The Shofar

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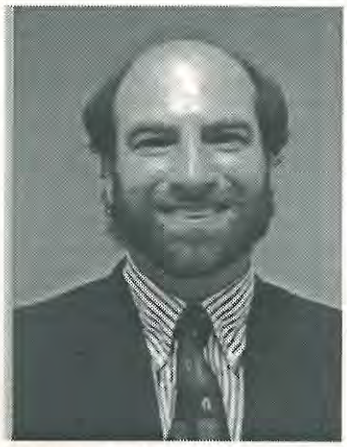
Prominent Israeli Rabbi to Spend Sabbatical Year as UJC Leader; Rabbi Sam Joseph returns to conduct 1996 High Holiday services

Leading advocate of religious pluralism says 'inclusiveness' most defines his style



While the search for a permanent rabbi continues, one of Israel's most dynamic and charismatic rabbis will lead The UJC for the 1996-97 religious year. American-born and educated Rabbi Levi Weiman-Kelman, who founded a congregation in his living room that became the center for Progressive Jewish life in Jerusalem, will be bringing impressive talents to Hong Kong as a religious leader, educator, lecturer, and political and social activist.

The grandson of two rabbis, Weiman-Kelman is heir to a rabbinical tradition that stretches back across 11 generations to the great Hasidic dynasties of central and eastern Europe. His father was an important leader of the Conservative movement in the U.S. and his maternal grandfather was a leading Reform rabbi in Chicago.

'In other words,' he writes, 'I feel comfortable (and related) to all kinds of Jews while being committed to the particular path of Reform Zionism. As my bio and course descriptions indicate, prayer and spirituality are central concerns in my rabbinate. I look forward to sharing this with your community. To summarize my approach, I suggest the words welcoming, warm, authentically Jewish and authentically liberal.'

Rabbi Weiman-Kelman will arrive from Israel with his family on August 27 and conduct Shabbat services August 30 and September 6. Earlier commitments, however, require him to be in Cleveland, Ohio during the High Holidays where he will be helping conduct services at Fairmount Temple. He will be back in Hong Kong in time for Sukkot and Simchat Torah.

A native New Yorker, the 43-year-old rabbi is married to Paula, a documentary film maker from Philadelphia's Overbrook Park. They have three children, Zohar (Zoe) 14, Benjamin, 11 and Raphaela, 8. 'We're all very excited about coming to Hong Kong,' he said .

As spiritual leader of Kol HaNeshama, the congregation he founded in Jerusalem in 1985, Rabbi Weiman-Kelman's success reflects, in many ways, a 'traditional' story of Reform in Israel in which immigrants from the U.S. and Canada, feeling disconnected from Judaism in their new homeland, led the way. He established the Congregation in Baka, a neighborhood where hundreds of Americans lived alongside working-class Sephardim. At the start most members were young English-speakers who enjoyed the combination of gender-egalitarian services and traditional ritual.

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UJC's first resident rabbi to renew ties, conduct active, High Holiday program

'I'm Coming Back . . . Home'
see Letter from Sam, page 5

When the history of The UJC is written, we'll read about a succession of rabbis and the singular contributions of each, all impressive in his or her way.

Much, however, will be made of the talents and personality of the first, and it will be difficult to imagine how, in their absence, the foundation could have lasted.

No wonder, then, at the welcome Rabbi Samel K. Joseph is likely to receive from the many friends he made as The UJC's first resident rabbi (1993-4) and High Holiday rabbi for the four years preceding.

The youngest-ever tenured professor at Hebrew Union College with a doctorate in education earned in 1979, Rabbi Joseph is a dynamic, widely published, and highly-respected member of his profession. His resumé details, in addition to the books he has written, numerous contributions to academic journals dealing with current issues such as Jewish education, population, and women plus many communal activities and workshops. All of this has earned him listings in five different *Who's Who.*

His most recent accomplishment is a major study of all facets of the religious schools and Hebrew schools of the entire Reform Movement. The study is the first one in 25 years and the most extensive ever completed. The two-year project is about to be published by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Following this, he will begin work on a book on synagogue leadership for the Reform Movement.

But resumés never tell the most important things — like what Rabbi Joseph is like as a person, what motivates him, and what gives him so much energy.

He easily relates to those he meets and even more, has a talent for heightening awareness and getting people involved. If, in the process, there is a reverse flow of energy, then it might account, at least partly, for the surplus on his end.

As we wrote several years ago, he is a man 'with enormous enthusiasm, warmth, energy and willingness to do whatever he can to help our young Congregation.' Add that to the resumé.

Since leaving Hong Kong, Rabbi Joseph has maintained many of the friendships established here through telephone, fax, and e-mail. During his stay , he will be the guest of Executive Committee member Robert L. Meyer.

From the Rabbi's Study . . .

We Jews don't say good-bye. When we take leave, we say *shalom*, the same as when we greet one another. But *shalom* is not good-bye (just as it is not hello). Meaning peace, *shalom* is a wish for someone's wholeness, completeness. One of God's names, it is a hope that everything will be full in the life of another person.

Then, when we take leave, we additionally say *l'hitra'ot* which means 'to be seen' or 'to be in the process of being seen'. That isn't good-bye. It is the hope for a future encounter, one where we will be together again.

So what is appropriate for me to say right now?

It is strange to be writing a final *Shofar* column on this, the eve of Barbara's and my leaving Hong Kong to begin yet another life adventure. In one sense, I feel as though we have just arrived, that we are still 'newcomers' and are leaving so soon. That's how quickly the time has passed. But after two years in Hong Kong, no one is a newcomer. (The pace is so quick that I'm not sure one is a newcomer here even after two weeks). And besides, if I reflect upon the vastness of our experiences here these last two years and really let those experiences sink in, what I — and Barbara —feel like are two people who have been here for a lifetime. Maybe we have. This kind of period of growth is indeed a lifetime unto itself.

But it is not the manifold and vast experiences that have made our two years here so rich. Rather it is the people whom we have met. More than anything else, they are what we will treasure and carry with us, literally for the rest of our lives.

I think of the almost uncountable number of activities and programs we experienced these past couple of years. Yet none of them is what made being the Rabbi of The UJC so exciting. Rather, it was you, the people I shared them with. Whether in the earlier months when, truly almost as wanderers, we were doing Jewish first in one place and then in another; or in the later months when, blessed with our new home on Robinson Place, we pretty much stopped moving around (though even then we still occasionally ventured into 'the wilds' or the depths of the South China Sea, as the case may have been), the people always came before the place. The people were always special.

That's what makes leaving here so hard. We studied together. We prayed together. We searched together. We played together. But always and in all ways, each and every time we came together, we *celebrated* together. In our religious/social/cultural/gastronomic gatherings, we continuously rejoiced in who we are, in how much we mean to one another, in how much our lives and our being together mean to all of us. Our by-word became this: each and every one of us mattered to each other.

So in keeping with the Jewish tradition, I am not going to say good-bye now. Instead, it is *shalom, l'hitra'ot*. Somewhere our paths will cross again, and each and every one of you who is part of this little thing of ours, this *chevre*, this circle truly of friends, is going to remain vital to my life until we do.

My prayer is that God will keep you safe and happy always, and on this, the eve of the High Holy Days, Barbara joins me in wishing that your hopes will all be realized and your dreams all fulfilled.

Howard A. Kosovske

Millodots To Make Aliyah

The UJC honored Michel and Susan Millodot at the August 9 Shabbat service for their many contributions to the Congregation and Community over the last five years. They leave August 22 for Israel where they will live in Tel Aviv. Michel noted that while they will continue to attend Reform services, the challenge will lie in learning the vernacular in which the services are given — Hebrew.

Rabbi Kosovske recalled with gratitude the assistance the Millodots gave when he first arrived in Hong Kong,, their regular attendance at services and other events, and Susan's help in teaching bar and bat mitzvah students the art of batik printing, enabling them to make batik *tallitot.*

Bob Green said the history of the Millodots in Hong Kong was in great measure the history of The UJC, noting Michel's contributions as a teacher in the Abba Eban Heritage series of videotapes, the Introduction to Judaism classes he taught, and the discussion and film presentation he gave on anti-semitism. He described Michel as the most knowledgeable of UJC members in history and Jewish history in particular. Green also noted Susan's contribution as an artist in batik when she made the *chupa* for the wedding of Nancy Pyatt and Barry Wickes.

As an expression of the Congregation's affection and gratitude, The UJC chairman presented the couple with two pairs of engraved silver chopsticks.

Earlier in the ceremony, Rabbi Kosovske explained some of the history and significance of 'making aliyah' which he said means, literally, 'going up.' The pilgrimage or migration to the State of Israel have long been very important institutions in the lives of Jews, despite the difficulties involved in preparation, the financial burden, and the taxing nature of the journey itself. Despite all this, the gains were seen to be enormous.

How to Keep in Touch

The Kosovskes

Rabbi Kosovske leaves The UJC to become the spiritual leader of a Reform congregation in Peabody, Massachusetts, a suburb of Boston. You can reach him or Barbara there as follows:

Rabbi Howard Kosovske/Barbara Kosovske
Temple Beth Shalom
489 Lowell Street
Peabody, MA 01960 USA
Tel: (508) 535-2100
Fax: (508) 536p-3115
email: hak&shore.net

The Millodots

Michel and Susan Millodot
8 Vitkin Street
Tel Aviv, Israel 63474

The UJC office will have the Millodots telephone number when it becomes available (sometime in September). When writing, Susan advises that it is best to print the address clearly to avoid problems in delivery of mail as experienced in the past.

(continued from page 1)

In the struggle for support and recognition, then-mayor Teddy Kollek provided a plot of city land which, together with foreign donations, allowed Kol HaNeshama to build a synagogue. The congregation is now housed in a large, modern temple with a growing, active membership of over 300 families. The building also has a highly successful nursery established by Weiman-Kelman, a point of apparent pride with him. 'I can't walk down the street without getting mobbed by people asking to get their kids into the preschool,' he said.

Services are regularly attended by hundreds of worshipers, as many as half of them native Israelis. 'They come wanting ritual, meaning, even spirituality, without the coercion they see in the Orthodox world,' Weiman-Kelman says. To relieve crowding, the Rabbi is now organizing satellite congregations elsewhere in Jerusalem.

'People really relate very intensely to the shul,' he says. 'A lot of North American Jews come to Israel and feel alienated from their religion; they often tell me that the first time they felt truly at home in Israel was when they came to this shul.'

The Rabbi refers to Kol HaNeshama as 'a symbol of religious pluralism and a place where secular Israelis can feel connected to their Jewish traditions.' The Congregation is affiliated with the Movement for Progressive Judaism, an organization representing the Reform movement in Israel.

Kol HaNeshama is a center not only of religious life but of political discourse as well. Weiman-Kelman is deeply committed to forging peace between Jews and Palestinians, and with the support of the Congregation has made Kol HaNeshama a center for dialogue between the two communities. Weiman-Kelman ends every service with a prayer for peace in Hebrew and Arabic, and has emerged as one of Israel's most consistent and uncompromising proponents of peace.

'We see as part of our religious commitment a strong emphasis on political action and community involvement,' Weiman-Kelman said, 'The synagogue is not just a place we come to pray in. . . .I'm very proud that the Reform movement in Israel, despite an infinitesimal amount of funding, has been able to lead the fight for greater democracy, accountability in government, pluralism and minority rights.'

'The people in the photo are residents of Magen, a hostel for mentally disabled adults. They are all regular worshippers at Kol HaNeshama. The young man, Meir, never had a bar mitzvah at the age of thirteen but actually prepared a few verses from the Torah and Haftorah and had a full-fledged bar mitzvah at Kol HaNeshama. It was, without a doubt, one of the most significant moments in my life as a rabbi.'

Rabbi Levi Weiman-Kelman

Teaching, he says, is his greatest love, evidence of which is seen in the role he has played in establishing the preschool at Kol HaNeshama and the creation of a public school on the campus of Hebrew Union College which he says 'is now up to the seventh grade with 500 students.' In addition to his own duties at Kol HaNeshama, he also teaches Prayer and Liturgy to American students at Hebrew Union College and Practical Rabbinics to the Israeli students.

As leader of the Israeli Movement for Progressive Judaism, Rabbis for Peace and the World Peace Council, the Rabbi is one of the most sought after speakers on matters religious and civil in Israel and abroad. He lectures frequently on such topics as 'the 'Struggle for Religious Pluralism in Israel', 'Building a Progressive Community in Jerusalem,' and Jewish spirituality and prayer.

The Rabbi has served as chairperson of MaRam (the Council of Progressive Rabbis). He is also a founding member of Rabbis for Human Rights and Clergy for Peace. Those values include a strong commitment to traditional Jewish texts in an egalitarian environment; a devotion to religious and political pluralism; and a desire to strengthen the state's democratic character and its observance of minority and human rights.

Weiman-Kelman studied the classics at the University of Wisconsin where he got his B.A. in 1972 and was active in the Kibbutz Langdon housing cooperative. He made a powerful impression on many of his instructors, including the historian George Mosse, a retired U.W. professor and frequent visitor to Israel, who says, 'He always had a tremendous intellect, and an ability to inspire people. He has an optimism and an idealism that is infectious.'

Weiman-Kelman was ordained in 1979 at the Jewish Theological Seminary, a choice, he says, greatly influenced by his father's prominence in the Conservative Movement.

He was Visiting Rabbi at the West London Synagogue from June 1983 to August 1984. 'West London' he writes, 'is THE cathedral-like Reform synagogue in Europe (2500 members, choir, organ, robes, etc.). 'The senior rabbi, Hugo Gryn, was a mentor/rebbe for me. He spent a few years as rabbi in Bombay, so he loves that I'll be in Hong Kong. Despite the contrast between the incredibly formal nature of the service at West London and my militant casualness, it was a great experience for both sides.'

Partially excerpted from stories appearing in *The Capital Times*, February 5, 1996 (Madison, Wisconsin) by John Nichols and *The Exponent*.

Telling the Story

When the great Rabbi Israel Baal Shem-Tov saw misfortune threatening the Jews it was his custom to go into a certain part of the forest to meditate. There he would light a fire, say a special prayer, and the miracle would be accomplished and the misfortune averted.

Later, when his disciple, the celebrated Magid of Mezritch, had occasion, for the same reason, to intercede with heaven, he would go to the same place in the forest and say: 'Master of the Universe, listen! I do not know how to light the fire, but I am still able to say the prayer.' And again the miracle would be accomplished.

Still later, Rabbi Moshe-Leib of Sasov, in order to save his people once more, would go into the forest and say: 'I do not know how to light the fire, I do not know the prayer, but I know the place and this must be sufficient.' It was sufficient and the miracle was accomplished.

Then it fell to Rabbi Israel of Rizhyn to overcome misfortune. Sitting in his armchair, his head in his hands, he spoke to God: 'I am unable to light the fire and I do not know the prayer; I cannot even find the place in the forest. All I can do is to tell the story, and this must be sufficient.' And it was sufficient.

God made man because he loves stories.

From *The Gates of the Forest* by Elie Wiesel, Schocken Books, New York 1982 (available in the JCC library)

from the chairman . . .

Rosh Hashanah — Returning Anew

Rosh Hashanah is a time to look at where we came from, where we are, and where we are going, both as individuals and as a congregation. There's change in the air, and change, or the possibility of change, can be exciting.

The return of Rabbi Sam Joseph to conduct High Holiday services, the departure of Rabbi Howard Kosovske for a pulpit in the U.S., and the arrival of Rabbi Levi Weiman-Kelman as The UJC's interim rabbi could not be more dramatic illustrations of the changes The UJC is undergoing.

During the year he spent here, Rabbi Joseph often reminded us of the importance of remembering where we came from as a congregation. His last sermon, built around one of the many parables of which he is so fond, emphasized the theme 'Don't forget your simple beginnings and the struggle you have gone through to get to where you are.'

Unquestionably, an important part of The UJC story is its early history and prehistory — that period from 1988 to 1993 in which we depended on the strength and determination of our organizers (later members) to gain recognition and raise funds for a rabbi, thus enabling the Congregation to become what Rabbi Joseph calls, in his letter in this issue of *The Shofar*, 'a fully-fledged member of the Hong Kong Jewish Community'.

Curious word, 'fledge.' It derives from Old English and Old High German words meaning 'capable of flying' or 'to acquire the feathers necessary for flight.' Indeed, it was through this struggle that The UJC acquired feathers for flying. And it is through knowing and repeating 'the story', I believe, that we derive a certain measure of strength and staying power.

I also believe that continuing growth depends on innovation and challenge. Organizations easily become complacent and stuck in their ways. Just as Rabbi Kosovske came with new ideas and the intention of creating a unique blend of Judaism matched to the particular needs of our congregants, we can expect exciting innovations and challenges in the months ahead.

As his background suggests, Rabbi Levi Weiman-Kelman, no friend of the status quo, will bring new energy to the task of expanding our understanding, intellectual and spiritual, through study and prayer. In the spirit that has informed The UJC since its inception, we can be no less than open and welcoming.

And in that way, as we acquire a few more feathers, Rabbi Weiman-Kelman will also become an important part of our story.

Art for Ark's Sake

With the objective of converting the old Indian chest The UJC has been using into a proper ark, three of the best ark architects and decorators in the business, Rabbi Kosovske, Robert L. Meyer, and Bob Green have redesigned the interior. The newly-renovated ark will make its first appearance at this year's High Holiday services.

Know anyone who wants to help design and create the ark curtain *(parokhet)?* Our goal is to make a beautiful and original curtain in time for *next* year's High Holidays.

Busy bee's and sewing bee's, please join in The UJC's 'Art for Ark's Sake' first design and concept meeting. If you have books on sewing techniques, appliqué, embroidery, textiles, Jewish folk ark or others which might inspire our imaginations, please contact Jackie at The UJC office for more information.

. . . and, all about arks

Arks can be decorated in innumerable ways and come in many different sizes, shapes, and materials.

The central part of the ark is a cabinet that contains the Torah scrolls. This usually has a *parokhet* — curtain — covering it. The *parokhet* is often elaborately designed with many embellishments; some shuls have a special white *parokhet* used only for the High Holidays. Because the parokhet is considered holy, it is treated like any holy object — e.g. books, Torah scrolls, etc. — and is never discarded.

The *parokhet* can be drawn aside either by the pull of a cord (like drapes) or simply be pulled aside by hand. The cord is usually on the right side of the ark. Then there are the ark doors, which either slide apart to each side or open outward toward you. In some synagogues the doors are on the outside and the parokhet is on the inside.

Excerpted from *The Second Jewish Catalog*, Strassfeld & Strassfeld, Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1976

Letter from Sam

'I'm Coming Back. . . Home'

I am coming back to my second home. I cannot think about the High Holy Days without Hong Kong coming to mind. From those first tentative steps in 1989, or actually the setting up of a synagogue in the China Fleet Club (may it rest in peace), to the United Jewish Congregation of Hong Kong becoming a full fledged member of the Hong Kong Jewish Community, I feel that I have been with you all the way. In many regards it is the reality. I have been with you, physically and/or spiritually.

Now, for the High Holy Days of 1996/5757 I again will be able to join with you as we welcome the New Year and pray for the peace of all humanity. We will greet the Days of Awe together and ask that for another year we be inscribed in the Book of Life.

For the Joseph Family Hong Kong is a special place. So many of you reached out to us while we lived with you, so many of you became our friends. To this day we continue to speak of our experiences with you. So when the High Holy Days return each year we feel deeply linked with The UJC.

Now as I write this column I am preparing to be with you. Sermon ideas and drafts are swirling around in my head and my computer. I am re-reading our High Holy Days prayerbook to absorb the thoughts and themes in a new light. Robyn Helzner and I have talked and planned the music that so enriches our worship. At the same time the fabulous UJC volunteers are covering every detail to ensure that there will be nothing that goes wrong and interrupts the solemnity of this season.

You know that my full time work is as an academic. I am a professor at Hebrew Union College, the training ground for Jewish professionals. Summertime is the time when academics catch up on work left undone during the year. One of my summer projects was to read a book by Karl Menninger. Several of his thoughts resonate with High Holy Day themes. With deft insight into the inner workings of the human psyche Menninger writes about luck, about people who feel that luck never really comes their way. There are so many people who feel thay they have little control over the events of their lives. Yet what we can control is the bitterness, the severity of what luck hands us. Menninger writes:

If people are unreasonable, illogical, and self-centered
Love them anyway.
If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives
Do good anyway.
If you are successful, you win false friends and true enemies
Succeed anyway.
The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow
Do good anyway.
Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable
Be honest and frank anyway.
People favor underdogs, but seem to follow only top dogs
Fight for underdogs anyway.
What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight
Build anyway.
People really need help, but may attack you if you help them
Help people anyway.
Give the world the best you have and you may get kicked in the teeth
Give the world the best you've got anyway.

These are powerful thoughts to ponder as we prepare for the High Holy Days.

Dori, Rachel and Bethami cannot be with us this year but they send their love and best wishes. Their hope and prayer is for each of you to have a happy, healthy, joyous New Year. I join with them in this prayer.

with Shalom

Rabbi Sam Joseph

Welcome New Members

AMY COE (USA) AND CHARLES BICKERS (UK)
(Amy: journalist, Cable TV; Charles: journalist
prev. affiliated with Liberal Jewish Synagogue in London

DAVID PAYNE AND JUDY IMMERMAN-PAYNE (USA) & JOSHUA, 9 MOS.
David: sales, Anhauser-Busch; Judy: fundraising, p.r.
prev. affiliation: Reform

DAVID BUTTS AND ELLEN FRIEDLANDER(USA) & SKYLER BUTTS (M), 3
David: executive, Vermont American; Ellen: mother

MARK AND STACY COHEN(USA) & MACKENZIE (F), 3 1/2
Mark: banker, Peregrine; Vermont American; Ellen: mother
prev. affiliation: Keneseth Israel, Jenkintown, PA (Reform)
and Temple Emanuel, Bayonne, NJ (Conservative)

JULIE SILBERGER(USA)
profession: publishing; firm: Institutional Investor
special talents, skills: speaks Chinese and Japanese

MARGARET BRITTON (CANADA)
profession: teacher
prev. affiliation: Temple Emanu-El, Montreal (Reform)

JACK GRAY AND BETH ROSENTHAL (UK)
Jack: promoter, Arthouse Ltd.;
Beth: office manager., Phoenix Securities
prev. affiliation: Princes Rd Synagogue, Liverpool (Orthodox)

KENNETH & RONNI CHERN (USA) & ALEXANDRA, 16 & STEPHANIE, 16
Kenneth: U.S. Foreign Service (U.S. Consulate)
Ronni: teacher, HKIS
prev. affil.: Northern Virginia Cong., Reston, VA (Reform)

Aline, Gary Wed in France

AIX-EN-PROVENCE, FRANCE. A small town in the south of France was the scene of The UJC's first ever 'wedding on the road.' 'Have Chuppa, Will Travel' was Rabbi Kosovske's motto, so off to France he was with the *katuba* packed in his case.

On the afternoon of Sunday 8 July, Aline Delpierre and Gary Silberg were married in the background of the wonderful, vine-covered mountains of the Cote-D'Azour. Guests truly came from around the world with friends and family represented from North America, Europe and Asia.

Following the service, guests were treated to a wide array of France's best food and wines. Most memorable was the 'Flaming' desert table brought into the hall on the shoulders of the waiters. The excitement was such that the dancing even continued until past four in the morning!

Please join us in wishing Aline and Gary all the best!

■ **Sean Debow**

Photo: Edward Hoffman, Sean Debow, Jennifer Debow, Rabbi Howard Kosovske. Aline. Garv

Introducing 'Jackie' Jacqueline Ariez Rowan Vachha!

We're not sure if it's Superwoman or Wonderwoman who landed in The UJC office, but judging by the words of praise from Rabbi Kosovske and Executive Committee members who have worked with her, The UJC has been very fortunate to obtain the services of Ms Jackie Vachha.

Thanks to the recruiting efforts of Jonathan Feiger, Daniel Kirwin, and Al Fine, The UJC has a new Executive Administrator to replace Sarah Millard who resigned at the end of June.

In her words, 'My name is Jacqueline Ariez Rowan Vachha. Jacqueline being my given name, Ariez being my husbands name, Rowan being the name of the tree that grows outside the house and Vachha is my married family name.

'I was born in the city of Leeds, West Yorkshire, England where I grew up, went to school and started working for the local Tax Office. Later I worked for a student hall of residence as an Administrator where I met my husband Ariez Jehangir Vachha some 16 years ago while he was studying for his degree in Production Engineering. He is now head of Information Technology at Moore Stephens.

'When Ariez graduated, he returned to Hong Kong where he had grown up and I followed him in 1986. Since then I have worked as a teacher at Sara Beattie College and as the Administration Manager, Far East for Finexco, a financial brokerage.

'In 1991, Ariez and I got married. In June 1993, our first son Darayus was born, followed by our second son Rohinton in August, 1995. That brings me to the present. It is time to go back to work, as that is why I am here.'

Visitor tickets available from office

Visitors, non-members welcome

Ever since its founding nearly eight years ago, The UJC has opened its doors to visitors and non-members who wanted to attend High Holiday services as well as all other UJC services and events.

At the same time, to help the Congregation meet the many expenses involved, it is hoped visitors make a generous contribution. The suggested donation is $800.00.

High Holiday tickets may be obtained in advance by contacting Ms Jackie Vachha at The UJC office or at the reception desk immediately before services. Contributions are deductible for either H.K. or U.S. tax purposes.

Alternatively, visitors may choose to become UJC members and receive, in addition to High Holiday tickets, full membership privileges in both The UJC and Jewish Community Centre plus regular mailings of The UJC and JCC newsletters and flyers.

MEMBERSHIP FEES

INDIVIDUAL

HK$2400 (US$310.00)

FAMILY

HK$4,000 (US$515.00)

NON-RESIDENT (INDIVIDUAL)

HK$800.00 (US$100.00)

Residents 30 and under may elect topay
HK$1800 (US$235.00) for individual membership

Tickets required for High Holiday services

Please pay your dues, now

To ease the flow of members into High Holiday services and avoid congestion at the reception desk, members are urged to send in their dues payments without delay, thereby ensuring they receive their High Holiday tickets in good time.

This will greatly ease the job of UJC staff and volunteers who need to concentrate their efforts on handling out-of-town visitors and non-member residents wishing to attend services.

Dues statements went out in June and July. Those who haven't received their statements or have questions should call the Executive Administrator, Ms Jackie Vachha at 2523-2985.

In all instances, consideration will be given to special cases, circumstances, or situations arising from financial constraints.

Submit Names for Yizkor Service

Members who would like the names of loved ones read by Rabbi Joseph at the Yizkor (Memorial) Service on Yom Kippur afternoon should submit the information well in advance, typed or clearly printed, preferably by fax or letter to The UJC office. Alternatively, the name(s) may be given directly to Rabbi Joseph before the service. If there is any question about pronunciation, please give a phonetic spelling or other indication of how the name (s) should be pronounced.

High Holidays

and Shabbat Shuvah

Schedule of Services

5757/1996

conducted by
Rabbi Samuel K. Joseph
Robyn Helzner performing as Cantor

◆

ROSH HASHANAH

Erev Rosh Hashanah
Friday, September 13, 7:30 P.M.

Rosh Hashanah Day
Saturday, September 14

Children's Service, 9:30 A.M.
Morning Service, 10:30 A.M.
Rosh Hashanah Lunch follows Service

Rosh Hashanah, 2nd Day
Sunday, September 15

Morning Service, 10:30 A.M.
Auditorium, Robinson Place
Rosh Hashanah Lunch will be served following the Service

◆

Shabbat Shuvah

Friday, September 20, 6:45 P.M.
Auditorium, Robinson Place
Shabbat dinner follows Service

◆

YOM KIPPUR

Kol Nidre
Sunday, September 22, 8:00 P.M.

Yom Kippur Day
Monday, September 23

Children's Service, 9:30 A.M.
Morning Service, 10:30 A.M.
Recess, 12:30
Discussion, 2:30 P.M.
Yizkor (Memorial Service), 3:30 P.M.
Afternoon Service, 4:00 P.M.
Neila (concluding) Service, 5:30 P.M.
Light break-the-fast refreshments will be served following the Service

◆

except where noted, all services are at:

Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts
Drama Theatre
1 Gloucester Road ,Wanchai, HK

FOR (Friends of Robyn) await folksinger's return as UJC Cantor

It's Shabbat, dinner's almost over and it's time for dessert and coffee. Robyn picks up her guitar and offers a choice of English, Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino, Russian and maybe a few other languages. Take them all. Is your wine glass full, or almost empty? What's the difference? The music is flowing, along rivers that are sometimes sad and anguished, sometimes joyous and exhilarating. You're in Latvia in the 19th century, a kibbutz in the 20th, or Spain following the Inquisition. You're at a *sthetl* in Galicia, the Warsaw Ghetto, a Yeminite wedding. You're a Marrano, a Litvak, a Yid, Tevye from 'Fiddler', the Golem of Prague, the mother of the bride. Music as magic, you're every one and every place that Robyn takes you to.

I remember certain tunes very clearly from Robyn's visits (this will be her sixth) and must confess to a slight shiver even when I play them in my head. The niggun *Le-cha dodi* is sung to many melodies, but listen carefully at the next Shabbat service when, following the gentle contours of the opening phrase, her voice rises in perfect harmony with the D string to deliver *lik-rat ka-la pe-nei Sha-bat* in a welcome as sweet, I'm sure, as any Sabbath Bride has ever received.

HOW DO YOU PRAY TO THE LORD? IS IT POSSIBLE TO PRAY TO THE LORD WITH WORDS ALONE? COME, I WILL SHOW YOU A NEW WAY TO THE LORD — NOT WITH WORDS OR SAYINGS, BUT WITH SONG. WE WILL SING, AND THE LORD ON HIGH WILL UNDERSTAND US'

RABBI NAHMAN OF BRATZKLAV

And what we find enchanting, double that for our children who, judging by their response at Robyn's concerts and services, see or sense the clearest path to our Jewish heritage through her songs. Parents understand that.

The UJC will have the good fortune of having Robyn Helzner's talents as cantor, folksinger, guitarist, and teacher for nearly a month as her visit stretches beyond Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur to include Sukkot and Simchat Torah.

A word about those talents and her background. Ms Helzner grew up listening to her father's records of folk singer Theodore Bikel, Israeli singer Geula Gil, Yiddish singer Martha Schlamme and Yiddish instrumental music. 'I have a visceral connection with things in a minor or modal key that comes from listening to a lot of this folk music throughout the '60's when Israel was still a very young country and there was still that pioneer spirit.'

Robyn began performing for Jewish organizations at age eight and went on to become a music teacher in Jewish schools.

A graduate of Northwestern University where she received her artistic and theatrical training, Ms Helzner built a reputation as a performer who 'shares her love for our rich musical tradition with captivating melodies, enchanting stores, and lively audience participation.'

Traveling twice to the former Soviet Union, she was a part of the first Jewish cultural tour there in more than 50 years. She has developed a concert tailored especially to Soviet Jews, weaving together Jewish and Russian folk songs.

Ms Helzner has also made several cassette recordings. As reviewed in *Lilith* magazine, 'Helzner's kids albums are fun (especially *Clap Your Hands*), but I more urgently recommend *A Fire Burns*, a collection of Israeli songs in Hebrew and Yiddish that show her strong, lovely voice at its best. *In A Fire Burns*, Helzner really shines. Both her choice of material and her delivery convey gravity and character.'

As in previous years, these recordings of her Shabbat and playtime songs for Jewish children will be available for sale through The UJC office.

Robyn Fund Tops $80,000

The UJC wishes to acknowledge, with thanks, the generous donations received most recently from members and friends for the Robyn Helzner Fund (received since those noted in the May/June edition of *The Shofar*). The fundraiser was launched this Spring to fund the expense of bringing Robyn to Hong Kong for the High Holidays and one or two visits in 1997.

Co-chairmen Cara Case and Dan Kirwin have extended the effort to mid-September to enable those who have been away for the summer to make contributions.

Received with Thanks

Pat & Bernie Alter
Mel Satok & Dianna Bennett
Amy & Don DaSaro
Jennifer & Sean Debow
Maggie & Joel Eisemann
Elane & Joseph Fine
Horst & Kathrine Geicke
Amy Gendler
Matthew & Joanna Gindsberg
Michell Gitin
Wayne & Lynn Goodman
Rebecca & Bob Haase
Romy Serfaty & Julian Hipwell
Neal & Jane Horwitz
Peter & April Kaminsky
Lisa & David Kasten
Anne & Michael Markowitz
Robert L. Meyer
Eli & Sussi Schwartz
Gary & Aline Silberg
Martin Weil & Patricia Theiler
Hilary Tinner
Robert Fetzer
& Roseanne Zimmerman

May their names and all be inscribed for blessing in the Book of Life.

Mazel Tov!

Rabbi Howard Kosovske, on his appointment as Rabbi, Temple Beth Shalom, Peabody, Massachusetts

Stephanie Mitchell and Natalie Ricter on celebrating their Adult B'Not Mitzvah

Neal & Jane Horwitz, on the naming of their son and daughter, Henry Nathan Horwitz and Elah Simone Horwitz

Ken Bell on his appointment to The UJC Executive Committee

Gary Silberg on his appointment to The UJC Executive Committee as Treasurer

Thanks!

Robert L. Meyer, for hosting Rabbi Sam Joseph while he is here for the High Holidays

Ken Bell for sponsoring the August 14 Exco meeting at the JCC

Terry & Jeff Paule for flowers for the pulpit

Ken Bell, for flowers for the pulpit and Shabbat wine

Eliot Cohen for flowers for the pulpit

Merle Wolin for conducting Shabbat services

Dan Kirwin, Mel Bazerman, Jonathan Green, Neal Horwitz, Ben Frankel, and Mark Michelson for conducting Shabbat services

Dan Kirwin for flowers for the pulpit

Farewell

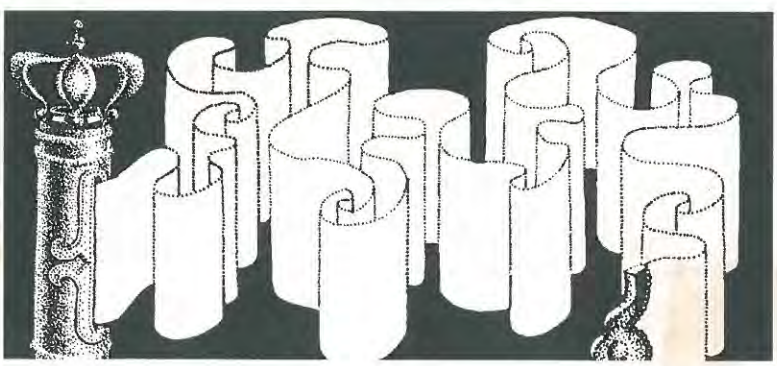
Jeff & Nancy Helpern
Robyn & Mike Abrams
Susan and Michel Millodot (aliyah to Israel)
Pat & Bernie Alter (Pakiston)
Jennifer Gold (USA)
Marc Kaplan & Kim Mugford (USA)
Lisa and Tim Lindon (USA)
Rebecca Robbins (Tokyo)
Bilin &Michael Stiber (USA)
Tamar Shay & Henri Tonnas (USA)

Donations

Robert L. Meyer, General Fund

Condolences to

Natalie Richter, on the death of her grandfather,
The memory of the righeous is a blessing



UJC Funds

There are many wonderful ways to honor, thank, and/or memorialize friends and loved ones in our tradition. One special way is to make a donation to one of the UJC Funds. There are the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund which is used by the Rabbi to subvent program expenses and help those who may need financial support to participate in a program; the Services Fund to help defray the expenses of renting function rooms for Shabbat and Holiday services; the Prayerbook Bookplate Fund which enables you to dedicate a prayerbook to a special person or event; the Rabbi's Fund and The UJC General Fund. Each of these funds have specific purposes which in the main help our Congregation with its expenses. Please consider a donation to a UJC Fund as a beautiful tribute to someone or something special.

The United Jewish Congregation of Hong Kong

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The Shofar is published bi-monthly by The United Jewish Congregation of Hong Kong. Requests for copies and notification of address changes should be addressed to The UJC office.

In Israel, Fears for Reform in Judaism under new Government

by Joel Greenberg

JERUSALEM. As Israel's newly elected parliament met last week, a small group of demonstrators carrying balloons gathered nearby to object to the increased influence of Israel's rabbinical establishment. Their placards said: 'Judaism Yes, Coercion No'.

Some of the protesters were civil liberties advocates, whose objections to the power of Israel's Orthodox rabbis are well known.

But the group was notable because it was led by Jews who regularly practice their religion — members of the Reform and Conservative movements, which are tiny in Israel.

These groups feel as threatened as do non-practicing Jews by the new Government's plans to extend Orthodox restrictions over areas of public and private life.

Agreements that Benjamin Netanyahu, the new Israeli leader, has signed with his religious coalition partners, and cabinet posts he has awarded them, indicate that his Government will substantially strengthen the already broad authority of Orthodox Judaism in Israel.

The problem for the Conservative and Reform movements is that this will be done at the expense of their own influence. Before the election, they had been making inroads by presenting themselves as alternatives to Orthodox Judaism for the vast majority of Israeli Jews, who practice their religion irregularly or not at all.

'People will be disappointed in what is happening to the character of Israeli society, and will be less willing to give money to a society with which they are not proud to identify.'

Change of Pace

So the advent of Mr. Netanyahu's Government may not only change the pace of movement toward peace with the Arabs. It could also slow a trend toward religious pluralism in Israel.

American Jews have a broad range of alternatives among congregations they can join. But the options in Israel are very different. Although they share Jewish traditions that have become part of Israeli national culture, most Israelis do not regularly observe religious rituals. They are commonly called 'secular' Jews, unaffiliated with any organized branch of Judaism. By far the predominant branch of Judaism here is the Orthodox, but it embraces only an estimated 20 percent of Israel's 4.5 million Jews.

In Israel's early years, Orthodox Judaism was virtually the only organized branch of the religion here, but recently the non-Orthodox movements have been able [to] draw more Jews into ritual observance.

Today, the Conservative movement says it has 20,000 congregation members in Israel and 50,000 followers who have participated in its religious or educational activities. The Reform movement says it has 5,000 congregants and 15,000 participants in its programs. The movements run seminaries, schools, day-care centers and summer camps. They also offer religious services like marriage and conversion, but the state does not recognize them as legally valid.

Such services have become a pressing need for many of the 700,000 immigrants from the former Soviet Union who have settled in Israel in recent years. For more than 100,000, many of them products of mixed marriage, their claims of Judaism are not even recognized by the Chief Rabbinate; thus they cannot marry or be buried in Orthodox ceremonies. (In Israel there are no civil marriage or divorce proceedings; Muslim and Christian authorities have jurisdiction over their own.)

Recognizing these difficulties, a party of immigrants that joined Mr. Netanyahu's Government signed an agreement with him to accelerate conversions by the Rabbinate, to help couples who are not deemed Jewish to marry, and to offer non-religious burial.

Seeking Recognition

But the Conservative and Reform movements want more. They seek official recognition that would break the monopoly of the Orthodox Chief Rabbinate, which is the only recognized Jewish religious authority in Israel. Weddings performed by Conservative and Reform rabbis are not recognized by the state, and under Mr. Netanyahu's agreements with religious parties, only Orthodox sanctioned conversions will be recognized.

During the term of the previous Labor-led Government, the Conservative and Reform movements began receiving Government aid and were authorized to draw up education programs and train Jewish studies teachers for the public schools. Now, though, Orthodox parties control the Ministries of Education and Religion, leading Reform and Conservative leaders to worry that Government backing will dry up.

At bottom, the struggle is over the future of Judaism in the Jewish state. The Orthodox rabbinate says it is upholding unchanged traditions that have insured Jewish survival for generations.

The Conservative and Reform movements have vowed to go to Israel's Supreme Court if necessary to secure recognition of their activities. But Mr. Netanyahu's Government has suggested that any gains in court could be nullified in parliament.

'Bright Spots'

'This will delay our development and may even set us back,' said Rabbi Uri Regev, a Reform leader. 'But there are some bright spots. It will be easier for us now to show the Israeli public the importance of fighting for freedom of religion and pluralism, because it will be clear who the bad guys are. I also see an awakening of the Jewish establishment abroad.'

Jewish groups in the United States have, in fact, expressed concern. 'People will be disappointed in what is happening to the character of Israeli society, and will be less willing to give money to a society with which they are not proud to identify," said Rabbi Richard Hirsch, executive director of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, the international umbrella group of Reform Judaism.

One course of action that both the Reform and Conservative movements have resisted so far is entering politics, forming a party and trying to achieve their goals in the same way the Orthodox have done so effectively.

Rabbi Einat Ramon, spokeswoman for the Conservative movement in Israel, said that such a mix of religion and politics is precisely what repelled many Israelis. 'We feel it's wrong,' she said, 'for a religious movement with a spiritual message to be involved in politics. That's what creates a bad image for Judaism and alienates so many people.'

■ Reprinted from *The New York Times Week in Review. June 23, 1996.* Submitted by Robert L. Meyer

Schedule
August - September

Shabbat services are held every Friday night in the Auditorium, Robinson Place, Jewish Community Centre, 70 Robinson Road, Mid-Levels, followed by a dinner in the JCC coffee shop. A pre-service Fellowship Oneg begins at 6:30 P.M.

Friday, August 23 10, 6:45 P.M.
Shabbat Service
conducted by Marc Miichelson

Friday, August 30, 6:45 P.M.
Shabbat Family Service
conducted by Rabbi Levi Weiman-Kelman

Friday, September 6, 6:45 P.M.
Shabbat Family Service
conducted by Rabbi Levi Weiman-Kelman

Sat., September 7, 6:30 P.M.
Havdalah Service & Light Buffet Supper followed by Study and Selichot Service
conducted by Rabbi Levi Weiman-Kelman

Friday, September 13, 6:45 P.M.
Erev Rosh Hashanah Service (page 7)

Sat., September 14, 10:30 A.M.
Rosh Hashanah Service (page 7)

Sun., September 15, 10:30 A.M.
Rosh Hashanah Service, 2nd day (page 7)

Friday, September 20, 6:45 P.M.
Shabbat Shuva (page 7)

Sat., September 21, 10:30 A.M.
Shabbat Service
conducted by Rabbi Samuel K. Joseph
with Robyn Helzner as Cantor
followed by kiddush lunch

Sat., Sep. 21, 3:30 - 5:30 P.M.
Sukkah building & decorating
The Terrace, Special Assets Limited,
6/f, Diamond Exchange Building,
8 Duddell St., Central District

Sun., September 22, 8:00 P.M.
Kol Nidre Service (page 7)

Mon., September 23, 10:30 A.M.
Yom Kippur Service (page 7)

Fri., September 27
Children's Sukkot Service, 5:45 P.M.
followed by
Shabbat Service, 6:45 P.M.
with Rabbi Levi Weiman-Kelman
and Robyn Helzner
followed by Shabbat supper
The Terrace, Special Assets Limited

Friday, October 4, 6:45 P.M.
Simchat Torah Service, Auditorium
conducted by Rabbi Levi Weiman-Kelman
with Robyn Helzner as Cantor
followed by Shabbat supper

Saturday, October 5, 10:30 A.M.
Simchat Torah Service, Auditorium
conducted by Rabbi Levi Weiman-Kelman
with Robyn Helzner as Cantor
followed by kiddush lunch

Please join us Friday, 6:45 P.M.

August 30

&

September 6
to

Welcome

Rabbi Levi Weiman-Kelman

&

Mrs. Paula Weiman-Kelman

as Rabbi Weiman-Kelman conducts his first
UJC Shabbat Services
followed by
Shabbat Supper
(please book with office)

and

Saturday, September 7

Havdalah Service, 6:30 P.M.

◆

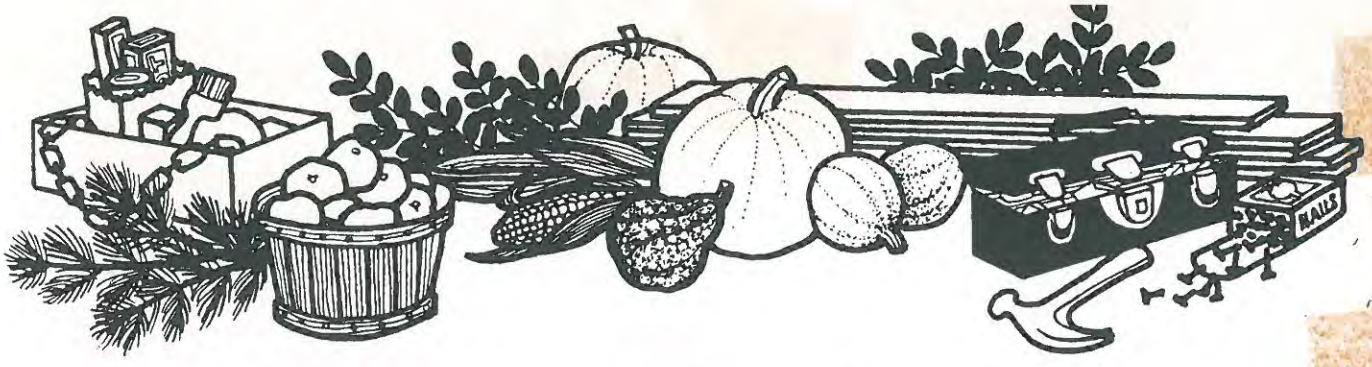
Dinner, 7:00 P.M.

◆

Study & Selichot Service, 8:30 P.M.
(please book with office)

In accordance with tradition, Rabbi Weiman-Kelman will conduct The UJC's *Selichot* Service on the Saturday night preceding Rosh Hashanah. 'It is a mitzvah to prepare for the Days of Awe during the preceding month of Elul by reciting these special penitential prayers called *selichot* asking for forgiveness.'

Auditorium, Robinson Place
70 Robinson Road, Mid-Levels, Hong Kong



You're Invited!

Sukkah Building Party

Saturday, September 21, 3:30 - 5:30 p.m.

Great fun for the kids!
Refreshments will be served

&

Children's Sukkot Service

Friday, September 27, 5:45 p.m.

followed by

Shabbat Service, 6:45 p.m.

conducted by Rabbi Levi Weiman-Kelman

followed by Shabbat Supper (details later)

Our Sukkah, and the functions above, are at:

The Terrace, Special Assets, Limited
6f, Diamond Exchange Building,
8 Duddell Street, Central
(office of Robert L. Meyer)

The United Jewish Congregation of Hong Kong
GPO Box 5259, Hong Kong

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