

# The Shofar

Published by The United Jewish Congregation of Hong Kong

May/June, 1994



*Congregation faces major decisions as it starts sixth year with over 500 members*

## Growth, Continuity Top Concerns as Rabbi Search Narrows

*Seder is biggest, best yet*

### UJC runs out of seats for Services, Seder

It's standing room only most Friday nights for Shabbat services at the American Club. In fact, the teenagers (including Rabbi Joseph's daughters Bethami and Rachel) are sometimes-lucky to even find a place sitting on the floor up front. Even though Rabbi Joseph observes the age-old tradition of starting services according to Jewish Standard Time, the smarter UJC members have learned to show up even before the scheduled starting time of 6:30 to get a seat. With coffee, tea, juice and cookies on hand (The UJC may be the only congregation in the world to have an Oneg Shabbat *before* the service), coming early makes even more sense.

It's clear that the Kam Shan room, impressive as the view may be from 49 stories above Victoria Harbor, was never designed to seat 60 people and more. It might have been different, of course, had Executive Committee member Mr. Al Fine, who takes a special interest in these matters, been allowed to design and arrange the chairs.

There's also the weekly battle with Gino, the charming *maitre d'*, to provide enough places for those who wish to stay for the Shabbat Italian Buffet Supper, another unique UJC institution and one of the best deals in town at \$135.00 for adults, \$85.00 for children. On recent evenings, Gino has somehow managed to scatter and integrate the Kam Shan room overflow into the adjoining Coffee Shop.

Most agonizing of all, however, was the need to turn away members and visitors who wanted to book for the UJC Seder. Regrettably, there was no choice when the total reached 275, the maximum that The Excelsior's Marina Room could seat.

It was, nevertheless, the best UJC Seder ever by most accounts. Rabbi Joseph, aided by Robert Meyer, conducted the service and the chef made matzoh ball soup that was as good as grandma's. The highly successful evening was a tribute to the hotel and the UJC organizers led by Janet Golden.

*Learning, special talents distinguish applicants*

### Prospects to Preach, Teach and Meet the Members in Visits Scheduled for May

The subcommittee charged with finding a successor to Rabbi Sam Joseph has recommended that The UJC bring two applicants to Hong Kong for one week visits in May to exchange views and become acquainted with the Congregation and community. Committee member Robert Meyer has generously offered to house the rabbis in his apartment.

The subcommittee, headed by Mrs. Karen Handmaker, has worked out a schedule of services, classes, meetings, and social events that will give members a number of opportunities to get to know the visiting rabbis. Details will be announced later. (See also schedule on page 12).

'Their visits to Hong Kong obviously will be pivotal to our decision making as well as their's,' Mrs. Handmaker told Committee members. 'Therefore, we must do everything in our power to make their few days here as productive, professional and enjoyable as possible.'

The strong response to the monthly Tot Shabbats and P.A.C.E. (Parents and Children for Education) programs

launched by Rabbi Joseph highlights an area that will require increasing attention from a new rabbi and the Congregation as The UJC continues to grow. The Congregation has 360 individual and family members or well over 500 including children.

Rabbi Joseph, on a sabbatical from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, will resume his teaching duties this fall.

As his ten-month term nears its end, it has become increasingly apparent just how 'tough an act to follow' his achievements represent. Nevertheless, the search committee received letters from a number of distinguished rabbis with impressive credentials.

The vacancy, a two-year contract with an option to renew for one year, was made known to the Liberal/Reform rabbinical community worldwide through the World Union of Progressive Judaism and the placement service of The Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

## Welcome New Members

*Robert and Sheri Dorfman, Carly, 9 & Justin, 7  
David and Nanette Alberts  
Richard and Naomi Mandel*

*Rick and Tina Schawelson, Hannah, 7, Dana, 4,  
& Joshua, three weeks*

*Jill Cohen, Louise, 3 & Jedidiah, 4 months  
Monty and Zandra Diamond & Lisa, 9*

*Ken and Wanna Adler*

*Henry Steiner*

*Beth Dayton*

*Sharon Margolin and Reto Meier*

*Wayne and Lynn Goodman, Daniel, 5 & Jean, 4  
Ross and Sherry Pollack & Jeremiah, 9 months*

from Rabbi Joseph's study

## The Rabbi Asks: 'Why be Jewish?'

Picture for a moment the *shtetl* Jew of our collective imagination. He looks a bit like the folks we see in parts of Jerusalem today, or maybe like the stage Jews of *Fiddler on the Roof*. The picture is romanticized, true; it lacks the edge and nuance of historical research; but it serves our purposes here. Someone approaches him on the street and asks, 'Why be Jewish?' Imagine the confusion on our *shtetl* Jew's face. Is there anything more absurd than this? Is such a question even in his universe of discourse?

And yet for some of us the question does not sound quite so absurd. We live in a world in which some Jews regularly opt out of the community, in which Jewishness has become an option rather than a fact.

Our problem as Jews in the late 20th century is larger than a Jewish 'problem.' It is the nature of modernity. As the great thinker Peter Berger describes the change from pre-modern to the modern world, 'it is a movement from fate to choice.' In the pre-modern world human beings saw themselves not so much as isolated individuals but as members of a community. People had far less control over their own lives, they worked in certain predetermined ways, dressed as their communities dressed, married and prayed and ate and drank as others around them did. The fate of birth and community ruled their lives.

For Jews the world of choice opened up as anti-Jewish barriers came down. With increasing political and social freedom, with access to most of the opportunities offered — in America for example — in employment, education, and status, Jews found that for the first time being Jewish was indeed a matter of choice, not fated by birth, and that they could actually choose to be 'in' or 'out.'

We are a great distance removed from the ghetto and *shtetl*. And our choices today 'are killing us, as Jews, with kindness.'

As Jews who come from the Western world, for better or worse, choice is an invariable condition of contemporary life. Yet just as some have chosen to opt out of the Jewish Community it might be the case that others choose to opt in!

There are a wide array of forces that lead to Jewish identification, for identity is not a fixed and immutable quality. The key task in strengthening Jewish identity is **discovering windows of opportunity for input.**

Of course for some Jews, identification is a constant reality, but for others, the quality and intensity of one's Jewish identification is subject to change. People move in and out depending on age, stage in their life cycle, and professional and family involvements.

Some have said that you should be Jewish because that is what God decreed for your life. 'I am Jewish by a larger design than fate . . . a plan by a Higher Authority.'

Others say that one is Jewish because it gives the person a sense of belonging. Jewish life gives one the ability to feel part of something larger than themselves, it is a haven in the anonymous world of contemporary times.

There are those who say that being Jewish is a cultural experience — art, dance, language, literature.

I have heard Jews say they are Jewish because they see themselves as a link in the long chain of the Jewish past. 'Judaism is where I came from and I owe a debt to that history,' they explain.

Judaism is viewed by some as a repository of personal meaning. The texts of the past can teach us something, can speak to our lives. Judaism offers a profound intellectual challenge worthy of serious study and reflection.

One may also view Judaism as a spiritual resource capable of satisfying the deepest hungers of the human soul.

And for some Judaism is the source of inspiration for one's social or political activism.

Finally, let me not forget what may be the single most powerful source of Jewish identification today, Israel. For many Jews, Israel is the primary answer to the question 'Why be Jewish?'

I return to the idea of **windows of opportunity**. Here in Hong Kong we all lead a life that is demanding, to say the least. Recognizing that fact, The UJC exists to support members of the Jewish Community who want to *opt in*. We do not judge a Jew's reason or reasons for choosing what is meaningful to him as a Jew. Even more, we suggest by our programs and services that one does have many choices. What we want to do is not let a window of opportunity close before we at The UJC have invited our fellow Jew in. 'Why be Jewish?' can be answered in many ways. Just look at us.

Wednesday series continues

## Lunch and Learn

What does Jewish law and tradition say about whether a widow is to be buried next to a first or second husband? Can a synagogue have a fortune teller for a fundraising event? Does Jewish law allow a woman to have permanent eye liner put in her eye lid? Can a Jew have a funeral for a pet? What rights do Jews have in starting new congregations in places where a congregation already exists? May a swimming pool be used as a *mikveh*? If a member of the congregation is a criminal may he be called for a Torah honor?

These are but a few of the questions asked of Rabbi Joseph during this year. And these questions represent a genre of Jewish thinking and literature called 'Responsa.'

Beginning in the sixth century, Jews would inquire of the intellectual leader of the Babylonian community about Jewish living. These written questions, called *she'elot*, would then be answered by this leader, a Gaon. The answers are called *teshuvot*.

There are over 1,000 volumes of Responsa literature with over 500,000 individual answers.

Today we still search Jewish sources for answers to all kinds of life's questions. The Lunch and Learn sessions will be devoted to reading and discussing these texts.

Fashioned to fit the fast-paced, time-conscious Hong Kong lifestyle, this midday Jewish study program begins and finishes exactly on time. Brown-bag it or grab a sandwich on the way. Come earlier and stay later if you wish, but give us your attention for 40 minutes of study.

The Lunch and Learn program is designed to enable people to attend as often as they wish.

## Lunch and Learn

**Wednesdays**

**12:40 P.M. — 1:20 P.M.**

**May 4, 11, 18, 25**

**June 1, 8, 15**

**702 Dina House  
11 Duddell Street,  
Central District**

(office of Charles Monat Ltd.)

# The Class of '94

Wendy Berk Rita Bongarten Karen Burgeon Amy DaSaro Don DaSaro  
Sharon Fine Michel Millodot Susan Millodot Diana Muller Clark Ray Linda Simon

## INVITE you to join in the celebration of their **B'Nai Mitzvah and the Festival of Shavuot**

**Sunday, May 15, 7:30 P.M.**  
Recital Hall, City Hall High Block, 8th floor

The Adult B'nai Mitzvah Class of 1994 spent an entire year preparing for their big evening. They studied together once a month with Rabbi Joseph. Topics included Jewish history, rituals, and prayer. They studied Hebrew language during a Hebrew marathon session. On top of these commitments, they attended most of the adult education offerings of the Congregation during the year.



It is quite appropriate that we celebrate the Bar and Bat Mitzvah of these 11 adult members of The UJC on the holiday marking our ancestors receiving the Torah. We hope these members of the Class of 1994 learned much Torah this year. We hope they continue to study and learn Torah. We hope and pray they will be an example for all to study and learn Torah.

*'...for by your light do we see light.'*

Shavuot was originally a harvest festival. The name means 'weeks.' Today we know it as the 'Giving of the Law' because it is traditionally seen as the day Moses received the Torah on Sinai. 'Weeks' is the name because it is representative of the seven week pilgrimage our ancestors took to arrive at Mt. Sinai after fleeing Egypt. Shavuot falls 49 days after the second day of Pesach.

During this Shavuot-B'Nai Mitzvah ceremony each class member will read parts of the service, a Haftarah portion (Book of Ruth), and several verses from the Torah.



religious education

## **Tot Shabbat** *led by visiting rabbi*

Tot Shabbats are special Shabbats with stories, songs, arts and crafts, dance and Torah. Come celebrate Shabbat especially geared for tots from one to five and their parents. This session will be conducted by a visiting rabbi. A snack will be provided.

**Saturday, May 14, 9:30 A.M.**

Family Recreation Room, Ladies Recreation Club  
10 Old Peak Road, Mid-Levels  
Please note change of venue

## **P.A.C.E. & Education Meeting** *(Parents and Children for Education)* *led by visiting rabbi*

P.A.C.E., a hands-on, interactive way of learning about and doing Jewish things, is designed for parents and children to learn together. It is most suited for children from 5 to 15. Children should be accompanied by at least one parent.

The topic for this meeting will be Jewish Books and Treasures.

Following the PACE program there will be an important meeting of parents with the visiting rabbi to discuss Hebrew and religious school for next year.

**Sunday, May 29, 9:30 A.M.**

Family Recreation Room, Ladies Recreation Club  
10 Old Peak Road, Mid-Levels

## **UJC Movie Night** ***The Commissar*** **Thursday, May 5, 7:30 P.M.**

Fleet Arcades, Fenwick Pier  
Lung King Street, Wanchai

Members, \$20.00; non-members, \$40.00

Park next to Grand Hyatt or at Admiralty

*The Commissar* was released for the first time in 1987, 20 years after it was made. It tells the tale of Jewish life, suffering, bravery and fatalism in a film about a Red Army officer who finds herself living with a *shtetl* Jewish family during the War. An indictment of anti-semitism, it was director Alexander Askoldov's first and last film; shortly after its completion, he was fired and the film locked away. It is now regarded as 'one of the most celebrated Soviet films.'

## **Heather Lynn Shulman**

*daughter of Ron and Lois Shulman  
will be called to the Torah  
as a Bat Mitzvah*

**Saturday, May 7, 1994, 10:00 A.M.**

**The American Club**

48th floor, Two Exchange Square, Central  
Hong Kong

*The Congregation is warmly invited to  
share this special occasion with the  
family and celebrate the first  
Bat Mitzvah ever conducted by The UJC.*

## **Origins of Bat Mitzvah**

Starting in the second or third century C.E., Jewish girls at age 12 took on legal responsibility for the performance of the *mitzvot*. As with age 13 for boys, 12 probably corresponded with their onset of puberty. However, girls were subject to far fewer commandments than boys. Since Jewish society at that time saw females solely as mothers and housewives, women were exempted from a whole series of time-bound commandments, on the assumption that their work and presence in the home took precedence. Today, liberal Jews affirm the total equality of women in terms of religious privileges and responsibilities.

Many centuries passed before any *bat mitzvah* ceremony appeared. In the 1800s, Reform Judaism abolished *bar mitzvah* in favor of Confirmation for both boys and girls (*bat mitzvah* not considered an option at that time). Within the 19th century traditional community, some families held a *seudat mitzvah* for a daughter on her 12th birthday, with the girl sometimes delivering a talk and her father reciting the 'Baruch Shepetarani.'

The first-known *bat mitzvah* in North America, of Judith Kaplan, daughter of Mordecai Kaplan, was held in 1921. Dr. Kaplan, founder of the Reconstructionist movement, scheduled his daughter's *bat mitzvah* on a Friday night. Judith recited the *berachah*, read a section from her *chumash* (not the Torah scroll itself) and its English translation, then recited the concluding *berachah*. *Bat Mitzvah* was born. Reform (which had by this time reintroduced *bar mitzvah*) and then Conservative congregations quickly adopted *bat mitzvah*, though in slightly different forms.

In Conservative congregations, *bar mitzvah* is usually held on Shabbat morning while *bat mitzvah* is often held Friday night. Girls may read from the Torah or, alternatively, chant the *berachot* before and after the Haftarah, as well as the Haftarah itself. In Reform congregations, boys and girls participate in the service in the same way.





## Jesse Matthew Alter

son of Bernie and Pat Alter  
will be called to the Torah  
as a Bar Mitzvah

**Saturday, May 28, 1994, 9:30 A.M.**

### Ladies Recreation Club

10 Old Peak Road, Mid-Levels  
Hong Kong

*The Congregation is warmly invited  
for the Bar Mitzvah and  
Kiddush reception to follow*

Mrs. Sylvia Protter, paternal grandmother of  
Jesse Alter, will light the candles at the  
Shabbat service on Friday, May 27  
in honor of Jesse's Bar Mitzvah

## Doran Blinderman

son of David and Jacqueline  
in preparation for and  
in advance of his bar mitzvah  
will celebrate with The UJC its  
first-ever ceremony of

### Shashelet ha-Kabbalah

as part of the weekly  
**Shabbat Service**

**Friday, June 3, 1994, 7:45 P.M.**

### Royal Hong Kong Golf Club

Deep Water Bay, Hong Kong

*The Congregation is warmly invited for  
the service and Oneg Shabbat to follow  
Please RSVP with The UJC office: 523-2985*

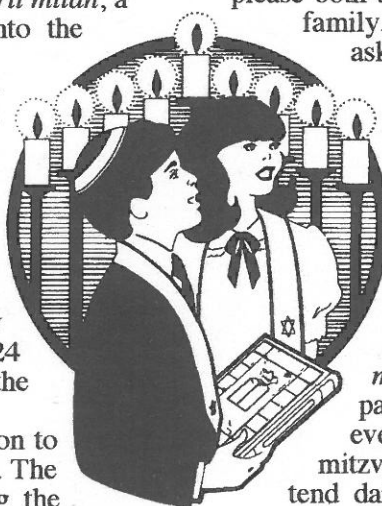
## Origins of Bar Mitzvah

The beginnings of *bar mitzvah* are obscure. It is not mentioned in the Torah, nor is there any biblical indication that 13 was the age at which one attained religious majority. We do know that many ancient civilizations conducted tribal initiations for young males at the age of 13, corresponding with the onset of puberty. These rites often included painful ordeals, such as circumcision. Indeed, Abraham's son Ishmael was circumcised at thirteen. However, Judaism recast circumcision in a religious context and moved to the age of eight days as *berit milah*, a formal ritual of welcoming male babies into the Covenant between God and Israel.

Most scholars feel that the association between age 13 and mandated religious observance began during the Second Temple period (516 B.C.E. — 70 C.E.). A section of the Babylonian Talmud (second or third century C.E.) affirms that 'until the 13th year, it is the father's duty to raise his son.' After that, however, he must say 'Blessed be He who has removed from me the responsibility for this boy!' In addition, *Pirke Avot* 5:24 states that at age 13 a boy is responsible for the *mitzvot*.

In ancient times, a father would take his son to the Temple in Jerusalem to receive a blessing. The *kohen* would also offer a prayer expressing the hope that the boy would learn Torah and live a happy life of good deeds. At that point in life, the young man was allowed to buy and sell property and make binding vows.

While the beginnings of 'our' *bar mitzvah* ceremony appeared as early as the sixth century C.E., it was not until the Middle Ages that a fully developed ritual emerged. By the 13th or 14th century, the custom of calling a boy up to the Torah was established as the way of recognizing entry into manhood.



## Shashelet ha-Kabbalah . . . 'The Chain of Tradition'

For so many of our UJC families there is the stress and strain of how they weave their Jewish life in Hong Kong with their desire to be part of their extended family's Jewish life overseas. The High Holy Days, Passover, and life cycle events sometimes are celebrated here, sometimes 'backhome.'

This year one UJC family decided to see if they could please both their Hong Kong friends and their overseas family. 'What can we do here and at home' they asked the Rabbi.

Their son was busily preparing a long Torah portion, an equally long Haftarah reading, and much of the service. His family decided long ago that they wanted his *bar mitzvah* to be in the U.S. The Rabbi did not want him to have to prepare another whole set of readings for Hong Kong. But after discussion and reflection an idea emerged.

Long before the modern idea of *bar mitzvah* was created, the young boy prepared for his 'manhood' by putting on *tefillin* everyday for several months before his *bar mitzvah*. He would learn the morning prayers, attend daily *minyan* and then when he was 13 he could be counted as part of that *minyan*.

Today's ceremony is different, to say the least. And very few, if any, young boys put on *tefillin* in the Reform Movement. But they do receive a *tallit* for their *bar mitzvah*, and they do lead the service on that Shabbat morning.

*Shashelet ha-Kabbalah . . . 'The Chain of Tradition'* will be our UJC way to celebrate a pre-*bar mitzvah* here in Hong Kong before the *bar mitzvah* itself occurs in the U.S. During this Shabbat, the young man will help lead our service, give the translation from the Torah, recite kiddush over the wine, and receive his *tallit* . . . the prayer shawl he will wear on his *bar mitzvah* day this summer.

## News from Israel

## Population up 2.2%

There were approximately 5,350,000 Israelis on the eve of Israel's 46th independence day, *Yom Haatzmaut*, the Central Bureau of Statistics reported. That represents an increase of 115,000 people or 2.2 percent over last year. Two-thirds of the increase was due to natural population growth and one-third to immigration, according to the Bureau.

A total of 2,373,444 immigrants have come to Israel since Independence, acting Jewish Agency Chairman Yehiel Leket reported. By the year 2000 Israel will become the largest concentration of Jews in the world, Leket said, based on a United Nations demographic study.

The average direct cost to the Jewish Agency of bringing an immigrant to Israel is US\$2,500. This includes the cost of preparing the immigrant for *aliyah*, flying him and his belongings to Israel, and providing initial housing arrangements and other assistance. These costs account for approximately 45% of the Jewish Agency's total budget of \$490 million. They do not include educational activities, community development, and many other Jewish Agency activities in Israel and abroad.

On the occasion of Memorial Day, observed the day before *Yom Haatzmaut*, the Defense Ministry reported that 17,955 Israelis have died serving in the armed forces since the country became independent in 1948.

## Meet Ms Milliard

## UJC Appoints First Fulltime Administrator

Within a day of meeting members of the Executive Committee at its meeting in mid-March, Ms Sarah Jane Milliard from Bristol, England was working with Rabbi Joseph learning the ropes of running The UJC office. She takes over these duties from departing Executive Administrator Mrs. Amy DaSaro who has kindly donated many hours making sure the transition, or 'baptism by fire' as it might be called in other organizations, goes smoothly. Amy and Don DaSaro are moving to Singapore in connection with Don's new assignment with Caterpillar.

Ms Milliard comes to The UJC from the U.K. with impressive secretarial, computer, and organizational experience. The new administrator becomes the first full-time staff member of the Congregation. Since Rabbi Joseph's arrival last fall there has been a dramatic expansion of the workload commensurate with the growth of membership and increase in programs and activities.

## Correspondence

### No Offence Meant

I would like to reply to the letter in the January/February issue of The Shofar from Michael Green who took offence to my letter published in the previous issue.

It is interesting that in this small community of Hong Kong we are blessed with the three entirely different segments of our religion — Orthodox, Chassid and Reform. Each practises our religion maybe just a little differently, but all are directed and motivated by the same book, the Bible.

I had the most wonderful experience the other day at The UJC's Purim party. To see the number of Jewish families participating in the festivities only makes me believe that for the very first time our heritage is being passed on to the next generation. People from all parts of the world and their children getting together to be part of a *Big Family* is what being Jewish is all about. Jews are People of the World.

I wish to thank Rabbi Joseph and all the people who put this party together. [A party like this] has never happened before in Hong Kong and it further supports the reason that all the Jewish children, no matter what form their parents pray in, should be allowed to be joined together in one *Jewishness*.

Socially and spiritually we all belong together. We must not allow anyone to take it upon themselves to decide 'Who is a Jew' but allow what is in your heart to dictate 'I am a Jew.'

In this holiday of Purim where the customs *Shalach-mones* which means 'giving gifts,' let the gift to the Jewish people of Hong Kong be 'Let The UJC prosper and teach the joys of being Jewish.'

I had no intention of malice when writing the letter and wish to apologize if some people took the contents other than its real meaning 'a search for enlightenment.'

David Shapiro

### Navy Commander Comes to Seder

Dear Rabbi,

My deepest thanks to you and the entire United Jewish Congregation of Hong Kong. Your hospitality and friendship will be one of my best memories of my Western Pacific Deployment. How often does someone get to say they attended not one but two Seders in Hong Kong?

Please give my best to table four. If I am fortunate our paths will cross again. Until then.

Sincerely,

Richard F. Nathanson

Commanding Officer, U.S.S. Mauna Kea (AE-22)

### Asparagus Appetizer Ungebruchts, Passover Serves: 4

- |                        |                      |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 lb. cut asparagus    | 2 Tbl. oil           |
| 1 cloved minced garlic | salt to taste        |
| 1 beaten egg           | lemon juice to taste |
| pepper to taste        |                      |
| 1 medium chopped onion |                      |

1. Cut asparagus in 1" strips. stew onion and garlic in oil, but do not brown.
2. Add asparagus and cook uncovered for 10 minutes. Beat egg with salt, pepper and lemon juice.
3. Fold into vegetables and cook for several minutes until egg is set. Serve hot or cold.



# Non-Orthodox Groups Encouraged in Israel

*Judges Back Rights of Reform, Conservative Jews Who Seek Seats on Religious Councils*

Reform and Conservative groups in Israel seeking political parity with the Orthodox will press on with their fight, encouraged by a ruling last week that will open up seats on local religious councils to non-Orthodox candidates for the first time.

The development, in which the five justices of the Israeli Supreme Court ruled unanimously that Reform and Conservative candidates cannot be barred from running for municipal religious councils, threatened to drive Orthodox representatives to boycott the councils. For the non-Orthodox, however, the court victory was only a first step, as their Orthodox counterparts will be guaranteed a majority of votes on the councils.

However limited, the court ruling represents a major breakthrough in the struggle to crack what non-Orthodox groups see as the Orthodox stranglehold over religious life in Israel. Whether the Orthodox decide to boycott the councils or prompt the government to disband them and assign their functions to other bodies, as some Orthodox spokesmen have suggested, one thing is clear: Israel is in for more tough battles over religious rights, battles that are sure to drive the major sects of Judaism only further apart. When the dust finally settles, Israel could be left with a vastly different structure for governing religious life here — and for dispensing public funds to religious groups.

The court's decision, says Rabbi Ehud Bendel, a leader of the Conservative movement in Israel, 'is a victory, but the war for religious pluralism will have to continue.' Rabbi Bendel was referring to the fact that despite the ruling, Reform and Conservative council members will continue to lack the power to influence the disbursements of funds and favors.

[The fight over religious pluralism in Israel is reverberating half a world away in America where members of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, an umbrella group, are weighing a resolution calling for greater rights of non-Orthodox Jews in Israel.]

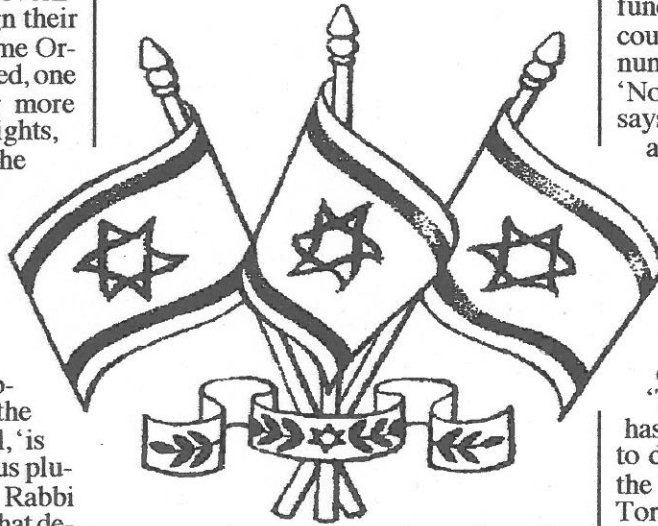
In explaining its ruling, the court said that councils are responsible for providing religious services to all sectors of the population and that, therefore, no sector should be denied the right of representation on them.

Local religious councils have annual budgets provided by the government of

millions of shekels which are dispensed in the form of rabbinical salaries, support for the maintenance and construction of synagogues, subsidization of religious activities and education and other activities. Until now these sums have been spent entirely within and for the benefit of the Orthodox communities.

The current court case goes back to 1989 when Rabbi Bendel and Anat Hoffman, a city councilwoman for the left-wing Meretz Party who was also representing the Reform movement, sought to run for the Religious Council of Jerusalem and were vetoed as candidates by the municipality.

'There is now no legal way to stop a Meretz or any other nominee from running for religious councils,' the Forward was told by Joshua Schoffman, legal adviser for the Association for Civil Rights in Israel and Rabbi Bendel and Ms. Hoffman's lawyer.



According to Israeli law, the members of the religious councils are chosen by a consortium of three bodies: the Ministry for Religious Affairs, which picks 45% of the council members, the local rabbinate, which picks 10% and the municipal council, which chooses the remainder. Since the first two of these are strictly Orthodox in outlook, the Orthodox establishment will continue to enjoy an automatic majority on every religious council in Israel.

Rabbi Bendel believes that even on a symbolic level, non-Orthodox representation on religious councils will have an effect. Last year at the time of the High Holidays, for example, the religious council of Jerusalem published a prominent advertisement in the newspapers

warning worshippers that hearing the shofar blown in non-Orthodox synagogues could not be considered a fulfillment of the mitzvah. Such a misuse of public funds, said the rabbi, would not have gone unopposed had the council had Reform and Conservative members.

One possible result of the Court ruling, however, is an Orthodox boycott of religious councils on which non-Orthodox members sit. The Orthodox press has denounced the idea of Reform or Conservative representatives sitting on religious councils, and several Orthodox spokesmen have raised the possibility of disbanding the councils entirely and assigning their functions to other bodies.

Rabbi Uri Regev, director of the Israel Religious Action Center, the advocacy arm of the Reform movement, does not think this would necessarily be a bad thing. 'The religious councils have proven to be a source of corruption, abuse of power and misuse of funds,' he says, pointing out that the councils are the object of the highest number of legal suits in the country. 'No other body even comes close,' he says, adding that it 'is this kind of situation that drives people away from religion and makes them feel that the only choice they have is between Orthodoxy and nothing.'

On the same day that the Court handed down its opinion, it also ruled on an appeal brought before it by an American-jewish feminist group called 'The Women of The Wall,' which has been demanding the right, hitherto denied it, to don prayer shawls at the Temple Wall and read from the Torah there. Here the three judges sitting on the case were divided. Whereas Judge Menachem Elon held that the sacredness of the site justified maintaining the ban in the name of traditional religious sensibilities, Judge Meir Shamgar, although concurring in the opinion, advised the Ministry of Religion to find a way of honoring the group's freedom of worship without offending others. Far from seeing this decision as a setback, Rabbi Regev welcomed it too as a sign that the rights of non-Orthodox denominations of Judaism are beginning to be taken more seriously by the Israeli Courts.

■ ABIGAIL WISSE

reprinted from *Forward*, February 4, 1994  
submitted by Robert Meyer



AN IDEA IS BORN

*New, Improved!*

## *Lunch with the Ladies*



*... Her worth is more than rubies*

*Need a few laughs? Why don't you join us next time we have lunch? The UJC Ladies. Call us and we'll call you.*

*Sarah, at 523-2985. You've Got to Eat!*

*Sisterhood was Never Like This*

## the layers of biblical commentary

### 1. The Torah (The Five Books of Moses)

Bible study starts with Torah. Tradition teaches that the Torah was given to the Jewish people on Mt. Sinai about 3500 years ago. Critical scholarship, however, suggests that the Torah was completed by the fifth century B.C.E.

### 2. N'AKH (Prophets and Writings)

(Bible = T'NAKH = Torah + *Nevi'im* (Prophets) + *Ketuvim* (Writings)). The final draft of the Bible was completed around 200 B.C.E. and Writings was completed at the Council of Jamnia (Javne) circa 90 C.E.

### 3. MASORAH (Tradition)

From the 6th-9th century C.E., a group of scholars called the *Masorites* were adding vowels and trope marks to the unvocalized texts, in a sense interpreting them through punctuation.

### 4. THE TARGUMIM (Translations)

Starting in the time of Ezra (Circa 450 B.C.E.) and continuing for many centuries thereafter, learned Jews translated sacred Hebrew texts into Aramaic, the daily language of most of the Jewish people. These translations were called *Targumim*. The most famous of these was that of Onkoles, a convert who lived in the second century C.E. Translation involves interpretation.

### 5. MIDRASH AND TALMUD (Rabbinic Commentaries)

Rabbis in Israel and Babylonia wrote these and other works beginning in about 500 B.C.E. and continuing through the first centuries of the Common Era. They are defined Judaism, transforming it from a particularistic cult into a universal religion.

### 6. RISHONIM (Early Authorities, until 16th Century)

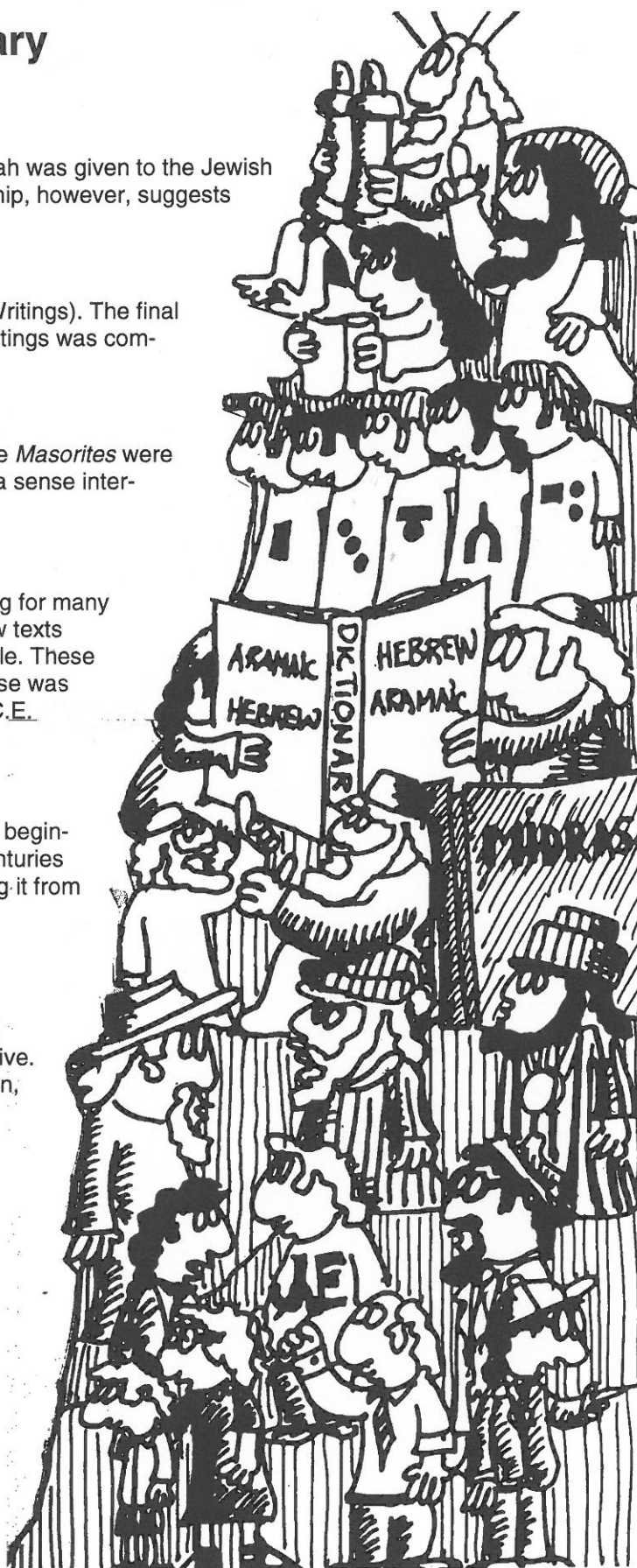
As Jews moved through the diaspora, great biblical and talmudic scholars (*poskim*) were consulted about various legal problems, and their decisions were recognized as authoritative. Among the leading names were Ibn Ezra, Rambam, Ramban, Rashi, and Radak.

### 7. BIBLICAL CRITICS

In the 1800s two non-Jewish scholars Karl Graf and Julius Wellhausen theorized that the Bible was a historical work created by different people at different times. Using archaeology, form criticism, linguistics, and other modern tools they began a new kind of Bible commentary. Jewish Bible commentators including Abraham Geiger and Leopold Zunz, began to apply their tools.

### 8. TODAY

Bible commentators are alive and well. Some, like Nehama Leibowitz, have continued the tradition of rabbinic exploration. Others, like Gunther Plaut, Stanley Gevertz, and Harry M. Orlinsky have made biblical criticism into a modern process. And still others like Robert Alter, Jacob Licht, and Michael Fishbain have brought even newer tools to their commentaries.



# Shabbat, Shabbat, Shabbat

Friday, May 13  
**Family Service**

Conducted by  
Visiting Rabbi

Friday, May 20  
**Family Service**

Conducted by  
Rabbi Samuel K. Joseph

Friday, May 27  
**Family Service**

Conducted by  
Visiting Rabbi

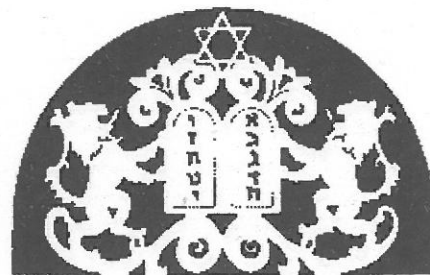
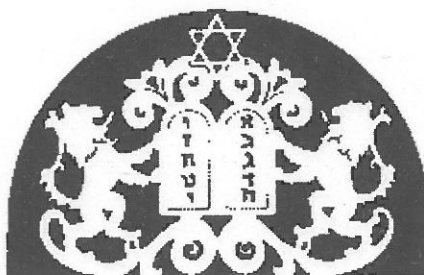
The American Club, Kam Shan Room, 6:30 P.M.

Exchange Square II, 49th floor, Hong Kong Central District

followed by

## *Italian Buffet Supper*

Members: adults \$135.00, children \$85.00 Non-members: Adults \$150.00, children \$100.00



Greetings, Farewell to Class of 1997

## *UJC Professor Looks at Free Speech Perils That Lie Ahead*

by Dr. Howard Wolf

Dear First Year Class:

I wish to express my gratitude to the Executive Committee of the English Society of Hong Kong University for giving me this opportunity to say a few words to the new members of the Class of 1997 who will be the last class to complete their studies at HKU while the university ordinance still names Her Majesty the Queen as its patron.

Needless to say, the Class of 1997 also will be the first class, if the calendar stays in place, to take its degrees under Chinese sovereignty. For the first time since its incorporation as a university in 1911, a British-appointed Governor will not preside at the commencement ceremony.

The Class of 1997 truly will be a 'transitional' class, a class that will stand at the crossroad and, for a while at least, the center of world history. The world will be watching Hong Kong with keen interest in 1997, and those of us (even Yankees like myself) who have had the privilege to teach in this fine university during the 'run-up' to '97 will pay particularly close attention to the status and fate of the university at all levels.

The Class of 1997 enters this university with a sense of drama, a short last act of a long play, and it bears the responsibility of acting its part with skill, integrity, discipline, decorum, commitment to free speech and 'enquiry,' and with a profound understanding of the role this territory has played as a port of safe call for all the world since its founding (however this founding is construed) in 1841.

You will be expected to act, by those of us who have served this university and 'returned' to other parts of the world, like those who have gone before you, like the very members of the Executive Committee who will greet you during orientation. Study them carefully. Emulate them, but always with a sense of *your difference* — as individuals, as members of a group acting in an historical drama, as people who grasp and treasure two great cultural traditions: Western and Chinese.

Since you will be playing a role in a historical drama, your courses in English will have special meaning for you. Dramatic conflict (what the Greeks call an *agon*, the root of 'agony') lies at the heart of literary study as you will learn when you study one of Shakespeare's plays in the First Year Course.

Your study of English will have other kinds of importance as well. Of course, you will want to master English as a practical matter of linguistic survival in today's global and multi-national world; and you will want to have it for the pleasures of travel and tourism in the years to come.

But perhaps more important than these reasons, you will want to be articulate in English so that you can speak to the world and defend yourselves against any threat to your guaranteed liberties after 1997.

With the recent re-arrest of Wei Jingsheng, 'China's most prominent political dissident' and the 12-year jail sentence for Hong Kong journalist Xi Yang, we are all reminded, if we need a reminder, that the future of liberty in Hong Kong is, at best uncertain, at worst, endangered.

The class of 1997 will have to speak for those of us who are no longer here. You will be a link between two epochs, and you cannot afford to be a weak link. But I have every confidence, as someone who has taught in this institution for three years, that you will take your place in a long line of HKU students who will be prepared — morally, academically, intellectually — to protect lives which *you* value. To do this, you may need to add courageous speech and writing to the university's coat of arms: *Sapientia et Virtus* (knowledge and virtue); but I am confident that you can and will.



## Mazel Tov!

Mel and Paulette Bazerman on their sixth wedding anniversary  
David and Jaqueline Blinderman on their 15th wedding anniversary  
Jeffery and Ruth Sacks on the birth of their daughter Ilana Grace Sacks  
Alan and Jennifer Hershey on the birth of their son Brian  
Rick and Tina Schawelson on the birth of their son Joshua Ryan

## Thanks!

Sharon and Al Fine for the use of their home  
Amy and Don DaSaro for the use of their home  
Chuck Monat for the continuing use of his office conference room  
Robert Meyer for the use of his office conference room  
Ann-Isabel Friedman, Karen Handmaker, and Martha Josephson for all the help and hard work they put into making Tot Shabbat so successful  
Sharon Yoel for leading a model Seder at Union Church  
Bernie and Pat Alter for the use of their home  
Ambassador Burt Levin for giving us an evening of stimulating discussion  
Clare Ray for the use of her home  
Janet Golden, Mollie Blaum-Sherbin, Amy DaSaro, Diane Satok, Al and Sharon Fine, Amy Meyer, Jacaueine Blinderman, Pat Alter, Lois Shulman, and Dori Joseph for making the Seder a great success.  
Phyllis Gerstell (a very special thanks) for conceptualizing the UJC Night at the Movies series, preparing the advertising, supplying the film reviews, and obtaining *The Commissar* and *School Ties*.

## Our Sincere Condolences to

Jill Dove (Mrs. Peter Dove) on the death of her father, Charles Rosettenstein  
Dianna Patsiner (Mrs. Leonard Patsiner) on the death of her brother-in-law, Robert Case

## Donations

### Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

(used by the Rabbi to subvent program expenses and help those who may need financial support to participate in a program)

Mel and Paulette Bazerman in honor of the wedding of Nancy Pyatt and Barry Wicks  
Robert Meyer in honor of the wedding of Nancy Pyatt and Barry Wicks

### Rabbi's Fund

Ross and Sherry Pollack, Beth Dayton

### Services Fund

(to help defray the expenses of renting function rooms for Shabbat and Holiday services)

Jason and Noel Felton, Lilian Michelson and Jonathan and Maureen Fox

### Prayerbook Bookplate Fund

Linda Simon

### UJC Funds: Opportunities for giving

*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. 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 special.*

## Chef Hits Aces

Rabbi Sam Joseph had his hands full. What do you do when the congregation that loves dining well grumbles about the traditional seders?

A few members decided to take matters into their own hands. The women looked for a chef who was willing to learn about Jewish holiday food and come up with the menu that respected the traditional menu but tasted as good as their best seder memory.

Success was found in the kitchen of the Excelsior Hotel. Executive chef Kurt Binggeli and *sous-chef* Alan Yu not only ploughed through cookbooks and heirloom recipes, but also studied the history of the meal, right down to the appropriate table setting and symbolic foods. , ,

Their homework paid off when the chefs invited the group back for a tasting session. One avid gourmet gave them the greatest compliment any Jewish cook could receive. 'The matzo balls were outstanding,' judged Janet Golden. The verdict on the matzo balls (dumplings) will canonize or humble a cook, and sends their mistakes to be used in a squash court.

■ Margaret Sheridan (excerpted from *The South China Morning Post*, March 24, 1994)

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Chairman: GPO Box 6083, Hong Kong  
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Social/Planning. . . . . Janet Golden  
Mollie Blaum-Sherbin

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

# UJC Calendar: May/June 1994

see notes below for addresses of venues

## Tuesday, May 3, 7:30 P.M.

*The Jews of Venice* and other interesting stories,  
a talk by Rabbi David Goldberg of  
The Liberal Jewish Synagogue of London  
Function Room, Queens Garden  
9 Old Peak Road, Hong Kong

## Wednesday, May 4, 12:40 P.M.

*Lunch and Learn*, Dina House  
*The Four Sons of Pesach*  
talk and discussion led by Rabbi David Goldberg

## Thursday, May 5, 7:30 P.M.

UJC Movie Night, *The Commissar*  
Fleet Arcades, Fenwick Pier (see page 4)

## Friday, May 6, 6:30 P.M.

*Shabbat Family Service*, The American Club

## Saturday, May 7, 10:00 A.M.

*Bat Mitzvah of Heather Shulman & Shabbat Service*  
The American Club, 48th floor

## Wednesday, May 11, 12:40 P.M.

*Lunch and Learn*, Dina House

## Friday, May 13, 6:30 P.M.

*Shabbat Family Service led by visiting Rabbi*  
The American Club

## Saturday, May 14, 9:30 A.M.

*Tot Shabbat* led by visiting Rabbi  
Ladies Recreation Club, Family Recreation Room

## Saturday, May 14, evening

Adult Education session, led by visiting Rabbi  
Details to be announced

## Sunday, May 15, 7:30 P.M.

Adult B'nai Mitzvah and Shavuot Service  
Recital Hall  
City Hall, High Block, 8th floor

## Wednesday, May 18, 12:40 P.M.

*Lunch and Learn*, Dina House

## Friday, May 20, 6:30 P.M.

*Shabbat Family Service*, The American Club

## Wednesday, May 25, 12:40 P.M.

*Lunch and Learn*, Dina House

## Friday, May 27, 6:30 P.M.

*Shabbat Family Service led by visiting Rabbi*  
The American Club

## Saturday, May 28, 9:30 A.M.

*Bar Mitzvah of Jesse Alter & Shabbat Service*  
Ladies Recreation Club, Family Recreation Room

## Sunday, May 29, 9:30 A.M.

P.A.C.E., *Jewish Books and Treasures*  
followed by meeting on religious education for 1995  
PACE & meeting led by visiting Rabbi  
Ladies Recreation Club, Family Recreation Room

## Sunday, May 29, evening

Adult Education session, led by visiting Rabbi  
Details to be announced

## Wednesday, June 1, 12:40 P.M.

*Lunch and Learn*, Dina House

## Friday, June 3, 7:45 P.M.

*Pre-Bar Mitzvah of Doran Blinderman & Shabbat Service*  
Royal Hong Kong Golf Club, Deep Water Bay

## Wednesday, June 8, 12:40 P.M.

*Lunch and Learn*, Dina House

## Friday, June 10, 6:30 P.M.

*Shabbat Family Service*, The American Club

## Wednesday, June 15, 12:40 P.M.

*Lunch and Learn*, Dina House

## Friday, June 17, 6:30 P.M.

*Shabbat Family Service*, The American Club

## Friday, June 24, 6:30 P.M.

*Shabbat Family Service*, The American Club



## Notes

702 Dina House  
Rutonjee Center,  
11 Duddell Street, Central District  
(office of Charles Monat)

The American Club  
Kam Shan Room, 49/f,  
Exchange Square II, Central District

Services are followed by Italian buffet supper  
Dinner for members, \$135.00 adults, \$85.00, children  
under 12; non-members, \$150.00 and \$100.00

Ladies Recreation Club  
10 Old Peak Road, Mid-Levels, Hong Kong

City Hall  
Committee Room South or North and Recital Hall  
High Block, 7th floor and 8th floor  
(same building as public library),  
Edinburgh Place, Central District