and water that is safe to drink. It is time that America uses its power to make these changes happen.”*

As I stood before the new Martin Luther King Memorial on the National Mall, one quote stood out to me: “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy. The true neighbor will risk his position, his prestige and even his life for the welfare of others.”

Through their participation in the L'Taken program, three young women from our congregation learned about the issues that will shape our future and challenged themselves to make our country and world a better place.



Tikkun Olam

Repair the World

Helping the Hungry Close-to-Home

During Thanksgiving week, my parents and I watched a show about how hunger in America is such a big problem. I wanted to help. What can a 12 year-old do to make sure that other kids and their families have enough food to eat? I decided I would do my own food drive.

So I did some research and learned that we have two food pantries within two miles of our house in Evanston. Did you know that 48.8 million adults and 16.2 million children in the U.S. live in food insecure households? I included that information in a flyer that I created to give to our neighbors. The flyer suggested ways they could help - by writing a check or giving food.

Just after Thanksgiving, when everyone was filled with the memory of overeating, I dropped off the fliers to about 60 or 70 houses. A week later I went around the neighborhood and picked up food that was left on the porches. I collected nearly a truckload of food, which I donated to Soup at Six -- a local soup kitchen started by two women (who don't have a lot of money themselves) and funded with money out of their own pockets.

I feel good helping to solve the awful problem of hunger close to home. I hope to help in other ways as well. In the meantime, I am considering doing a food drive a few times a year.

Sukkat Shalom By the Numbers	
Annual Sukkat Shalom Book Fairs:	5
Books sold this year:	250
CDs sold:	26
Boxes of Hanukkah candles sold:	14
Families placing orders:	57
Amount donated to Family School Scholarship Fund:	\$1,000

My Mitzvah Project

One of the very important responsibilities of becoming a Bat Mitzvah is to choose and complete a mitzvah project that would be meaningful to me. A mitzvah project has to do with giving and being helpful towards others that are in need. It can also help in healing and repairing the world, which in Hebrew is called Tikkun Olam. I feel a mitzvah project has a lot to do with becoming aware of the lives around me, and doing as much as I can to benefit them.

For my mitzvah project I wanted to help children who have cancer because of what my mom was going through. I also love being with young children, so I was especially eager to help kids who had cancer.

Acting is my passion. I have always loved performing and expressing myself. I thought it would be a wonderful idea to perform songs and skits for children with cancer. I called Evanston Hospital, Lutheran General Hospital, and Comer Hospital. Sadly, all the hospitals said that I had to be 14 or older to volunteer.

I was determined to help the kids in some way. I thought of the time last year when my mom and I made friendship bracelets for each other to wear while my mom was going through her surgery. I came up with the idea to make friendship bracelets and potholders to sell to the people at Sukkat Shalom and to use the money to buy items that kids with cancer would need or want.

I contacted the woman in charge of the Cancer Wing at Children's Memorial Hospital and told her about my project. She liked the idea very much. She told me that the most useful thing would be to get some DVD players that are helpful in distracting and entertaining the kids while they are going through long treatments.

I was so excited when I heard this! My mom had told me how great it was to watch a movie while she was going through her treatments. A few DVD players would be a perfect gift for the kids! Rabbi Gordon had suggested that I ask what was most needed because sometimes people who want to contribute to charities end up giving things that turn out not to be so helpful. I'm really glad I checked in with the hospital because I hadn't thought of DVD players.

My friends and I made 85 potholders. It made me feel so good that my friends really cared about helping the kids and worked so hard. We earned \$819 for my project!

A few weeks ago, my mom and I delivered six DVD players, six pairs of headphones, and a \$50 gift certificate for movies the kids might want. I met the woman I had been talking with on the phone and she was extremely grateful. Seeing how touched she was about what I'd done gave me a warm feeling inside. I realized how it sometimes feels even better to give than to receive. It is so wonderful knowing I've helped improve the lives of kids who are going through a very hard time.

Working to Protect and Preserve the World's Cultural Heritage

by Patty Gerstenblith

This past summer, I was honored when President Obama appointed me to chair the U.S. Cultural Property Advisory Committee (CPAC). In short, CPAC recommends to the President whether to impose import restrictions on archaeological items from other countries.

CPAC is composed of 11 members. Three represent the interests of the public, three are archaeologists or anthropologists, three are experts in the international sale of archaeological or ethnographic objects, and two represent the interests of museums. I previously served as a public representative between 2000 and 2003.

I have always been fascinated by the past—whether it was through Greek mythology, my first excavations in Scotland and England, or travel and study in the Eastern Mediterranean, especially Jerusalem.

More important, I believe in the power of the past to inform us of who we are, to give us a sense of belonging and identity, to teach us about history and, from that knowledge, to be better prepared to face and solve the problems of the future. The best way to learn about the past is through tangible remains—objects, buildings and monuments that are of historical, religious, social or cultural significance.

Looting and destruction of cultural objects were typically part of war and conquest. The most prominent example is the intentional looting and destruction of Jewish communities during World War II. This included their religious and historical monuments and structures, and the collections of individual Jews -- both of religious artifacts and world-class art collections. The legacy of this looting continues today in numerous private lawsuits brought by the descendants of Holocaust victims attempting to recover property taken from their ancestors.

Following World War II, a different threat developed to the remains of the past. The growing international art market, particularly in Western Europe and North America, created increasing demand for ancient art and artifacts. As the only way to obtain "new" artifacts for sale was through the looting of archaeological sites, this led to increasing destruction of such sites -- particularly in Central and South America and in the Mediterranean countries.

In recognition of this threat to the past, the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property was adopted in 1970. The U.S. was one of the first market nations to ratify this Conven-

“Looting and destruction of cultural objects were typically part of war and conquest.”

tion; President Reagan signed the implementing legislation in 1983.

Most looting of archaeological sites is conducted for economic gain. The looter sells the looted artifact through a chain of middlemen until the artifact reaches the international art market. The goal of the law is to deter conduct that imposes negative consequences on the public. In this case, the looting of archaeological sites and the destruction of artifacts and their original contexts cause all of us to lose through our diminished ability to reconstruct and understand the past.

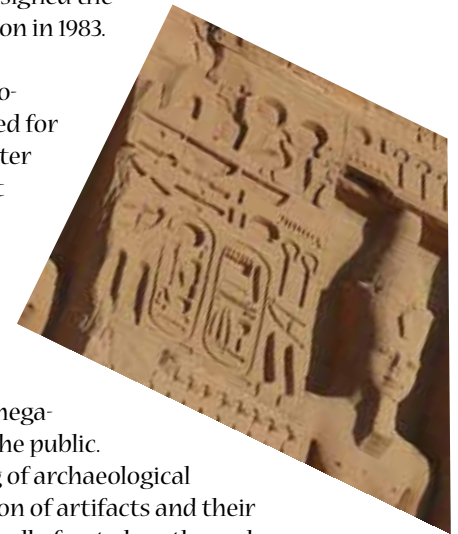
The 1983 legislation established a mechanism by which other nations may ask the U.S. to impose import restrictions on designated categories of archaeological and ethnographic materials whose pillage is threatening their cultural patrimony. A nation may submit a request, through diplomatic channels, to the U.S. Department of State. That request is then reviewed by the Cultural Property Advisory Commission.

“It is my hope that preservation of cultural heritage will continue to gain an increasingly important role in our cultural and public diplomacy.”

Because looted archaeological objects are looted directly from the ground, they are unknown and unrecorded until they appear at the U.S. border, on the market, or in a collection. Import restrictions are therefore imposed on general types or categories of artifacts rather than on specific, known objects. A State Department website (exchanges.state.gov/heritage) contains an image database for most of the import restrictions.

The U.S. currently imposes import restrictions on undocumented artifacts from 12 countries: El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, Mali, Italy, Cyprus, China and Cambodia. It recently concluded an agreement with Greece.

It is my hope that preservation of cultural heritage will continue to gain an increasingly important role in our cultural and public diplomacy. In this way, we will be able to help preserve the world's cultural heritage and pass on to future generations a greater understanding of our past.



Building Renovation Moving Ahead on Schedule

The renovation of our new building at 10th and Central Streets in Wilmette is moving along on schedule. The interior demolition is finished and the framing of offices for Rabbi Gordon and Judy Buckman is now complete. In the sanctuary, the north wall and the organ have been removed. Two new windows were recently installed, just behind where the bimah will be placed.

The elevator pit has been installed and the elevator shaft has been constructed as part of the effort to make the building



handicapped-accessible. The old boiler has been completely removed (a messy job), the electrical service is almost complete, and work on the new HVAC system has begun.



LG Construction and Wheeler Kearns Architects are doing an excellent job and the weather has been very cooperative. We are still on track for a September 1, 2012 move-in date.



CONGREGATION SUKKAT SHALOM

CONGREGATION SUKKAT SHALOM
444 SKOKIE BLVD, SUITE 300
WILMETTE, ILLINOIS 60091
847/ 251-2675
www.sukkatshalom.org

Rabbi Samuel Gordon
Cantor Jason Kaufman
Director of
Family Education Alissa Zuchman
Executive Director Judy Buckman
Program Director Amy Israel
President Jesse Peterson Hall
Vice President Fred Wilson
Treasurer Craig Caffarelli
Secretary Ken Kraus

Steve Comar
Joel Fliegel
Pamela Kraus
Miles Paris
Anne Ryan
Janet LeVee

Jill Schoeneman-Parker
Debra Shore
Steve Witt

Liz Sciortino, Ex-Officio President
Jane Rothschild, Ex-Officio President
Andrew Werth, Ex-Officio, President
Matt Baker, Ex-Officio, President

Bulletin Editor John Kupper
Layout and Design Deborah Harris