



## Greetings from the Rabbi...

I am delighted to send New Year greetings to all of our UJC members. In the brief time I have served as your Rabbi I have met many of you and feel warmly received. I look forward to meeting many more of you during the numerous holiday services before us in October.

The High Holidays present us with a unique opportunity to "Return" to Jewish life. Some of us have been quite involved in the planning and implementation of programs within our community during this past year. Others have taken a back seat — happy to attend events but 'not yet' ready to take responsibility for them.

And then comes Rosh Hashana — our opportunity to renew ourselves and our commitments to Jewish life. Before us is the chance to start anew and take that first step towards more active participation in our congregation. I invite you to take that step — it will reward you in ways you may not even imagine now!

We are a small group actually and in need of everyone's support. Make this a year of "Return"; take that first step and others will be there to help you along the way.

I look forward to working with you and sharing with you the joys and challenges of Jewish life.

Wishing you a Happy and Healthy New Year. *G'mar Chatimah Tova.*

**Rabbi Joel Oseran**

## from the Chairman...

On behalf of the Executive Committee of The United Jewish Congregation of Hong Kong, I want to wish all members of the Congregation a happy and healthy New Year.

In recent days and weeks, I've had the satisfaction of working with Rabbi Joel Oseran as he takes up his duties, displaying insights into our Congregation and the unique challenges it presents as if he has been with us for years. Looking at the programs he has initiated and is planning, I feel we are very fortunate indeed in having Rabbi Oseran to guide us through the coming year.

It has also been very rewarding to see the level of commitment and achievements of several UJC members, particularly those leading our fund-raising efforts and the initiative to form havurot. This, together with the many programs and activities offered by the Jewish Community Centre and its highly-qualified professional staff, point to an exciting year ahead in which UJC and Community members in general will enjoy unprecedented opportunities to live an enriched, Jewish life in Hong Kong.

When Rabbi Lennard Thal conducted a leadership seminar for the Executive Committee late last month, he shared with us the mission statement of another Reform Jewish congregation pledged to create an environment that, among other things, 'values and promotes religious exploration, Jewish education, ethical action, communal celebration, and the development of lifelong relationships.' What more can we possibly hope for The UJC in the year 5758?

Shana Tova,

**Mark Michelson**

## Trustees Send Greetings

The Trustees would like to extend warm wishes for a Happy New Year to all members of The United Jewish Congregation of Hong Kong. The UJC has grown into a dynamic congregation with exciting and creative programs designed to integrate new members rapidly into the system. In particular, the Havurah Program being initiated by The UJC should go a long way to building fellowship and a sense of 'community' for the more transient members who have yet to establish their Jewish roots here in Hong Kong.

We would also like to commend The UJC on its decision to support the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's project in the Hong Kou district of Shanghai. This project, designed to improve quality of life of children with mental disabilities and the elderly, is a fitting way of demonstrating Jewish appreciation for support rendered by the people of Shanghai half a century ago.

We wish you a year of peace, health and happiness and look forward to your continuing important role in the Hong Kong Jewish Community.

*The Incorporated Trustees of the Jewish Community of Hong Kong*

### Rosh Hashanah Story

### If Not Higher

by I.L. Peretz

Every Friday during the month of Elul the Rabbi of Nemirov would vanish. He was nowhere to be seen. Where could the Rabbi be? In heaven, no doubt, the people thought, asking God to bring peace in the New year. Where could the Rabbi be? A villager decided to find out.

One night he sneaked into the Rabbi's home, slid under the Rabbi's bed, and waited. Just before dawn, the Rabbi awakened, got out of bed, and began to dress. He put on work pants, high boots, a big hat, a coat, and a wide belt. He put a rope in his pocket, tucked an ax in his belt, and left the house. The villager followed.

The Rabbi crept in the shadows to woods at the edge of town. He took the ax, chopped down a small tree, and split it into logs. Then he bundled the wood, tied it with the rope, put it on his back, and began walking.

He stopped beside a small broken-down shack and knocked at the window.

'Who is there?' asked the frightened, sick woman inside.

'I, Vassil the peasant,' answered the Rabbi, entering the house. 'I have wood to sell.'

'I am a poor widow. Where will I get the money?' she asked.

'I'll lend it to you,' replied the Rabbi.

'How will I pay you back?' asked the woman.

'I will trust you,' said the Rabbi.

The Rabbi put the wood into the oven, kindled the fire, and left without a word.

Now whenever anyone reports that the Rabbi has gone to heaven, the villager only adds quietly, 'Heaven? If not higher.'

## JDC expands project to two new districts; China sees national benefits, applications UJC Fund to Aid Shanghai Children, Elderly Nears \$250,000

Encouraged by Chinese officials who see eventual nationwide benefits from a pilot project supported by The UJC, field officers of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) passed through Hong Kong last week on their return from Shanghai buoyant over recent moves that extend the project's scope to two new districts in the city. One of the districts, Yu Wei, in the new commercial and industrial zone of Putong, is what China considers a model district from which other localities are expected to learn and emulate programs and advanced ways of doing things. The other is in a section formerly known as the French Concession which was also home to a number of Jewish refugees during World War II.

The project was initially launched in the Shanghai district of Hong Kou, one of the few places in the world to open its doors to Jewish refugees from Europe in World II. In the true spirit of Jewish giving, or *tzedakah* — literally, doing what is just or ethical — members and

friends of The UJC have contributed to 'righting the balance' by supporting the project. The program provides, in addition to wheel chairs and other assistive devices, top specialists from mostly Israel and the U.S.A. to train Chinese professionals and volunteers in caring for children with special needs and the elderly.

JDC field officers Alberto Senderey and Will Recant, told UJC members over the weekend that Chinese officials expressed interest in convening a nationwide conference within the next year or two to help disseminate some of the experience of those who have been involved in the project.

UJC fundraisers headed by Cara Case and Dan Kirwin are planning a reception at the China Club in January to both honor donors and raise additional funds. There are also plans for a trip to Shanghai before Chinese New Year for members and friends interested in learning more about the project.

IN ADDITION TO THE GENEROUS CONTRIBUTIONS LISTED BELOW, THE UJC WISHES TO GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE THOSE WHO SENT IN DONATIONS OF CHAI (\$18,000) OR MULTIPLES OF CHAI, AS FOLLOWS:

Robert and Sheri Dorfman  
Michael and Lori Durbin  
Gerald and Anne Godfrey  
The Kadoorie Charitable Foundations (Michael Kadoorie)  
Ira Kaye  
Robert L. Meyer  
Special Assets Foundation (Robert L. Meyer)  
Charles S. Monat

MAY THEIR NAMES AND ALL BE INSCRIBED FOR BLESSING IN THE BOOK OF LIFE

Edward and Joanne Abram	April and Peter Kaminsky
Paul Alexander	Daniel Kirwin
Ted and Marie Axler	Dennis and Mary Leventhal
Joyce Barnathan and Steve Strasser	Sally and Shalom Levy
Kenneth and Debra Bell	Saul Lockhart
Cara and Andrew Case	Kate and Mark Michelson
Emma and Gerald Conn	Stephanie Mitchell
Jennifer and Sean Debow	Roda and Miron Mushkat
Renee and Jonathan Fenby	Carla Milner-Barry
Albert and Sharon Fine	Robin and James Kaptzan
Benjamin and Fiona Frankel	Melanie Nutbeam
Alice Freund	Sonia Park
Pierre and May Gabison	Stacy and Bryan Palbaum
Janet Golden	David and Judy Payne
Dan and Diana Goldman	Terry and Jeffrey Paule
Grace and Robert Green	Amy and Richard Reingold
Patricia Herbig and Gary Greenberg	Jean Salata
Alex Grinberg	Melvin and Diana Satok
Edward and Patsy Handelman	Linda Simon
Amy and Phillip Heilberg	Julie Silberberger
Isabella Ho	Marc Straussberg
Hertha and Bert Horwitz	Sophie and Alexander Tunik
Neal and Jane Horwitz	Dawnna and David Wayburne
Lee Kaplan	Stephane and Sophie Wilmet
	Joy and David Zweig



## MEMBERSHIP RESPONDS TO APPEAL

THE UJC GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE THE FOLLOWING DONATIONS TOTALING HK \$313,489 RECEIVED IN RESPONSE TO THE UJC CONTRIBUTORS CIRCLE CAMPAIGN.

### ○ Aleph Circle (\$72,000 or more)

- Robert L. Meyer

### ○ Gimmel Circle (\$18,000 to \$35,999)

- Robert and Sheri Dorfman
- Dan and Diana Goldman
- Charles S. Monat
- Andrew Pleatman and Ellen McNally

### ○ Dalet Circle (\$7,200 to \$17,999)

- Mark, Kate and Lillian Michelson,  
Max and Aaron
- Maggie and Joel Eisemann,  
Zachery, Benjamin, and Perry

### ○ Hay Circle (\$3,600 to \$7,999)

- Arthur and Linda Belfer
- Cara and Andrew Case
- Carol Betson and Henry Goldstein
- Jonathan Feiger and Nancy Laben
- Joseph and Elane Fine
- Jonathan Feiger and Nancy Laben
- Bob and Grace Green,  
David and Jonathan
- Peter and April Kaminsky
- Steve, Masako, and Jake Levitt
- Stacy and Brian Palbaum
- Diane and Leonard Patsiner
- Jean-Eric and Melanie Salata
- Dan Shure
- Cindy and Paul Theil

### ○ Vav Circle (\$1,800 to \$3,599)

- Anonymous (2)
- Ken and Debbie Bell
- Roy and Junggae Birnbaum
- Andrea and Jeffrey Chaitman
- Kerin and Adam Conn
- Brian and Rebecca Dlugash
- Al and Sharon Fine
- Maureen and Jonathan Fox
- Janet Golden
- Alex Grinberg
- Julie and Alan Jacobson
- Patsy and Ed Handleman
- Daniel Kirwin
- Leonard and Christel Lane
- Sharon Ser
- Janeth and David Weil
- David and Joy Zweig

### ○ Zayin Circle (\$720 to \$1,799)

- Anonymous (4)
- Elsa and Martin Berman
- Margaret Britton
- Eliot Cohen
- Michael Greenberg
- Neal and Jane Horwitz
- Saul Lockhart
- Ann Lubart
- Michael March
- Viviane Meyer
- Terry and Jeffrey Paule
- Jeffrey Rosichan & Christy Dittrick
- Dan Schwartz
- Steven Sperber
- Daniel Tretiak

### Children's Circles

### ○ Het Circle (\$360 to \$719)

- Jacqueline Birnbaum
- Sandra Birnbaum
- Emma Conn
- Gerald Conn
- Charlotte Cronin
- Dylan Cronin
- Carly Dorfman
- Justin Dorfman
- Perry Feuer
- Jasmine Gould-Wilson
- Zachery Gould-Wilson
- David Handleman
- Michael Handleman

### ○ Tet Circle (\$180 to \$359)

- Anonymous (3)
- Anna Berman
- Jacob Berman
- Jessica Berman
- Ariel Kaminsky
- Benjamin Kaminsky
- Daniel Kaminsky
- Aliana Weil
- Samuel Weil

### ○ Yod Circle (\$1 to \$179)

- Victoria Edwards
- Benjamin Meyer
- Michael Meyer
- Rachelle Meyer

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



# Rosh Hashana 5758

I have been asked often of late why I am spending so much time on the promotion of religious pluralism in Israel. Isn't it a diversion from the continuity crisis in America, which is, after all, my main concern?

The fact is that the two are linked. Israel is a large component of American Jewish identity. Were Israel to become irrelevant or off-putting for American Jews, our ability to withstand the forces of assimilation would be gravely impaired. As an unconditional Zionist, I would support Israel even if it became a benighted shtetl. But such a constricted and coercive state would hold little meaning for our grandchildren.

The campaign for religious pluralism then is deeply existential. It is about transforming Israel into a country respectful of the religious diversity that has marked Jewish life since emancipation, attentive to the religious sensibilities of Diaspora Jews and supportive of a panoply of expressions of Judaism. It is about breaking the stranglehold of the Orthodox on the government and the silence of Israeli leadership in the face of their verbal and physical violence against other Jews. It is about strengthening an Israel that will continue to be a source of pride, values and learning for all Jews in the Diaspora.

After eight months of battle, we can point to solid results. For the first time ever, an Israeli government is negotiating with the Reform and Conservative movements in the framework of a committee headed by Finance Minister Yaakov Ne'eman. Although the negotiations are unduly protracted, the prospects for a proposal on conversion and perhaps other issues are good. Given the anger of American Jewry, the government is determined to avoid passage of any conversion bill in the Knesset.

Equally important, UJA-Federation leadership is responding favorably to the plea for earmarking more funds for religious pluralism in Israel. In 1998, the Jewish Agency will double its yearly grants to the movements to \$5 million (the first increase in more than a decade) and national UJA has already begun to raise \$10 million each for Reform and Conservative projects in a supplementary campaign, which hopefully will become annual. Likewise, local Federations are setting aside ever more funds for direct investing in Israel, much of which will surely go for religious pluralism.

These heartening steps augur well for increasing collaboration between the religious movements and the world. I salute the courage of UJA-Federation leadership for daring to reorder its philanthropic priorities once again and urge all Jews to contribute generously to their local federation.

My goal is to work within the system, not to jeopardize it. From the outset, I knew that in the 1970s, Federation had expanded its mission to include Jewish education and in the 1990s, to strengthen the synagogue. Both decisions represented a willingness to cross the religious-secular divide, and both succeeded because they were carried out with an exemplary measure of fairness, precisely the ethos missing in Israel. The agenda of religious pluralism in Israel is thus but another instance of

responsiveness to the ever-changing challenge to bolster the forces for Jewish continuity in America.

Finally, we need to recognize the emergence of allies in Israel. The country is pulsating with a nationwide quest for religious renewal. More and more, Israelis are engaged in a serious, undogmatic study of their religious patrimony. Small groups of secular and religious adults poring over Talmud and Midrash proliferate across the country. We cannot open TALI schools quickly enough for their children. Our campaign for religious pluralism has captured the attention of the national media. If we could only cover the landscape with new venues for religious alternatives, staffing them and the institutions already in place with the young Israeli professionals graduating from our *Beit Midrash*, we would in time make of religious pluralism a root value of Israeli society.

The theme of worldwide unity is a dominant motif of our High Holy Day liturgy. The fourth *berakha* of every amida that we shall recite on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur intones a fervent prayer that God might help us achieve that which is beyond human reach. To underscore our inadequacy, the verb is even put in the passive voice: 'that humankind might be refashioned [by God] to constitute a single community performing God's will with a perfect heart.' A fractured Jewish people can scarcely lead humanity toward that elusive ideal. At loggerheads with each other, Jews detract from the grandeur of ethical monotheism. Yet a Jewish unity built on contempt and coercion is counterfeit. Power always corrupts pretensions of piety. To accept the status quo in Israel is to settle for a caricature of Judaism. Unity must rest on equity for all and professions of love must be followed by extension of rights, or else Israel will lose the allegiance of its Diaspora constituency, to the detriment of both.

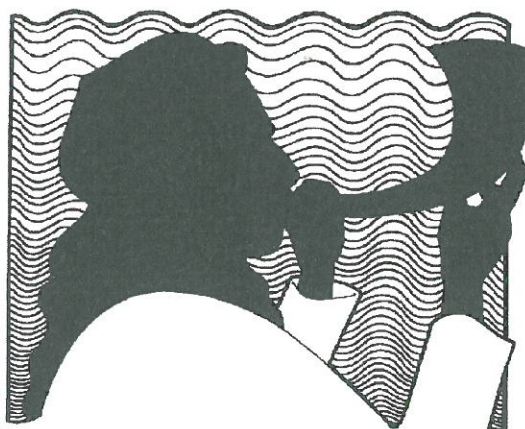
In the year to come, may God imbue us with the wisdom and compassion to understand that unity is more important than 'truth.'

*Leshana tova tikatevu.*

Sincerely,

Rabbi Ismar Schorsch  
The Jewish Theological Seminary

■ submitted by Jonathan Feiger



*Dear Hong Kong friends,  
We are missing you and thinking of you!  
Hope it is a great year for everybody.*

*Levi and Paula*

*Shana Tova*

from Levi and Paula Weiman-Kelman  
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