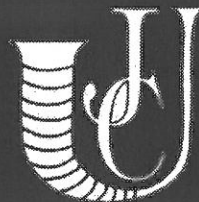


# The Shofar

THE UNITED JEWISH CONGREGATION OF HONG KONG

MAY/JUNE, 1997



*Congregation moves swiftly to fill post after Cleveland rabbi's change of heart*

## Educator, 'FSU' Specialist Takes UJC Pulpit for Sabbatical Term

### A Word of Introduction

BY RABBI JOEL OSERAN

Since the March/April edition of *The Shofar*, The UJC has gone through quite an experience. I can imagine that many of you were disappointed to learn that the search for a permanent rabbi did not work out as expected [see page 4]. None of us can rewrite the past — but all of us can benefit from the future.

In a matter of a few weeks I was contacted, brought to Hong Kong to meet the Congregation and its leadership and, with great pleasure, accepted the invitation to be your rabbi for the coming year. We Jews are masters at turning adversity into promise. I believe that our *Shiduch*, our coming together, was really meant to be. I plan on making this coming year one to remember for The UJC and the Oseran family.

Even though most of my career has been devoted to work in Jewish education, I served as a congregational rabbi from 1982-1986 in Los Angeles for a very large and successful Reform congregation (University Synagogue). And because I loved that time leading a congregation, working with congregants, teaching children, giving sermons, etc., I am so looking forward to getting to know you — to teaching you about our beautiful heritage and also to helping you when/if the need may arise, when life's pressures and pace seem to get the better of us. I will be your Rabbi 24 hours a day, seven days a week (with some time off for good behavior, I was told by the Committee).

I also plan to work hard with our Reform movement leadership in the U.S. and around the world so that we not only find a 'permanent' rabbi to take over from me when I return to Jerusalem in July, 1998, but that we have many excellent candidates standing in line to land this great job!

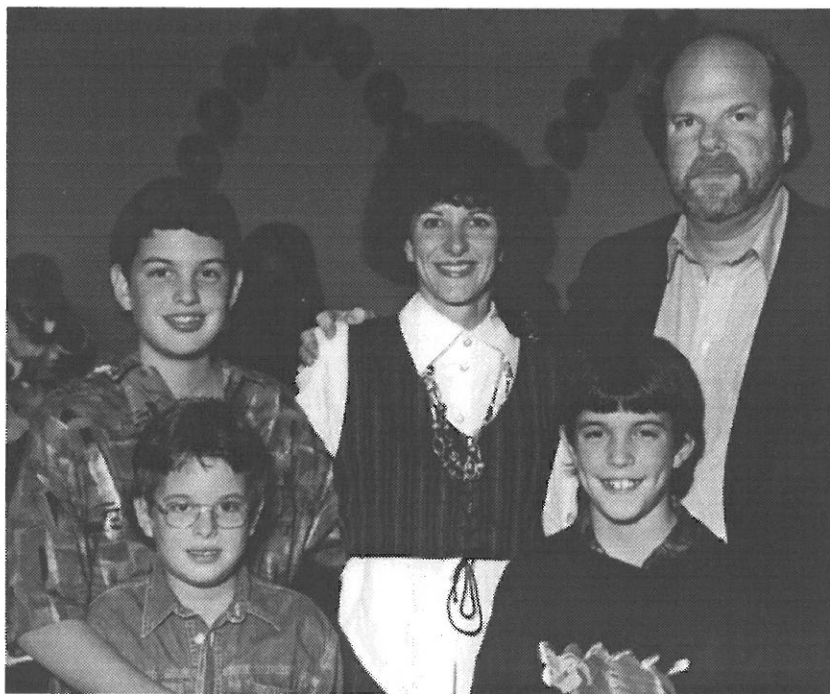
For the past 11 years I have served as the Director of Education for the World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ) — the international Reform movement organization — headquartered in Jerusalem. During these exciting years, I was privileged to have been among the pioneers in establishing our Reform movement in Israel on a more solid

footing. Together with my wonderful friend and your current Rabbi, Levi Weiman-Kelman, we helped create a new Reform movement school in Jerusalem which today has over 430 children (grades 1- 6) and an outstanding reputation for quality Jewish education in a liberal Jewish setting.

In addition to my work in Israel, I have been responsible for developing a Reform movement educational program for the Former Soviet Union (FSU). In the late 1980's, when it became clear that Jewish life would again open up to the millions of Jews throughout the expanse of the Soviet Union, the WUPJ made the commitment to enter the FSU. In the last eight years, we have succeeded in establishing over 45 congregations, over 15 religious schools, and a number of training seminars, camps, and academic

institutes. We have also made it possible for four students to study for the rabbinate at the Leo Baeck College in London.

During these years I have traveled to Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and throughout the Baltic states over 25 times to help teach our people there and help them rebuild a Jewish community rooted in our Liberal Jewish tradition of egalitarianism, pluralism and respect for all human beings. Our work in the FSU has been among the most challenging I have ever confronted — and our successes among the most rewarding. I fully intend to keep plugging away with our



Shai (standing), Ariel, wife Rachel, Ilan, Rabbi Oseran

FSU work upon my return to Israel.

But enough about myself. While I may have something to say about the 'spirit', it is Rachel, my wife, who has a great deal to say about the 'body'. Rachel directs an aerobics exercise studio in Jerusalem called 'Great Shape.' She herself is a master aerobics instructor, specializing in step aerobics and in pre/post-natal exercise. In Rachel's 'spare time', she also teaches Childbirth Preparation Classes using the Lamaze method at the well-known Jerusalem hospital, *Misgav Ladach*. Rachel is really looking forward to our Hong Kong experience! (she plans to teach aerobics as well).

(continued, page 3)

## From the Rabbi's Study . . .

Last shabbat [May 31] we read the last portion of the book of Leviticus - Behukotai (chanted beautifully by Nicki Dlugash at her bat mitzvah). Five times a year, when we finish each of the five books of Moses, we recite three words — *chazak chazak venitchazet*, usually translated 'be strong, be strong and we will be strengthened.'

I thought of those words often in the weeks leading up to the election of the new board of the JCC and the continuing controversy around the Carmel School. Jewish communities all over the world (especially in Israel) are driven by the mistaken notion that the strength of our own movement or ideology is determined by the weakness of our opponents.

Those who have heard my *d'verei torah* or classes will recognize that the themes of Jewish power, strength and communal divisions have informed many of my talks throughout the past year. With those three simple words Judaism presents us with another model of strength. The words *chazak chazak* are not necessarily directed inwards, at ourselves. We are not praying for our own strength. This formula demands that we celebrate and appreciate the strength of 'the other.' If you can do that you are really strong.

A great problem in The UJC in general is not knowing our own strength. The results of the JCC board vote prove that fact. We should acknowledge our strength, not just numerically but also ideologically. We affirm a legitimate and beautiful way of practicing Judaism.

Second of all, we must exercise that strength wisely, not using it to make others feel weak or threatened. This is a great challenge.

The strengths of competing groups may highlight our weaknesses. We should not be defensive. Fear of criticism is the sign of real weakness. Anytime criticism is ignored or suppressed it has a way of coming back in a more destructive way.

With the words *chazak chazak* we are not threatened by the strengths of those who believe or practice differently from us. When we acknowledge each other's strengths *venitchazek* we are all strengthened.

*Levi Weiman-Kelman*



Join us for the Sunday  
BBQ Buffet Dinner

&  
**Farewell**

to

**Rabbi Levi and Paula**  
**Zoe, Benji & Rafa**

**Sunday, June 22, 6:45 P.M.**

*Jewish Community Centre*

Come to wish the Weiman-Kelmans well as the sabbatical year nears its end and the family prepare for the return to Israel and Levi's resumption of his rabinate at Kol Haneshama in Jerusalem

Important: RSVP Jackie, 2523-2985

## UJC Slate Wins J.C.C. Seats

Six UJC members, one of them uncontested, were voted onto the 12-member Jewish Community Centre Board at the JCC Annual General Meeting on June 3. Their success owed much to Mary Leventhal who directed the fax and phone effort urging UJC members to attend the meeting and cast their votes.

The successful UJC candidates were Dr. Ted Axler, Ken Bell, Susan Blumenthal, Jonathan Feiger, and April Kaminsky. The other successful candidates were Naftali Gez and Sally Saunders. There were 15 candidates for the seven seats.

The other five seats on the Board were uncontested: Anne Godfrey, chairman; Ilka Shore-Cooper and Russell Davidson, vice-chairmen; Arthur Belfer (UJC member), treasurer; and Joseph Taub, Secretary.



Reprinted from *The Third Jewish Catalog*, Sharon & Michael Strasseld, Jewish Publication Society of America



## A Word of Introduction

(continued from page 1)

My three sons are great kids (you'll have to trust me until you meet them for yourselves). Shai, 15, is a basketball devotee (roots for the Phoenix Suns, which is my home town, by the way). Ilan, 12, is a championship swimmer who competes in all the major swim competitions in Israel (his favorite is the backstroke). Ariel, 8, is Mr. Personality. He is full of life, always has a smile on his face and will engage you in conversation on any subject — regardless of previous knowledge!

I will be arriving in Hong Kong during the last week of August in order to get the kids well situated in school for the start of the year in September. Rachelle won't be arriving until a bit later in September due to her work responsibilities. I am very excited to be coming and hope that our year together will bring us much mutual joy and satisfaction.

I must add a closing thank you to Levi and Paula and their children who were truly responsible for planting the seeds for this adventure. I am sure that you benefitted tremendously from Levi's warmth love of Judaism and unique soul. He is a dear friend and I can imagine that many of you would like nothing better than for him to stay. But he has an unbelievably exciting congregation waiting for him here — so you will just have to make *aliyah* to Israel so you can have Levi as your rabbi for evermore.

I look forward to seeing you soon. Until then, my very best wishes to all — and if there was a blessing for the smooth and tranquil handover from Britain to China, I would wish you that as well.

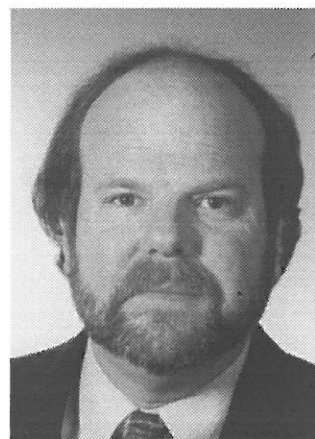
Shalom to everyone.



## Rabbi's Commitment, Building Skills Make Strong Impression

If both first and lasting impressions count for something, The UJC may consider itself fortunate in obtaining the services of Rabbi Joel David Oseran, even if for only 10 months.

First impressions first: Wednesday, March 6, 1996, when the Director of Education for the World Union of Progressive Judaism (WUPJ), stopped in Hong Kong to tell UJC members about his many trips to the former Soviet Union (FSU) to develop and monitor educational programming for the Reform movement.



Committee members Mark Michelson, Bob Green, and others at that talk and the dinner that followed came away highly impressed with the man, his mission, and accomplishments. They met a rabbi who had served not only behind the pulpit, but out front as well, on the very oldest and newest of Jewish frontiers.

We also learned about his work in Israel 'overseeing our movement's efforts to integrate new immigrants from the FSU into our Israeli Progressive movement by organizing leadership training programs and other activities.' When the UJC pulpit became open again this spring following Rabbi Joshua Aaronson's decision to remain at Cleveland's Fairmount Temple, Committee members started hearing high praise from Israel, the U.S.A., and, most significantly, from Rabbi Levi Weiman-Kelman who has known Rabbi Oseran and his family for years. There are many rabbis in Israel, Rabbi Levi Weiman-Kelman told Executive Committee members at the April meeting, many of whom are Reform rabbis. 'Joel is among the few that I count as a real friend.' That endorsement extends to his wife, Rachelle and their three sons — all 'beautiful boys' in Rabbi Weiman-Kelman's words.

During a visit in early May, Rabbi Oseran conducted a Shabbat service, met with Executive Committee and rabbi search committee members, and joined UJC members for a Saturday afternoon 'Shabbat at Sea' outing.

Rabbi Oseran will bring a wealth of other experience to Hong Kong as well. His work on the Union of American Hebrew Congregations' counseling series for interfaith couples included help with a video on the subject which is used in hundreds of congregations in the U.S. Most recently, he has been part of the WUPJ rabbinic staff developing the Beit Midrash Liberal Yeshiva project in Jerusalem, the first yeshiva ever to be established by the Reform movement in Israel for English speakers.

Every second year, Rabbi Oseran organizes WUPJ international conventions, as he has just done in May for the 28th International Convention. The next one will be in March, 1999 in Jerusalem — 'to which you are all invited.'

Ordained in 1976 after getting a B.A. in history at UCLA and two Masters degrees — one in Hebrew Letters at Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion and another in education at University of Southern California, Rabbi Oseran has worked with the WUPJ since 1988. Previously, he served at University Synagogue in Los Angeles and Congregation Natan-Ya, in Netanya, Israel. He has also served as a visiting rabbi in Iran, South Africa, Hungary, Australia and the FSU.

## An Open Letter to Members of The UJC

This is a difficult letter to begin. I know that I have disappointed many of you. I know that, in the end, no explanation will suffice. However, I feel that I owe all of you a formal explanation.

When I accepted the position of Rabbi of UJC in late January, I did so based upon the information I had at that moment. My family and I were tremendously excited about the opportunity. We sold our house, we began making arrangements, we planned our visit in April, all with great enthusiasm. Personally, I looked forward eagerly to assuming my duties this summer.

On Sunday, April 6, all that changed. I was presented with a new set of circumstances. I was informed that the current senior rabbi would be relieved of his duties no later than June, 1998. Members of the Fairmount Temple urged me to reconsider my decision to leave. They offered me the opportunity to be here at Fairmount Temple for several years, at least. While a new senior rabbi will not be named for at least a couple of years, I will function in the interim as The Rabbi of Fairmount Temple. Though no explicit or implicit promise has been made, I strongly believe that I will be named the Senior Rabbi of Fairmount Temple at the appropriate time and after the proper process is completed. I believe that my future and this congregation's shall be linked for many years.

Given this new set of circumstances, I made the decision to remain here at Fairmount Temple. I acknowledge that in doing so, I abrogate a verbal agreement that I had reached with The UJC. The fact that I did not have a signed contract is irrelevant. My word serves as my contract.

I carefully measured the importance of fulfilling my obligation to the UJC with my obligation to make decisions that are in the best interests of my family. Both my wife and I feel that the opportunity to remain in Cleveland on a long-term basis is the best decision for our family. This decision was at odds with my commitment to honoring my word.

From my vantage point, I did not see a good solution. I could have fulfilled my obligation to UJC yet one eye would always be focused on eventually returning to Cleveland. Would that have been better? I honestly don't know. Of course, I could have chosen simply to live with the decision I made in January on the basis that one makes decisions with the information available at the moment and lives with those decisions even when circumstances change. I chose not to take that option. As my wife will tell you, I spend most of my time making decisions based upon what is good for others. In this specific instance, I felt that my family's welfare was the most important, and in the end, the only consideration.

I seek neither forgiveness nor understanding. I respect that you feel a trust has been broken. Let me, however, ask one thing of you: do not blame anyone but me for this decision. I made this decision and I alone bear responsibility for it. The World Union for Progressive Judaism, the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations are not to blame. Your anger should not be directed at them. Both Rabbi Sher and Rabbi Kulwin desperately want for the UJC to have a well-qualified rabbi. Nor should you let this experience color the way in which you view rabbis in general. Most of my colleagues struggle each day to do the right thing. They conduct the struggle with dignity and integrity.

I do hope with time that your anger and frustration will ease. As well, I hope you continue to flourish. Each of you bear the most important title our tradition can bestow, that of Jew. Hold it close and it shall guard you.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Joshua M. Aaronson

## A Way Forward

BY KENNETH BELL

Chairman, Religious and Ritual Committee

As a result of Rabbi Josh Aaronson's decision not to take up The UJC post and thereby satisfy our search for a rabbi on a multi-year contract, our best chance of finding a highly-qualified rabbi for the months ahead was to again engage someone for a sabbatical term. On one hand I believe we were very fortunate in getting Rabbi Oseran to join us for the coming religious year, but on the other hand, this means The UJC will continue, over the next two years, as in the past year, to go through a period of transition in religious leadership.

If we look at the interval from the end of Rabbi Kosovske's term to the time a more permanent rabbi will be in place (around September 1998) and include Rabbi Joseph's stay for the High Holidays last year, we will have had five rabbis in just over a two-year period. Personally having grown up in a synagogue that had a single rabbi for over 30 years, The UJC has been a very different type of experience for me, as I am sure it has been for many of our members.

There is no doubt that each rabbi, as we 'transition' from Rabbi Kosovske to Rabbi Weiman-Kelman and now to Rabbi Oseran, offers a different style which was, is and will be reflected in our services. As would be expected, each style has its own merits and appeals accordingly to different members.

As this situation has become more apparent, the Religion and Ritual Committee has come to feel that the Congregation should try to develop a service unique to The UJC — one developed by the members in conjunction with the rabbi that will meet the religious needs and satisfy as many members as possible. It is realized that this is an ambitious goal and maybe an impossible one, but the effort must be brought forward.

It was originally hoped to begin this task upon the arrival of Rabbi Aaronson, particularly since it was hoped he would be here for more than just an initial two-year commitment. Now with Rabbi Oseran coming for ten months and then another rabbi after that, the Religious and Ritual Committee believes that it is now even more important to begin this effort, hopefully, shortly after Rabbi Oseran's arrival in late August.

The effort would be ongoing. Hopefully, this is something we can talk about with Rabbi Leonard Thal when he visits in September and tap on his experience. Also, we can take advantage of Robin Helzner's presence during the High Holidays and get her ideas about music for our services. If necessary, we should avail ourselves of resources from outside the community.

The major problem in moving forward with this plan is that until now, the Religious and Ritual Committee has been a committee of one. I am therefore appealing to all members of the Congregation who would like to join this committee and work towards developing a better, stronger UJC to get in touch with me. I can be contacted at 2813-9584, fax 2813-5164. I will notify interested members of details for the first meeting.

Thank you in advance for your anticipated help.



# Welcome New Members

## **MICHAEL AND SARAH MILLER (AUSTRALIA) & RACHEL, 7**

Michael: investment banker, Credit Suisse First Boston;  
prev. affil.: North Shore Temple Emanuel (Liberal), Sydney  
special talents or skills: public relations

## **JON & CRISTINA HILSEN RATH (USA)**

Jon: journalist, Asia Inc.; Cristina, journalist, Wharf Cable TV  
prev. affil.: Temple in Manhasset, NY

## **ANDREW SOLLINGER (USA)**

journalist, Institutional Investor Inc.  
prev. affil.: Union Reform Temple, Freeport, New York

## **SIMON AND JANE NEVILLE (UK) & JESSICA, 5, SOPHIE, 3**

Simon: treasurer, Jardine Matheson  
prev. affil.: Wimbledon Reform Synagogue, London

## **BRUCE EINHORN AND MARCIA ELLIS (U.K.) & NATHALIE, 2**

Bruce: journalist, Business Week;  
Marcia: attorney, Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison

## **ROBERT WOLK (USA)**

investment banker, Goldman Sachs (Asia)  
prev. affil.: Central Synagogue, New York City (Reform)

## **ADAM AND KERIN CONN (UK) & EMMA, 2; ALEXANDER, 1**

Adam: stockbroker, James Capel  
prev. affil.: Stonegrove Reform Synagogue, London  
& Glasgow New Synagogue, Glasgow

## **MAURIZIO AND ELLEN LEVI-MINZI (USA) & JONATHAN, 2**

Maurizio: attorney, Debevoise & Plimpton  
Ellen: banker, Citibank  
prev. affil.: Temple Israel, Lawrence, NY

## **NANCY BOEHM (USA)**

**& CHRISTOPHER ALLAN KAVI BOEHM, 3 MOS.**  
banker, Bank of Bermuda

## **PIERRE AND MAY GABISON (CANADA)**

Director, Franco-Chinese Consultants, Ltd.  
special talents or skills: karate

## **JODIE GAHARD (USA)**

attorney, Preston, Gates & Ellis

## **ESTHER FRIEDMAN (SOUTH AFRICA)**

AME Investment Tdg. Ltd.  
special talents or skills: charity work  
prev. affil.: Orthodox (South Africa)

## **PHILIP MILNER-BARRY (UK) AND CARLA RAPOPORT (USA) & CHARLOTTE, 9, SARAH, 6**

Philip: ship broker, Rodskog;  
Carla: journalist, Future Events News  
prev. affil.: South London Liberal Synagogue

## **MICHAEL CARMAN AND BETSY RUDOLPH (US) & JEFFREY, 6**

Michael: Allied Signal  
prev. affil.: Temple Israel, Swampscott, MA (Conservative)

## **RENEE SPELTZ (USA)**

special talents or skills: R.N., psych. counselling  
prev. affil.: Conservative synagogue in Helsinki

## **DANIEL AND TINA KUSHNER (USA)**

Daniel and Tina: managers, ETAK International  
special talents or skills: music, language, tennis

## **PAUL NATALI (USA)**

solicitor: Lovel, White, Durrant  
prev. affil.: London, Sephardic

## **MELANIE NUTBEAM (NEW ZEALAND)**

financial consultant, Bentley Reid & Co.  
prev. affil.: London, Sephardic

## **DANIEL AND MEI-HUA BIER (USA) & JOSHUA, 5, RACHEL, 5, & MAE, 1**

Daniel: journalist, Far Eastern Economic Review  
special talents, skills: writing, editing  
prev. affil.: Temple Judea, Los Angeles (Reform)

## **STEWART AND MOLLY HOMLER (USA) & LEO, 6; JEREMY, 4**

Stewart: Director of Investment,  
MetLife Investments Asia, Ltd.

## Visitor, New Member Seek Summer Housing

I am a Jewish student in the U.S. looking for accommodations in Hong Kong for the summer. I have secured a job with NBC Asia in Chai Wan, but unfortunately they are unable to assist me with housing. I will be in Hong Kong from June 24 to August 21.

Ideally, I am looking to rent a room or a small flat for these two months. While I am certainly on a budget, I fully expect to have to spend around HK\$5,000 a month for small lodgings.

I would greatly appreciate any help The UJC and the Hong Kong Jewish community could give because my options are quite limited at this point. I would welcome any opportunity to stay with a Reform or

Conservative family looking for a housesitter, someone to perform odd jobs, or simply as a boarder. I will of course present qualifications and/or information about myself should anyone be interested. Please contact me through E-mail (below) or The UJC office.

Many thanks,

Adam Marshall  
Yale University, Class of 2000

E-mail: adam.marshall@yale.edu  
or DobraM@aol.com (mother)

affil. with: Adis Israel Congregation.  
Wash. D.C. (Conservative)



Dear UJC members:

I will be needing a room on Hong Kong Island from mid-July onwards and would be very interested in hearing from anyone who has a spare room I could rent. I could also be available to flat/house sit for people over the summer period. Please let me know of any possibilities by contacting me via pager at 7895 5209, #10 or The UJC office.

Many thanks,

Justine Obrart



# Academic Calls for 'Causeless Love' to Help Resolve Differences

BY JULIUS LESTER

It is misleading to frame the current tensions between Orthodox and Liberal Jews in terms of the recognition of non-Orthodox converts in Israel. The issue is rabbinic authority, i.e. whose rabbis have the authority to admit 'aliens' into the Jewish people. This issue is not new in Jewish history and what we are witnesses of and participants in is simply the latest manifestation of tension that has existed most recently since the inception of Reform Judaism.

Let there be no illusions. Reform Judaism is an attack on Orthodoxy because Reform Judaism says that the Torah was not given literally on Sinai by God and that the Oral Law - *halachah* - is not binding. Reform Judaism attacks Orthodoxy whenever a Reform synagogue calls itself 'Temple'-such-and-such. Reform Judaism believes that the Temple will never be rebuilt and should not. Orthodox Jews pray three times a day for the restoration of the Temple. Orthodox Judaism would argue that Reform Judaism (as well as Conservative and Reconstructionist) delay the coming of the Messiah. For these and other reasons some Orthodox Jews feel they are involved in a holy war to save Judaism. I mention these examples because I am not sure that Liberal Jews are enough aware of and sensitive to the seriousness and depth of the differences and thus do not understand why the rhetoric of some Orthodox Jews against Reform is sometimes so strident.

Those of us who are not Orthodox should be equally clear and calm. We cannot compromise on our contention that Judaism has evolved and continues to evolve in time, that Judaism has periodically refashioned elements of itself depending on the historical circumstances and places Jews lived, that one of Judaism's strengths is its ability to meld the traditional and the new and recreate itself in a variety of ways. Chasidism is one example of this. Reform is another.

Such a position is unacceptable to the Orthodox and we should respect them enough and not ask them to accept it.

Just as the Orthodox are clear in their principled rejection of Liberal Judaism, we should be equally clear in our principled rejection of Orthodoxy. While I love tradition and learn much from studying Talmud and midrash and observe some *halachot* (laws), I finally concluded that I cannot accept rabbinic Judaism as the final authority. Let me state it as clearly as I can: I will be the final arbiter of my relationship with God. I avail myself of the wisdom in Jewish tradition and do not make a decision without learning what Jewish law says about an issue. I want to be equally clear that as a post-denominational Jew — and that describes me more accurately than the term liberal — it is essential that I know and understand Jewish law, but my ultimate decision is not based on the fact that I will do such-and-such solely because Jewish law says so. I will do it because it is right for me as I understand and know my relationship with the Divine.

I rejected Orthodoxy because there appeared to be too little space and respect for the authority of the individual's relationship to the Divine. Many of us have consciously and willfully rejected Orthodoxy and rabbinic Judaism because we want a Judaism that allows for the interplay between the communal dimension and the personal one. We want a Judaism which acknowledges and respects that the inner requirements and demands of 'purely spiritual development' will not always accord with *halacha*. Orthodoxy cannot meet this need and cannot be blamed for not doing so. That is not its purpose.

Our decisions to affiliate with a liberal movement came after consideration and rejection of Orthodoxy. It is not that

we wanted an easy way to be Jewish. It is that Orthodoxy did not represent the best expression of Judaism for us.

Accompanying Orthodoxy's long history as normative is an equally long tradition of Jews rejecting it. The Chassidic movement was a protest against the Orthodoxy of the 18th century and many Orthodox rabbis railed against the Baal Shem Tov, et. al. with the same vitriol that some rail against Reform today. No movements of dissent against Orthodoxy have achieved the success, in numbers or longevity, of Reform and Conservative Judaism. These movements are not going to fade into obscurity as did the Karaites or Samaritans, because they have found rich soil in America from which to grow and develop. The richness and vitality of Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist Judaism in America is, in and of itself, a critique of Orthodoxy.

A teacher of mine said once, 'When you are in a discussion, try to understand the premise from which the other is speaking. See if your premise and his agree. If they do not, end the discussion because you're going to be talking at cross purposes.' The Orthodox view of Judaism is based on premises I do not accept. My view of Judaism is based on premises they do not accept. They are certainly not going to change their view and I am not going to change mine. So, let's stop.

Instead, let's try something else. I wonder if Christianity does not offer a model. It is divided into distinct branches with one — Catholicism — offering a model of absolute authority in doctrinal matters to the Pope, while in Protestantism, models of authority are more diffuse. Christian denominations have varying rites but all celebrate Christmas and Easter. The overriding religious principle all Christians accept is the divinity of Jesus.

Perhaps we as Jews can learn something from Christians on how to live with division and difference. I would propose two principles on which we can all agree. Those born of Jewish mothers are Jews. The recognition of converts as Jews as well as the children of Jewish fathers and Gentile mothers would be left to the discretion of the various denominations. The state of Israel would recognize all converts under the Law of Return but it would be a matter of record under whose auspices the conversion was performed so that the Orthodox would be protected for purposes of marriage.

The second principle on which I think all of us can agree is Torah. Just as Christians can agree on the divinity and primacy of Jesus, perhaps we as Jews can agree on the centrality and primacy of the Written Torah. We do not have to agree on how to interpret it or live it. Let us simply agree that to all of us — Orthodox, Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist — the Written Torah is the foundation of our Jewish lives.

Rather than talk about who is a Jew, etc., etc., etc., it would be far more useful if Jews of all persuasions studied Torah together. In doing so, we might find that we agree on more than we could imagine. And we might learn a new respect for each other.

The Talmud tells us that causeless hatred between Jews was the reason the Temple was destroyed. Rav Kook commented that only causeless love between Jews could restore the Temple. If we understand the Temple as symbolizing the coming together of all Jews, then it is clear: We are in desperate need of an epidemic, indeed, a plague of causeless love.

Julius Lester is Professor of Judaic Studies at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. ■ Submitted by Rabbi Levi Weiman-Kelman



# Chief Rabbinate Draws Fire from Reform, Conservative Leaders

BY ERIC YOFFE

The chief rabbinate [in Israel] was created by the British mandatory authorities as a means of exerting control over the Jewish subjects of what was then Palestine. The very idea of a politically selected chief rabbinate was contrary to accepted practice in the Jewish community, which dictates that a rabbi's standing is determined by such factors [as] a knowledge of Torah and personal piety. Nonetheless, the Zionist leadership of the Yishuv accepted the chief rabbinate as an added means of gaining recognition from the mandatory power.

In the early days of the State of Israel, the chief rabbis were known for their moderation and strong Zionist commitments, and for their determination to use their office to resolve difficult religious issues facing Israel's Jewish citizens. Changes in the last three decades have been far-reaching, however, altering the chief rabbinate beyond recognition.

The religious bureaucracy controlled by the rabbinate — which includes the religious courts, the religious councils, the apparatus for kashrut supervision and the network of neighborhood synagogues and rabbis — has grown dramatically. This bureaucracy is entirely state-supported and, in relative terms, is roughly comparable in size to the institutions of the Catholic Church in pre-modern France. More importantly, a half-century of religious monopoly and a shift in orientation from moderate Zionist to ultra-Orthodox have given the chief rabbinate and its associated institutions an entirely different character.

It is indeed true that there are many pious, devoted Jews who serve in the religious institutions of the state. The best intentions of individuals, though, cannot change the fact that a large, coercive, monopolistic religious bureaucracy always leads to corruption and distortions, undermining the religious tradition it is meant to serve. What has been an ineluctable historical principle is as true for the Jews and Israel as it is for every other group and nation.

I do not favor a complete separation of religion and state in Israel; the American model would not work in the Jewish state. Still, a substantial reduction in the religious bureaucracy is essential; similarly, the chief rabbinate should be abolished or reduced to an entirely symbolic status. Ironically, since the Reform and Conservative movements are so tiny in Israel, it is modern Orthodoxy that would most benefit from a 'free market' in the religious realm. However, modern Orthodox leaders refuse to advocate that which is most likely to elevate their own position as well as the standing of Torah in the eyes of Israel's secular majority.

I once held out hope that it would be possible to have discussions with the chief rabbis that might lead to understandings on religious problems in Israel that would be acceptable to all the major religious movements. When I became an official of the Reform movement in 1983, I made efforts to establish dialogue with the chief rabbis and their representatives. For more than a decade, all of my approaches and the approaches of other Reform leaders were summarily rejected. What do you call an institution that professes to represent Judaism in the state of the Jews, but rejects even informal contact with the largest religious movements in the Jewish world? A disgrace to the Jewish people.

*Rabbi Yoffie is president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Abridged from Forward, May 23, 1997. Submitted by Robert L. Meyer.*

FORWARD STAFF

The chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Rabbi Ismar Schorsch, is calling for the dismantling of Israel's chief rabbinate, saying that the Jewish state's religious authorities are 'dysfunctional' and 'without a scintilla of moral worth.'

The call was made in a private meeting of Conservative Judaism's Rabbinical Assembly but will be issued publicly in a Passover letter this week. The letter contains Rabbi Schorsch's four-part plan to achieve a separation between synagogue and state in Israel.

'The supreme irony of Zionist history is that the founders of Israel who fled an intransigent Orthodoxy in eastern Europe ended up relinquishing all control of Judaism in the Jewish state to that self-same Orthodoxy,' Rabbi Schorsch writes, bemoaning the fact that the chief rabbinate and its courts 'have fallen into the hands of the ultra-Orthodox, who ruthlessly conspire' to prevent conversions.

Rabbi Schorsch alleges that the statement by the Union of Orthodox Rabbis in North America condemning Reform and Conservative Jews as heretics was 'hatched in Israel.' He said the statement was tantamount to inciting the murder of Yitzhak Rabin.

His four-point plan calls first for Reform and Conservative Jews to stop funding all ultra-Orthodox institutions and second for the promotion of religious pluralism in Israel for Jews to become 'a top funding priority for UJC-Federation.'

'Third, the time has come to dismantle the Chief Rabbinate and its network of courts,' Rabbi Schorsch writes. 'Sustained by a political alliance between cynicism and fundamentalism, the system is today without a scintilla of moral worth.' He calls for 'decoupling the state from a dysfunctional ultra-Orthodox rabbinate.'

Finally, Rabbi Schorsch called for 'the campaign against the stranglehold of ultra-Orthodoxy [to] be carried irrespective of the peace process.' Rabbi Schorsch's letter comes as other Conservative rabbis were distancing themselves from Rabbi Yoffie's sharp criticism of the chief rabbinate. The difference between the two movements is significant, and not only tactical, as the two branches negotiate with the Israeli government on the religious pluralism issue. More broadly, the Reform movement is trying to persuade the Conservative to accept its position in favor of patrilineal descent and an activist Washington social action agenda. Rabbi Yoffie said last week that the battle over religious pluralism had 'drawn us together,' referring to the two movements.

Not so fast, the Conservative leaders say. 'We do have our differences. We try very much not to paper them over,' said the executive vice president of the Rabbinical Assembly, Rabbi Joel Meyers. 'I don't know if I would use Rabbi Yoffie's words,' he said, allowing, however, that 'the chief rabbinate as it exists is really an anachronism.'

The executive vice president of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, the movement's congregational branch, Rabbi Jerome Epstein . . . called the Israeli chief rabbinate 'a dinosaur' whose behavior has been 'outrageous.'

Abridged from *Forward*, April 18, 1997

## Eternal Jewish Truths (or) Grandma's Talmud

If you can't say something nice, say it in Yiddish.

If it tastes good, it's probably not kosher.

No one looks good in a yarmulke.

WASPs leave and never say good-bye.

Jews say good-bye and never leave.

Twenty percent off is a bargain; fifty percent off is a mitzvah.



No one leaves a Jewish wedding hungry; but then again, no one leaves with a hangover.

If your name was Lipschitz, you'd change it, too.

Always whisper the names of diseases.

One mitzvah can change the world; two will just make you tired.

If you don't eat, it will kill me.



Anything worth saying is worth repeating a thousand times.

The most important word to know in any language is sale.

Never take a front-row seat at a bris.

Prune danish is definitely an acquired taste.

Never leave a restaurant empty-handed.

What business is a yenta in? Yours.

Schmeer today, gone tomorrow.



The important Jewish holidays are the ones on which alternate-side-of-the-street parking is suspended.

You need ten men for a minyan, but only four in polyester pants and white shoes for pinochle.

A schmata is a dress that your husband's ex is wearing.

Without Jewish mothers, who would need therapy?

According to Jewish dietary law, pork and shellfish may be eaten only in Chinese restaurants.



Tsuris is a Yiddish word that means your child is marrying someone who isn't Jewish.

No meal is complete without leftovers.

If you have to ask the price, you can't afford it. But if you can afford it, make sure you tell everybody what you paid.

Laugh now, but one day you'll be driving a big Cadillac and eating dinner at four in the afternoon.

■ submitted by Mark Michelson

## Charles Monat, Robert Meyer pledge major, kick-off contributions UJC launches campaign to help Shanghai elderly and children with special needs

The great philanthropist and benefactor of the Jewish people here in Hong Kong and elsewhere, the late Lord Lawrence Kadoorie, knew how much we owed to one of the very few places in the world that accepted Jewish refugees from Europe during World War II.

Meeting in his office in Hong Kong in May, 1989 with Pan Guang, dean of the Center for Jewish Studies in Shanghai, Lord Kadoorie told the professor that the Jewish people would never forget Shanghai.

Acting now on that same sense of gratitude and indebtedness, The UJC has teamed up with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) to support a pilot project centered in the Shanghai district (Hongkou) where some 20,000 Jews fleeing the Holocaust found a safe haven.

The money raised will go for wheelchairs, walkers, computers, and software and to fund the expenses of JDC experts from Israel and the U.S. who train local staff in their use.

This project, designed to expand and modernize services for the elderly and create new educational opportunities for special needs children in Shanghai, is the first major outreach initiative undertaken by the UJC in its eight-year history.

It is particularly rewarding in light of its wide implications and potential benefits. Not only is it the intention to apply these programs in existing community centers serving Hongkou District's 850,000 residents but to use them as a model that can be replicated all over Shanghai and ultimately, throughout China.

The project has come to a critical stage. In order to continue and expand, new funding is required for training and equipment purchases. By good fortune, this opportunity to assist came to The UJC's attention through community member Ira Kaye and has been enthusiastically received by a number of others looking for a way to

perform *tzedakah* that is meaningful and relevant to them in the context of their lives and jobs in this part of the world.

The names of those contributing HK\$18,000 or more will be inscribed on a special plaque commemorating the project in Shanghai's Hongkou District, and in The UJC's Torah in the Book of Life.

As important as financial contributions are, the project also depends on the help of UJC members who have the time to look in on the project in the course of visits to Shanghai. Because the JDC can only afford to send teams of experts a few times a year, it benefits greatly from on-the-scene progress reports.

For a first-hand look on how your money is being spent, and a glimpse at life in China that you can never get from behind the tinted windows of a tour bus, contact the fund-raising committee, if you are planning a visit, for details on how you can help.

Also, as committee co-chairman Cara Case wrote in her letter to UJC members, 'As more Jews do business in China, it is time to re-establish the special bond between the Chinese and the Jews. By providing assistance in China, the JDC provides a visible link to Israel and the Jewish community in the minds of the Chinese, thus strengthening the ties between these two countries and peoples.'

**'The Jews needed help yesterday and the Chinese gave it,' Ms Case said. 'Remember the Jewish tradition of *tzedakah* and we know you will find it in your heart to give.'**

In addition to what has already been written about the project by UJC member Steven Strasser in a recent issue of Newsweek, a number of other international news organizations have expressed interest as well. NBC Asia plans a half-hour television story within the next few months which is expected to air in the U.S. as well.





# Guide to Former Jewish Sites in Shanghai

*Compiled and prepared by Tess Johnston and Professor Gao Wangzhi, Shanghai, March 15, 1990 [with subsequent minor editing by The Shofar]. Provided by Professor Pan Guang, Center for Jewish Studies, Shanghai. The UJC visited several of the sites noted below on the May, 1995 Heritage Tour but cannot confirm the validity of all the information, particularly since it is now somewhat dated.*

## Synagogues

**Beth El**, 16 Beijing Dong Lu (formerly Peking Road). Orthodox Sephardic congregation founded August 2, 1887; synagogue built beginning of the century. **Demolished**, site now part of the Shanghai Friendship Store.

**Shearith Israel**, probably 541 Dong Da Ming Lu (formerly Broadway) in Hong Kou (Hongkew) District. Dedicated by D.E.J. Abraham in 1900; had Talmud Torah and Mikvah. **Partly demolished**; the remainder is incorporated in houses.

**Ohel Rachel**, Shan Xi Bei Lu (formerly 200 Seymour Road). Founded by Sir Jacob Sassoon (Victor's father) in his wife's memory and consecrated in 1920 by Rabbi W. Hirsch. **Well preserved**, now occupied by the Shanghai Education Bureau.

**Beth Aharon**, 42 Hu Qiu Lu (formerly 50 Museum Road). Built in 1927 with a donation from Silas A. Har- doon in his father's memory. **Demolished** spring of 1985. The stone Menorah is preserved in the Shanghai Museum.

**Ohel Moishe**, 62 Chang Yang Lu (formerly 62 Ward Road, Hong Kou). Original synagogue founded 1907 (lo- cation unknown) and moved to this site in 1927. It was a synagogue for Orthodox Russian and German Jews, head- ed by Rabbi Ashkenazi. Headquarters for the Zionist youth organization Brith Trumpeldor (Betar). **Partly pre- served** (including original gate and staircase), now occu- pied by the Shanghai Mental Hospital.

**New Synagogue**, Xiang Tang Nan Lu (formerly 102 Rue de la Tour), near Huai Hai Zhong Lu. Built and consecrat- ed in 1941. Original site was at 26 Ward Road (now Chang Yang Lu). New Synagogue was a huge architectu- ral structure with seating for 1,000. Services continued until 1956. **Preserved**, now occupied by the Shanghai Ed- ucation College as its auditorium.

**McGregor**, 627 Dong Yu Han Lu, Hong Kou. Founded 1941 as synagogue of the *Juedische Gemeinde*. **Demol- ished** in 1985.

## Schools

**Shanghai Jewish School**, Shan Xi Bei Lu (formerly 200 Seymour Road) at the same place as Ohel Rachel Syna- gogue. First founded in 1900 by D.E.J. on the grounds of Shearith Israel, the new school was established in 1932 by Horace Kadoorie on the grounds of Ohel Rachel. **Pre- served**, now occupied by the Shanghai Education Bureau.

**Kadoorie School** (SJYA School), 627 Dong Yu Han Lu at same place as McGregor Synagogue. Founded 1929 by Horace Kadoorie, moved to the new site in 1942. **Demol- ished** in 1985 along with McGregor Synagogue.

**Wayside Primary School**, 150 Hou Shan Lu (formerly Wayside Road). **Demolished**. There is still a primary school on the site, but none of the original buildings.

## Clubs

**The Jewish Club**, formerly 1623 Peking Road, moved in April, 1947 to 20 Fen Yang Lu (formerly rue Pichon) Founded by Russian Jews, mainly for the performance of music. **Preserved**, now occupied by the Shanghai Conser- vatory of Music.

**The Jewish Recreational Club** (JRC), 35 Moulmein Road (now Mao Ming Bei Lu). Founded 1912 for sports activities. **Preserved**, now used as a private residence for numerous families.

## Hospitals

**Shanghai Jewish Hospital**, 83 Fen Yang Lu (formerly rue Pichon). Originally B'nai Brith Polyclinic, founded 1934. Adopted new name in 1942. Headed by Dr. Max Steinmann, a German Jewish refugee. **Preserved**, now the Shanghai E.N.T. Hospital.

There were other Jewish hospitals: one with a maternity ward on Ward Road (now Chang Yang Lu); and others on Chaoufong Lu (now Gao Yang Lu), an isolation ward; and Washing Lu (now Xi Chang Lu). All are in Hong Kew District.

## Main Streets, Hongkew Ghetto

- **Ward Road** — now Chang Yang Lu
- **Wayside Road** — now Hou Shan Lu
- **Baikal Road** — now Hui Ming Lu
- **Chusam Road** — now Zhou Shan Lu

## Famous Jewish Buildings

- **Sassoon House, on the Bund**, built by Sassoon
- **Embankment Building, on Suzhou Creek**, built by Sassoon
- **Marble Hall, the Kadoorie Family home**, Yan An Lu
- **Hamilton House**, Fuzhou Lu
- **Metropolitan Building**, Fuzhou Lu

## Cemeteries

There were four but all have been demolished. The first, The Israel Cemetery, built in 1862 on Mohawk Road (now Huang Pi Bei Lu), is now a park. The second, much larger, located on Baikal Road (now 724 Hui Ming Lu) is now the Hui Ming Children's Park. The third, founded in 1926 on Columbia Road (now Fan Yu Lu) is now the Shanghai Repair Workshop for Precision Machines. The fourth, on Point Road (now Li Ping Lu), is now the Xin Hua Wireless Factory. In the latter part of the 1950's, the first three cemeteries were moved to Ji An Cemetery at Weijiajiao in the western suburbs of Shanghai. The fourth was moved there in 1966.

All cemeteries containing foreign graves were **de- stroyed and plowed over** during the Cultural Revolution (1966 to early 1970's). There is only one Jewish grave re- maining (Sassoon).

## Thanks!

For organizing, arranging the Passover Seder: **Diana Goldman, Jackie Vachha, Martin Gershon, Jody Kuzmick, Maureen Fox, Diana Satok, Steve Kahn, Jonathan Feiger, Kee Cronin, Terry Paule, Lynn Godman, Mark Michelson, Bob Green, Ken Bell, Maggie Eiseman**

**Charles Monat** for hosting a dinner party for Alberto Senderay

**Diana Goldman, Rhonda Sturtz, Stacey Cohen, Mel Satok, and Alis-taire Hayman** for organizing the Purim party at the LRC

**Rabbi and Paula Weiman-Kelman and family** for hosting havdalah services and other get-togethers in their apartment

**Peter Kaminsky** for helping prepare the UJC accounts for the audit

**Mark Michelson, Terry Paule, Robert Meyer** and all the other members of the search committee for bringing Rabbi Joel Oseran to Hong Kong

**Neil Horwitz, Benjamin Frankel, Jonathan Feiger, and Mel Bazerman** for leading services or giving the D'verei Torah in the Rabbi's absence

## Mazel Tov!

To all those who completed the Introduction to Judaism course, and were called to the Torah. An unforgettable day for all who came.

**Brian Blank and Michele Watters** on their marriage planned for July 18

**Woody Abram and Joanne Cheung** on their marriage planned for July 5

**Yuhong and Andrew Starger** on the birth of their son Meir Elan on March 5 and bris

**Nancy and David Boehm** on the birth of their son Christopher on March 12 and bris

**Adam and Kerin Conn** on the birth of their son Alexander on May 1 and bris

**Asaf Malamud, son of Idit and Avraham Malamud**, on his Bar Mitzvah March 22

**Glen Marcus, son of Basil and Debbie Marcus**, on his Bar Mitzvah April 12

**Abby Lavin, daughter of Ann and Franklin Lavin** on her Bat Mitzvah May 10

**Melinda Paule, daughter of Jeff and Terry Paule** on her Bat Mitzvah May 17

**Ashley Brenner, daughter of Nancy and Allan Brenner** on her Bat Mitzvah May 17

**Nicki Dlugash, daughter of Rebecca and Brian Dlugash** on her Bat Mitzvah May 31

**Matthew Sears, son of Robin Harris and Robin Sears** on his Bar Mitzvah June 7

**Michael, son of Elly Brooks and Alan Reid** on his Bar Mitzvah June 14

**Renata Axler, daughter of Ted and Marie Axler** on her Bat Mitzvah June 22

**Ashley Wayburne, son of Dawnna and David Wayburne** on his Bar Mitzvah July 5

## Shabbat Sponsorships

**Aline and Gary Silberg**, March 21, on the occasion of their departure

**Mary Seddon**, March 28, on the occasion of Michael Meyer's visit

**Debbie and Basil Marcus**, April 11 & 12, on the occasion of their son's Bar Mitzvah

**Adam and Kerin Conn**, April 9, on the birth of their son Alexander

**Terry and Jeff Paule, and Nancy and Alan Brenner**, April 16, on the occasion of their daughters' B'nai Mitzvot

## Shabbat Sponsorships (continued)

**David and Janeth Weil**, April 30, in honor of the birthday of David's mother, Marlene Weil

**Robin Harris and Robin Sears**, June 6 and 7, on the occasion of their son Matthew's Bar Mitzvah

**Elly Brooks and Alan Reid**, June 13 and 14, on the occasion of their son Michael's Bar Mitzvah

**Ted and Marie Axler**, June 20 and 21, on the occasion of their daughter Renata's Bat Mitzvah

**Sharon Ser**, June 27, on the occasion of her parents' visit.

**Dawnna and David Wayburne**, July 4 and 5, on the occasion of their son Ashley's Bar Mitzvah



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Jonathan Feiger..... Vice-chairman; Educ.; Admin.  
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Robert Meyer..... Treasurer; Legal; Liaison  
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Cara Case..... Fundraising, Outreach  
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Daniel Kirwin..... Fundraising, Administration  
Charles Monat..... Community Relations; Liaison  
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David Zweig..... Without portfolio

Honorary: Carol Betson, Peter Kaminsky, Benjamin Frankel, Albert Fine, Janet Golden

*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.

Articles and letters from members and friends are most welcome and encouraged. Address all submissions to Editor, *The Shofar*, G.P.O. Box 6083, Hong Kong; by fax to 2730-5507; or E-mail to rgreenhk@hk.super.net



## Creating an island of holiness in a sea of secularism Putting God on the Guest List

By JEFFREY SALKIN

As UJC members know, Rabbi Levi Weiman-Kelman and his predecessors have insisted on parents 'making the spiritual journey' with their children studying for bar or bat mitzvah, imparting many of the values described in the article below. Jeffrey Salkin is senior rabbi of The Community Synagogue in Port Washington, New York.

Once upon a time, a bar mitzvah was a relatively minor life-cycle observance that was part of what one did as a Jew. But for too many Jewish teenagers it has become a closing act in Jewish education. Consider: about 50% of all American Jewish teenagers end their Jewish education soon after their bar or bat mitzvah. Too many American Jews join synagogues solely for the bar or bat mitzvah of their child and then leave shortly afterwards.

But the problem goes far beyond our teenagers. Jewish parents make this journey as tourists — watching but not really participating or being touched spiritually. They must approach the time as people who are making a sacred journey that is potentially filled with great meaning.

What can American Jews do to make bar and bat mitzvah ceremonies into a spiritual journey.

Jewish parents must journey with their children, work together toward the goal of bar and bat mitzvah: whether it means going to synagogue together or doing Shabbat at home. It works. It can transform the family and make the bar or bat mitzvah a spiritual pilgrimage.

Puberty is a bad reason to end your Jewish education. Jewish parents allow their children far more discretion in the Jewish aspects of their lives than they do in any other arena. They tend to see Judaism as elective, as something extra.

The way you celebrate reflects what you value. Everyone has a 'Can you top this?' story about bar and bat mitzvah celebrations. The outrageous costs, the ridiculous themes, young teenagers staying at parties until 2 in the morning — Philip Roth did not invent stories about the excesses of alienated Jews. The stories point to a larger problem: the disconnection between what we say we value and how we live our lives. Judaism is not an ascetic faith. But we need to create a balance between the commercial and the spiritual.

Sanity and sanctity. We must restore these two elements to the bar and bat mitzvah ritual. If American Jewish culture is to change from within, it must adopt a Judaism with depth, holiness and community. Asking probing, challenging questions about this custom will help American Jews to clarify their values and forge new meanings for Judaism and the Jewish community.

A Chassidic rebbe, Simcha Bunin of Pshischka, out walking with his disciples, encountered some Jews engaged in casual conversation. The rebbe asked his disciples, 'Do you see those Jews? They are dead.'

His disciples were stunned. The rebbe explained. 'They are dead because they have stopped asking questions and searching for the answers.'

The Chassidim walked on, pondering his statement. One of the bolder disciples asked, 'How do I know that I am not dead?' The rebbe answered, 'Because you asked.'

American Jewry will thrive as long as we know that there are questions that we need to pursue, that there are answers to be found, and meanings to be encountered. Bar and bat mitzvah can be the gateway for youths, families and the entire community to the questions, answers and meanings that can profoundly change their lives.

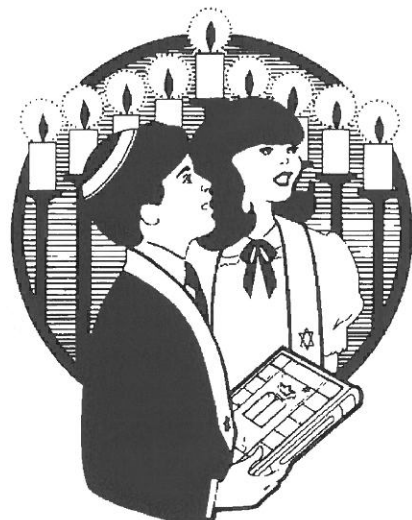
■ Abridged from *Forward*, February 14, 1997

**RENATA EMILY AXLER**  
DAUGHTER OF TED AND MARIE AXLER  
**WILL BE CALLED TO THE TORAH**  
AS A  
**BAT MITZVAH**

**SATURDAY, 10:15 A.M.**  
**JUNE 21, 1997**  
AUDITORIUM, JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTRE

*The Congregation is invited to join us  
for Shabbat Services on Friday, June 20  
followed by Shabbat Dinner  
and for Lunch, Saturday, June 21  
following the Service*

*RSVP to The UJC office, tel. 2523-2985, fax 2523-3961*



IN HONOR OF THE  
**BAR MITZVAH**  
OF THEIR SON  
**ASHLEY**

ON  
**SATURDAY, JULY 5, 10:15 A.M.**  
UJC AUDITORIUM

DAWNNA AND DAVID WAYBURNE

*Warmly Invite the Congregation  
to Join Them For  
Shabbat Service and Dinner  
Friday, July 4  
and Shabbat Service and Lunch  
Saturday, July 5*

*RSVP to the UJC Office, 2523-2985, fax 2523-3961*



## Biggest, most imaginative UJC seder yet Seder Rains Ping Pong Balls

One thing is certain. The UJC seder at The Excelsior 15 Nisan (April 22) will be remembered by the some 350 members and visitors, including celebrity Ted Koppel of ABC's Nightline, as one of the most unusual since the Israelites left Egypt.

Rabbi Levi Weiman-Kelman pulled out the stops on this one. In addition to the challenge posed by a congregation made up of members from many different countries and a variety of religious backgrounds, he faced the usual problems of conducting a community seder: how to get children involved while making sure the experience remains meaningful for adults; and how to make the experience 'new' to those familiar with it from many past years' observance.

In addition to a novel variation on handling the *afikomen* that made the search even more exciting for the children, the Rabbi brought home the message of the calamities inflicted on the Egyptians by supplying each table with 'plague plates' containing ping pong balls, sticker sheets of red dots, and toy frogs (thanks to Steve Kahn who faxed an urgent request to one of his factories in China).

The key elements of the seder are telling the story, eating matzoh, drinking four cups of wine, eating *maror*, and reciting *hallel*. But as the Haggadah states, 'Whoever expands upon the story of the Exodus deserves praise.' Expand is what the Rabbi did. Ping pong balls started flying (to simulate the hailstones rained upon the Egyptians). The frogs were to remind us of that particular calamity and the red dot stickers, which guests pasted on their hands and faces, were intended to resemble the boils with which the Egyptians were afflicted.

In addition to the usual 'Passover Hits' — Dayyeinu and Had Gadya — the Rabbi, accompanying himself on guitar, led guests in Blowing in the Wind, If I Had a Hammer, and Go Down Moses.

Rabbi Mark L. Winer, president of The National Council of Synagogues, conducted another UJC seder simultaneously on another floor of the hotel. Organizers had arranged for a second function room when bookings approached capacity. Rabbi Winer was in Hong Kong with his wife Suellen in advance of boarding a cruise ship, and offered to conduct the overflow seder.

[see Thank You's, page 7]

## A good time was had by all (almost) Tradition in the Making

Members went to sea again May 3 aboard a 60-foot fiberglass cruiser to celebrate Shabbat with salt air, samosas, satay and chardonnay. Infidels and apostates would be hard-pressed to create a more enjoyable pastime than this UJC version or variation on the Day or Rest. In a religion in which Tradition (spelled 'tra-di-SHUN' in Broadway musicals) counts for a lot, these spring and fall Ritual Pilgrimages on the South China Sea have all the makings of Events destined to stand the Test of Time.

United by their commitment to satisfying the appetite, the world's two oldest civilizations got down to the serious business of eating shortly after dropping anchor. By providing an abundant quantity of both noodles and strudel at the lunch buffet, the organizers cleverly enabled Judaism to bridge the culinary gap and make a Great Leap Eastward.

Since our first Shabbat at Sea last spring, the Word has gone out that the powerful combination of old-time religion (a *dvar* on counting the omer, on this occasion, with two rabbis to compound the message) with Spiritually-Uplifting Songs from the Sixties ('Did he ever come back? No he never came back') rendered *fortissimo* in competition with twin-screw 'Gardner' diesel engines (260 HP x 2) — is Progressive Judaism on the cutting edge.

Except for two members (the Rabbi's daughter Zoe and my wife Grace) conked out by anti-seasick pills, all aboard were rewarded for their devotion by this opportunity to Suffer and Endure in the finest Jewish Tradition (tra-di-SHUN) of which we are so proud. Only one little girl went missing during a walk at the Mystery Destination, but she was quickly recovered. Neither prickly heat nor swarms of armed mosquitoes flying ankle-high on border-crossing missions could disturb the composure of mariners intent on discovering Sabbath rest and joy, peace and comfort on this remote island, our destination.

The next cruise, Shabbat at Sea IV, is set for November 1, Members and friends are advised to book early for what promises to be another memorable Test of Faith.

■ Bob Green

## Feast of Lots Draws Top UJC Luminaries

Queens, Kings, and Clowns plus a fair number of Princesses, mostly 6 and under, made the annual UJC Purim Party March 22 at the Ladies Recreation Club one of the most successful social events of the religious season.

With a formula perfected over the centuries — well-planned activities, great food, and terrific music — it was hard for things to go wrong, and they didn't.

For starters, consider this: games with prizes for everyone • costume parade with prizes for everyone • jewelry making (bracelets, necklaces, medallions) • paper hamentaschen making • gregger making (subsequently used during the Megillah reading) • real hamentaschen making, something the kids really loved.

The hamentaschen were so delicious that UJC leaders made an Executive Decision on the spot to have a hamentaschen 'factory' next year and make enough for everyone.

For the Megillah reading, various members of the Congregation took turns, each one putting on a silly hat for his or her reading part.

Credit for this fun-filled afternoon goes to organizer Diana Goldman and Rhonda Sturtz, Stacey Cohen, Mel Satok and Alistaire Hayman who assisted.

