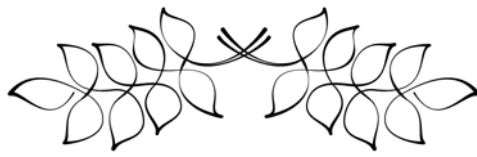


Volume 20 – Issue #1
Winter, 2014
1001 Central Avenue
Wilmette, Illinois 60091
tel: 847/ 251-2675
fax: 847/ 251-6002

www.sukkatshalom.org



CONGREGATION
SUKKAT SHALOM
Bulletin

Rabbi's Message

by Rabbi Sam Gordon

"In the beginning there was chaos--*Tohu va vohu*--nothingness and void."

So opens the Book of Genesis. God's act of creation was to put the world in order, separating day and night, dry land and waters, culminating on the seventh day with Shabbat, a day of peace. Terrorism returns us to that original state of chaos. The world doesn't make sense, and we feel vulnerable, frightened, and unsafe. With each act of terror, we are reminded that we are living in a world that is fragile, dangerous, and chaotic.

"Terrorism returns us to that original state of chaos."

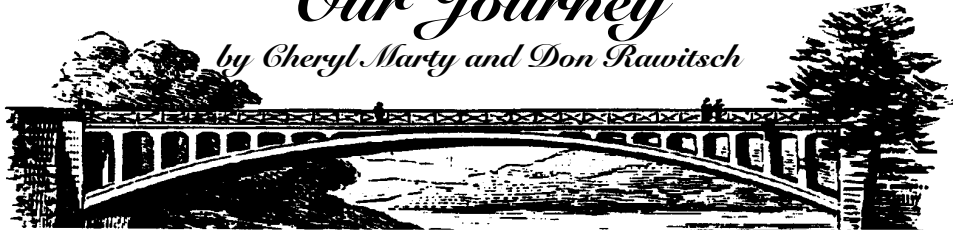
The most recent terror attacks in Paris targeted the newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* and the Jewish community. There is currently great concern and even fear among the Jews of France and much of Europe. There are right-wing, xenophobic groups and left-wing, anti-Semitic political parties. It is natural for Jews to be fearful, but this is not Europe in the 1930s. The governments are not fomenting hatred; rather, as in France, they are doing everything to battle the extremists.

There are those who are calling for French Jews to leave France, and some will surely emigrate to Israel, Canada, the U.S., and elsewhere. But the majority of French Jews feel that France is their home. French Prime Minister Manuel Valls, prior to the latest terrorist attacks, argued that it is not only the physical safety of Jews in France that is imperiled by anti-Semitic violence, but the very idea of the French Republic.

please turn to page 2

Our Journey

by Cheryl Marty and Don Rawitsch



We came to Sukkat Shalom nearly three years ago as a couple with a common goal: to find our spiritual home. We came with many shared motivations and experiences, although our religious backgrounds were very different.

Don: I was born into a Jewish family and grew up in the Chicago suburb of Homewood. As children, my parents had attended Temple Sinai in Hyde Park but came away unenthusiastic about formal religion. In the 1950s, a group of south suburban parents started a Jewish Sunday school unaffiliated with a temple to teach the history, culture, and music of the religion to their children. When, at age six, I found out that some of our neighbors were attending this school, I implored my parents to let me go. I attended for eight years.

Outside of Hanukkah and Passover, our family conducted no real observance at home. Christmas became the important "family holiday" -- probably out of a desire to assimilate with the community. I knew I was Jewish, but had few Jewish friends or family nearby. Periodically, a Jewish-related event would stir feelings of belonging in me, such as performing the powerful and moving Ernest Bloch "Sacred Service" with the high school choir.

"My heritage was Jewish but my religion was yet to be determined."

While in college, I successfully applied for Conscientious Objector status in the military draft. From my Jewish background, I determined that I was opposed to war in any form. By the time I graduated in 1972, I had worked out my story: My heritage was Jewish but my religion was yet to be determined.

"The fact that we found this place late in life, but also in partnership with each other, makes it all the more special."

Cheryl: My mother and father had strong family, moral, and ethical principles, which they openly shared and modeled. But spirituality and religion were not central to our family. My maternal grandmother followed Christian Science principles for a while, but eventually abandoned those beliefs. Our family never pursued a formal religion.

My father was the youngest of five children born to Basque immigrant parents who came from Spain in the early 1900s. He practiced Catholicism until his early teens. His mother wanted him to honor the family and become a priest. After several years as an altar boy, he decided on a different path and became an outspoken critic of formal

please turn to page 3

From the Rabbi, cont'd

The Jews of France have an extraordinarily rich history, tracing back to Roman times. In the Middle Ages, it was the home of Rashi, the great Biblical commentator. In the French Revolution, it was the first country to emancipate its Jewish citizens. It is certainly true, however, that anti-Semitism and discrimination remained a factor in French society, culminating in the Dreyfus Affair of the late 19th Century that divided France into those who falsely condemned Alfred Dreyfus and those who fought to prove his innocence.

There is a long history of the forces of right-wing nationalism battling liberalism and open democracy. But throughout modern history, French Jews remained deeply invested in the political arena. Prior to World War II, the Socialist, Leon Blum, was elected Prime Minister three times. And yet, tragically, more than one-fifth of the Jews of France perished in the Holocaust, which remains a stain on French history.

Following this most recent terrorist attack, French Jews certainly feel more vulnerable and under threat. But most French Jews will remain in France, for it is their home. There is indeed a rise of anti-Semitism in many places in Europe, but abandoning Western Europe because of attacks in Belgium, France, or elsewhere would be a victory for the terrorists.

It is important for American Jews to show solidarity with the Jews of France. They must not feel isolated or abandoned. Sukkat Shalom has been in touch with Rabbi Tom Cohen of Kehilat Gesher, a small Reform congregation in Paris. Rabbi Cohen writes:

"I have had numerous demands asking what people can do to help from overseas. Just beyond the amazing spiritual and psychological support, concern and prayers that we have received, there are some concrete actions that could be very helpful right now:

"First, the little things -- like a Talmud Torah class in Chicago sending a picture of their kids in support of us is extremely uplifting. You can always contact Javier Liebiusky, our Talmud Torah director (he speaks Spanish, English, Hebrew and French) at talmudtorah@kehilatgesher.org for actions in support of our religious school.

"Second, come and visit. The *hizzuk* (strength) we get from your presence is important. We had a couple from New York this last Shabbat who came to Friday night services. Their presence on a night when the rest of us were still in shock was priceless!

"Third, the reality is that even if the country starts to turn things around, there is so much to do that it will take awhile. We will not be able to let down our defense anytime soon... something our Israeli brothers and sisters have learned to live with so much longer than us! So this implies that we will need to keep on our hired private guards on a much longer term than our current budget can absorb. For those who want to help out in

this regard, I urge you to partner with us by donating to KG USA, our 501c3 "friends of Kehilat Gesher in France" organization in the USA. We will be creating a specific category for donations to help with security needs in our current place. That is until we can find a more suitable location for our congregation that is better secured than our current one.

"In the same vein, we will be promoting more Jewish-Moslem relations programs to which you might want to help. If you are interested in helping in these ways, you can send a check (made out to *Kehilat Gesher USA*; please note on the check that your donation is for KG France) to our friend and Treasurer of KG USA, *Rabbi Peter Grumbacher, Vice President, Finance, of Kehilat Gesher USA, 300 Woodland Drive, Wilmington, DE 19809.*"

If you are so moved to help an individual congregation, feel free to respond to Rabbi Cohen's suggestions. Additional support can be given to international Jewish communities through the World Union for Progressive Judaism. All nations must fight the scourge of terrorism and extremism. Let us hope and pray that, one day, all people will be able to live in safety and freedom.

*"It is important
for American
Jews to show
solidarity with
the Jews of
France."*

Journey, cont'd

Catholic practices. Those experiences left him very critical and suspicious of organized religion and determined to shield his own family from it.

As a child, I was curious about God, religion, and spirituality. For several years, I attended Baptist church and Bible school with my next-door neighbor, much to my father's chagrin. At 16, I joined a Missouri Synod Lutheran Church and became an active member, even teaching Sunday school. But because I divorced as a young adult, the synod excommunicated me, which left me confused and disillusioned with organized religion.

Through the years, I was struck by how my Jewish friends seemed to have a strong connection to God and other Jews. I had attended services with friends over

the years and learned about Judaism. I marveled at how my Jewish friends and their families seemed to relate directly to the traditions of their religion, especially when they welcomed me at Shabbat and Passover meals.

Don & Cheryl: We started dating some 20 years ago and, in 1996, decided to create a blended family. We explored and agreed upon all the personal and family elements that became the foundation of our relationship—except for religion.

“We enjoyed the “sacred time” at the end of each week and the welcome we received from other members”

Cheryl acknowledged Don's Jewish heritage and knew he was not a practicing Jew. Don acknowledged Cheryl's personal spirituality with no direct link to a particular religion.

That all changed about three years ago when we attended a Bar Mitzvah of Don's

cousin's son at Congregation Sukkat Shalom. As we sat during the service led by Rabbi Gordon, we noticed a brief description of the congregation on the back of the program. It emphasized exploring the faith, intellectual as well as spiritual stimulation, helping others, pursuing social justice, and being open to all. This was written for us! After attending a few more services and visiting with Rabbi Gordon and Judy Buckman, we joined -- not exactly sure of how we would fit in.

We attended Friday Shabbat services as often as possible, as well as most of the Caffeine for the Brain sessions. We enjoyed the “sacred time” at the end of each week and the welcome we received from other members. We joined just as the congregation was moving into the new building and found opportunities to get involved. We unwrapped and organized items in the new pantry and helped shelve books in the Rabbi's office.

Don was surprised at how much he remembered about Jewish ritual -- and how much he didn't know at all. His opportunity to join the High Holy Days choir rekindled his passion for performing choral music. Mostly, he felt like a great weight had been lifted as he found a place where Judaism was a comfortable fit.

Cheryl made spiritual and social connections at speaker sessions, Women's Spirituality, and Dinner with Friends. She forged strong connections with other members through the Hineinu Committee and co-chairing the Welcoming Committee, helping others to feel a part of the congregation.

Sukkat Shalom presents us with the perfect combination of life experiences: spiritual discovery, intellectual stimulation, a welcoming community, and artistic expression. The fact that we found this place late in life, but also in partnership with each other, makes it all the more special. In a life so often challenged by pressures and complexities, we are grateful to regularly gather strength from our Shelter of Peace.

Sukkat Shalom – By the Numbers

Share the Harvest - 2014

Families Fed:	47
Children Fed:	137
Adults Fed:	99
Gift Cards Donated:	23



Meals prepared for Share the Harvest 2014.

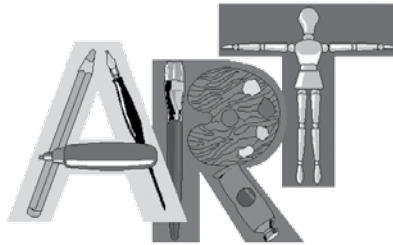
Spirituality and the Arts: Making Meaningful Connections

By Alissa Zuchman,
Director of Family Education

"Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn." – Benjamin Franklin.

As a Family School, we have the unique ability to engage not only with children, but also with parents and grandparents. The arts are a wonderful way to explore our spirituality.

As artists and teachers begin working together, lessons can connect subject matter to art projects. Students might create a quilt, with each patch representing a key idea from the Bible. Teachers might develop Hebrew letter awareness by having students "dance" letter shapes.



Sometimes, curriculum is designed to make conceptual connections between an art form and another subject—between music and prayer, for example.

Students might choose a popular song and write words of prayer to make the connection.

Actively involving students beyond traditional methods of teaching gives us the capability to make Judaism come alive.

In an arts-integrated classroom, we can connect meaningfully to a student's own experiences and feelings. Students can create something for an audience that matters to them—not just to their teachers, but also to their school-mates, families, and communities. They have the freedom to communicate productively and responsibly. They develop esthetic standards and experience a sense of accomplishment.

"Actively involving students beyond traditional methods of teaching gives us the capability to make Judaism come alive."

I have been accepted into a brand new Masters Program called Using the Arts in Jewish Education. I am excited to work with artists who can bring dance, music, photography and painting to the families of Sukkat Shalom and help us to explore our spiritual lives in creative and meaningful ways.

I look forward to taking this journey with you.

Life After Family School: Wesley Needle, Charter School Teacher

Wesley Needle, 25, is the son of Terri Gartenberg and Olin Needle – founding members of Sukkat Shalom. Wesley attended Evanston Township High School and graduated from the University of Iowa in 2011 with a Political Science major and a certificate in Entrepreneurial Business.

Immediately after college, Wesley traveled in Israel as part of the *Shorashim* Birthright Israel program. He then was accepted into a teacher-training program through Teaching Fellows Arizona. He taught 5th and 6th grade special education at an inner-city charter school in Phoenix for two years while also coaching soccer and basketball.

Wesley currently lives in Somerville, Massachusetts, and teaches at a KIPP charter school. He enjoys attend-

ing professional sports events in the Boston area, where he has seen the Bulls beat the Celtics, the Blackhawks beat the Bruins and, unfortunately, the Bears thrashed by the New England Patriots.



Wesley Needle with some of his students.



My Mitzvah Project: Creating Blankets for Hospitalized Children

I learned from my Torah Portion that, if you want something to happen, you can't just sit around and expect it to happen. You have to get up and work for it by asking for help. You need to be a self-advocate. I used to have a lot of trouble with getting help when I needed it but, thanks to my congregation and the people who helped me learn to speak Hebrew, I understand how to be an advocate for myself.

For my mitzvah project, I chose Project Linus -- an organization that distributes handmade blankets to children in the hospital. I have epilepsy so I get an EEG twice a year, and they always provide a blanket for me to use. I thought to myself: Wouldn't it be nice to have warmer blankets that had designs so kids could enjoy getting EEGs? So that is why I chose Project Linus -- and also because Linus is my favorite character in Charlie Brown.

I made tie fleece blankets for Lutheran General Children's Hospital. I went to Vogue Fabrics and chose a bunch of pretty fleece fabrics that I thought young boys and girls would enjoy having in the hospital. It took a LONG time to make all of the blankets. I made a total of 18 blankets (along with some help from friends). I wasn't able to give the blankets to the kids personally, but I can imagine how they are going to feel once they receive them.

I learned so much through this experience. I learned that, even if you do something small, it can make a big difference. It can impact someone so much, which gives you the best feeling of accomplishment.

Bringing Jewish “Mindfulness” to Daily Life

“Mindfulness” is a practice of pressing the pause-button in our lives to breathe deeply and listen to the inner call to return to our essential sanity, goodness and wholeness. With each mindful moment that we set aside, we are reminded of the greater purpose that can revitalize and ennoble our lives and work.

The Touchpoints Task Force will host an **Introduction to Jewish Mindfulness on Wednesday evening, April 29th, from 7:30 to 9 pm at Sukkat Shalom.** Rabbi Jordon Bendat-Appell of the Institute for Jewish Spirituality and *Orot*: Center for New Jewish Learning will lead us in exploring the fundamental elements of Jewish mindfulness with an emphasis on practices that can be integrated into daily life.

We will study and discuss texts that point to key elements of Jewish mindfulness. There will be short periods for meditation, study and questions. Please mark your calendars and join us for this potentially life-changing event.

Please also note that **Friday, May 8th will be our special Shabbat service to honor our senior congregants.** If you have any questions about either program, please feel free to call the Sukkat Shalom office at (847) 251-2675.



CONGREGATION SUKKAT SHALOM

CONGREGATION SUKKAT SHALOM
1001 CENTRAL AVENUE
WILMETTE, ILLINOIS 60091
847/ 251-2675
www.sukkatshalom.org

Rabbi Samuel Gordon
Executive Director Judy Buckman
Cantorial Soloist Adam Davis
Director of
Family Education Alissa Zuchman
President Fred Wilson
Vice President Jill Schoeneman-Parker
Treasurer Joel Fliegel
Secretary Clive Hohberger

Brian Fabes
Beth Gombert-Hirsch
Pamela Kraus
Ken Obel
Michael Rothstein
Anne Ryan
Marilyn Schonthal
John Shapiro
Debra Shore

Jesse Peterson Hall, Ex Officio President
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

Nominating Committee Looking for a Few Good Men and Women

Want to do your part in leading Sukkat Shalom into the future? The congregation's Nominating Committee is searching for prospective members of the Board of Directors as well as those interested in serving on a task force or committee.

If you want to serve, would like to nominate someone else or want more information, please submit your name (or name of a nominee) with contact information to SukkatShalom@SukkatShalom.org by Friday, February 27, 2015. Please include a brief description of why you would like to serve and what strengths and skills you would bring to the position or committee.

Board service and committee participation are rewarding opportunities that will strengthen your bond with the Sukkat Shalom community. There are many ways to volunteer through community-building events, social justice opportunities or project work. Committee/task force participation does not require nomination. If you would like more information on how to participate, email SukkatShalom@SukkatShalom.org

Being proposed or considered for the Board does not ensure selection. Candidates will be evaluated by the Nominating Committee (composed of both members and non-members of the Board of Directors) to ensure that the Board contains a mix of skills and demographics best serving the needs of the congregation. The slate will then be presented to the congregation to be elected by a majority of members present at the Annual Meeting in May 2015.

We invite you to participate. Sukkat Shalom's future depends on you!