

# The Shofar

September, 1991



## Club Offers Special 'Lunch Membership' to Boost Income

What promises to be one of the best deals in Central comes on stream in mid-October when the Jewish Club begins serving daily, five-course kosher lunches for \$93.50 including service charge in the King David Room as part of a new membership scheme designed to increase revenues.

The special membership, open to 'all friends and associates of the community, and other interested Hong Kong residents,' according to a Club news release, costs \$200 for six months and offers access to the King David restaurant from noon to 2:30, Monday through Friday.

The meal, described as a 'business lunch' consists of soup, salad bar, the Chef's Daily Special or Deli Sandwich, dessert, and coffee.

For membership applications or more information, please call 801-5432.

## The Shofar Needs You!

Everyone is welcome (and urged) to contribute material of all kinds to The Shofar. . . book reviews, stories, poems, letters, recipes, whatever. Just keep them coming so that this can be a real community voice.

Those with the spirit but lacking in inspiration can call Martha Josephson (865-0118) for 'writing assignments.'

## UJC Schedules Twice-Monthly Home Services for October, November

*Marans' Host October 4 Shabbat, Halperns Offer Home for October 18 Service in Tai Tam*

Following the highly-successful High Holiday services and a surge in membership, the UJC is moving closer to becoming a 'full-service congregation' by increasing the frequency of Shabbat services. In response to the interest of the membership and generosity of a number of families, the apparent trend is not only toward greater frequency of services but having them in homes instead of clubs or hotels.

### Shabbat Schedule

Services begin at 8 p.m. and will be followed by an Oneg Shabbat. To help the hosts plan, please call Susanna Chan at 463-8156 or the home numbers listed below if you plan to attend.

#### October 4

Where: Eugene and Anne-Marie Marans  
Address: 27B Kennedy Heights, 10-18 Kennedy Road, Mid-Levels  
Parking: Guest parking available  
Tel: 523-5833

#### October 18

Where: Barry and Ellie Halpern  
Address: The Manhattan, Block A, 25/f, 33 Tai Tam Road  
Parking: Call for instructions  
Tel: 813-9522

#### November 1

Where: Venue to be announced

#### November 22

Where: David and Jacqueline Blinderman  
Address: B28, Repulse Bay Apartments, 12/F, 101 Repulse Bay Road  
Parking: Guest parking available  
Tel: 812-6991

#### December 6

What: Chanukah service + dinner/party  
Where: Venue to be announced

At the same time, the leadership continues to press for the right to use a function room in The Jewish Club for religious-related events. Although several trustees and Jewish Club committee members support the UJC request in addition to a substantial number of the members, permission has been denied on the religious grounds that Reform/Liberal services with mixed seating are in violation of Halachic laws (the Jewish code).

## Wanted: Shabbat Hosts

The UJC is looking for members who are willing to share their homes for Shabbat services. This is not only a way to give special significance to the occasion, but to truly render a 'service' to your fellow-congregants.

Looking at the immediate months ahead, there is a need to fill the November 1 slot. If you can volunteer your home for this date (or any other), please contact Janet Golden at 812-1624.

## Check-in Time for Books

Members who have borrowed Jewish texts over the summer from Martha Josephson are asked to please return them as soon as possible so that an inventory of available materials can be drawn up.

*From the chairman . . .***Another Threshold**

In the years to come, the High Holidays of 5751/2 will be recalled as a turning point for The UJC during which we crossed an important threshold into a new stage of development. The attendance at services and enthusiasm of those involved demonstrated that Reform/Liberal Jews have an important role to play in our community for well into the future, a role that offers enormous scope for the talents of its members.

Because of the transient nature of Hong Kong and the high turnover of membership, perhaps the highest of any Jewish community in the world, the success of any congregation here is highly dependent on developing a broad leadership base. This is an observation that was passed on to me last week by Robert Dorfman, presently a trustee and formerly the chairman of the Jewish Recreation Club (as it was then called). The emphasis must therefore be on continuously attracting new members and, to ensure the continuity of our efforts, finding ways to bring them into leadership positions. As important as other objectives might be — obtaining a place for regular worship services or a resident rabbi, for example — it is the very members themselves who have the greatest contribution to make to our success.

To capitalize on this most valuable resource of talent and energy, I believe it is critically important that we address ourselves to the job of finding an office space. As appreciative as we may be of the willingness of various members to work out of their homes and offices to perform membership, financial, newsletter and various other organizational functions, we can never achieve continuity, efficiency, and economy of scale without a dedicated workspace and dedicated volunteers or paid clerical assistance. How much longer should our future growth depend on the availability of Bob Green's secretary to print *The Shofar*, Mark Michelson's travel schedule to process a membership application, or Victor Falk's willingness to spend half his working day processing dues payments and the like. And let's face it: how many congregations answer telephone calls with the words 'Amazing Grace Elephant Company'? I'm afraid we may have lost a few prospective members who thought we were a Christian missionary society and promptly hung up. Would it be better to answer calls with the name of an insurance company, bank, law firm, or stock brokerage house?

For these reasons and more — the need to locate our computer database in a central location, have our files kept in an orderly and up-to-date fashion, maintain a library, take bookings, handle inquiries, etc., the time has come to take one step forward and go from a semi-permanent floating UJC office for wandering Jews to a spiritual home that's fixed in concrete. Can that be such a difficult task in a city with thousands of office spaces and a congregation with members looking for a way to express their faith in our future, their future?

Ideally, perhaps, the UJC should have its office in The Jewish Club and any search should certainly not preclude this possibility. It's also highly unlikely that The UJC would turn down an offer of 100 or 200 square feet of conveniently-located office space in Central from someone, a generous member perhaps, who would be content with less than the going market rate.

This is just one of the issues the leadership needs to consider. With the experience from our recent Annual General Meeting and High Holidays to draw from, it is an opportune time to take a larger look at where we are going and how to get there, as the committee intends to do within the next few weeks. As in any democratic organization, the decisions to be reached should reflect the wishes of the members, so please make it a point to express your views to committee members in this most important season of our year, the time to make some decisions.

**New Members  
Join Committee*****Volunteers Sought for  
Sub-committees***

The UJC General Committee welcomed new members Kathy Goeld and Jeremy Leifer at its September 12th meeting. Both had been voted in at the Annual General Meeting in August.

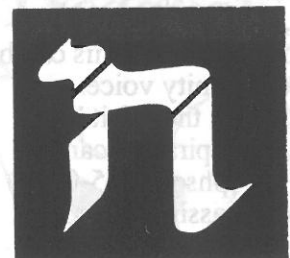
Kathy and her husband Rick have lived in Hong Kong for several years and were among the first UJC members and supporters. As a committee member, she will be focusing on social planning and publicity.

Jeremy will be involved with adult education and, as an attorney at Richards Butler, will be available to advise The UJC on any legal issues that may arise. He has lived in Hong Kong three years.

During the High Holidays, a number of other members and prospective members expressed interest in assisting in other areas or on special sub-committees. These include Fiona Collins (The UJC library and adult education), Molly Sherbin (The Shofar), Charles Booth and Carole Petersen (legal issues), Shelly Lohmann (youth activities), and Peter Kaminsky (financial). Both Jackie Rund and Dayna Bender responded to suggestions that The UJC get involved in charitable activities.

Anyone with a particular skill or interest, community spirit, or just a desire to make friends is wholeheartedly urged to volunteer to help in The UJC's organization/administration. To get involved or place yourself on a sub-committee, contact Bob Green or Carol Betson at 463-8156 (tel.) or 456-3450 (fax).

■ Martha Josephson





## Jews by Choice Spend Illuminating Evening with Rabbi Sam Joseph

By Martha Josephson

'How do I know if I'm ready to formally convert to Judaism?' 'How can I provide a better Jewish home life for my kids?' 'What should we be thinking about . . . doing . . . feeling?'

Some 19 members of The UJC's Jews by Choice group met with Rabbi Sam Joseph during his visit to gain answers to these and many other questions facing couples in which one partner was not born Jewish.

To this end, Committee member Kathy Goeld opened her lovely home to the group and served refreshments. Thanks to her terrific hospitality, the discussion stretched well into the night. As the group sought to cram 'one year's guidance into several hours,' the conversation and questions were pointed and lively.

Among Rabbi Joseph's observations to the group were:

\* Being Jewish, whether born a Jew or not, involves a constant process of study and commitment. Converting is not a matter of just signing a paper.

\* Maintaining a Jewish home and raising children to follow Jewish traditions is very much to be encouraged in any form it takes for an individual family.

\* Exploring Judaism by asking questions and challenging beliefs is very much in its tradition — accordingly, those in the group concerned about the role of women and of theology in the Jewish tradition are encouraged to pursue these issues actively as this has always been a process that keeps Judaism alive.

\* The UJC offers an openness to partners of mixed marriages that is unique today in Judaism outside of major Reform Jewish centers in New York, Los Angeles and London. UJC members should take maximum advantage of this Hong Kong community's support in order to 'build their Jewish identities.'

After the meeting, Rabbi Joseph made himself available for one-on-one meetings to counsel members on personal issues. He also committed to developing a syllabus for those in the congregations who were exploring Judaism with the intention to convert.

'Nothing much surprised me,' Rabbi Joseph commented after the meeting. 'This group has very intense but very typical needs; they are pretty much in the mainstream of modern Judaism.'

Rabbi Joseph also distributed a reading from the magazine Reform Judaism that noted the high rate of Jews converting out of Judaism as well as of mixed religion marriages in general. The piece drew the inevitable conclusion that embracing the non-Jewish spouse who chooses to observe Jewish traditions and maintain a Jewish home is a vital way to stem these losses from the faith.

## 'Next Steps' for UJC

### Parting words from the Rabbi

Following his 16-day visit and assessment of the situation, Rabbi Joseph saw the following as priorities or challenges for The UJC in the coming year:

Establishing a 'curriculum' for Jews by Choice and general adult study; involving more members in events and activities (essential in order for The UJC to be a 'truly established congregation'); expanding activities to include cultural events and charitable assistance for needy members of the community; clarifying and resolving relations with the Hong Kong Jewish community at large including matters involving the new Jewish Club.

As he had counseled on his visit last year, Rabbi Joseph again encouraged the congregation to support the mixed religion families in the community as they create Jewish homes and family lives. He also noted with satisfaction the progress made by the Jews by Choice group during the past year.

## Jewish Study Group Assigns First Reading

The Jews by Choice religious study group, joined by other interested UJC members, will discuss *Living a Jewish Life* by Anita Diamant and Howard Cooper at their next meeting on October 29 at the home of Kathy and Rick Goeld.

Limited quantities of the book are available at the China Fleet Club or it can be ordered through Kelly & Walsh Ltd. at Pacific Place Mall. The book is published by Harper Perennial, a division of Harper Collins.

An 'expert' from the congregation will lead the discussion. There was a large and lively number of people at the last meeting and the organizers are expecting good attendance again.

Following this session, the group will embark upon the conversion study syllabus promised by Rabbi Sam Joseph during his recent visit.

## The Shofar

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### General Committee

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### The Shofar

Editor Bob Green  
Asst. Editor Martha Josephson

## focus on Ethics by Alan D. Bennett

Reprinted from *Reform Judaism* (a publication of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations) Fall 1991

I've always been struck by psychologist-philosopher Kenneth B. Clark's now 16-year-old observation: 'I have a crazy theory about anti-Semitism — that non-Jews have never forgiven the Jews for introducing moral and ethical concerns into the realms of religion. Before Judaism, man could have his religion and immorality in the same package, but the Jews said that their worship of God had to include a respect for man — this was a terrific albatross. The Christian religion bought this from the Jewish Rabbi Christ and some Christians are angry that the Jews, through Christ, imposed this terrific burden upon them.'

Clark's view of anti-Semitism aside (a theory which early on was advanced also to account for Hitler's anti-Semitism), his characterization of Judaism is accurate. The Jewish mitzvah system, fundamental to religious life, is heavily burdened with demands to sanctify life and to improve the world through compassionate deeds and passionate efforts for individual and social justice. The Jewish concept is embedded in Hebrew value terms like *gemilut chasadim*, acts of loving-kindness; *tzedakah*, which is justice, not charity; *rachamanut*, compassion; the word, mitzvah, itself which, while it has come to mean good deed, has the power of a command from God.

Put another way, the idea is just to do what's right. The problem comes in knowing what's right in each situation. Where do we find the guideposts? How do we apply to particular cases what we think we know about right and wrong? Do the facts support Clark's assertion?

The essence of Jewish ethical considerations flows from Judaism's unequivocal credo: *Adonai* is One. The corollary, humanity is one, joins the religious quest with the ethical imperative. Our ancestors became the people chosen to complete God's plan for the universe. The choosing was voluntary; after that it was all command and obligation. We are the heirs to that revolutionary principle. We are, or ought to be, obsessed with individual responsibility and social action. Our deeds ought to burn with the fire of the prophets who, after all, burned with the fire of God.

The Torah offers life and good, death and evil and life and death, blessing and curse. Then we are told to choose life (Deut. 30:15-19). But the power of choice is an instrumental power to be used to achieve life and good. Unlike political power, which can be used to do

bad things as well as good, theological power is unidirectional because it's God's gift.

What if the Jewish mystics are right, and the Divinity contracted into Itself to make room for creation? What if that shattered primordial space now needs repair? Who's to do it? Who's to undertake *tikkun olam*, repair of the world which was fractured at creation? What responsibilities accompany a God-shared power? How do we set about, in the little and the big things, to repair all the fractures on this planet? And what does that have to do with being Jewish?

Jewish tradition recognizes that being a good person is neither easy nor automatic. It's the result of an internal struggle we all must experience. That's because we are inclined, by nature, to be both good and bad, to be governed by the Good Urge — *yetzer hatov* and by the Evil Urge — *yetzer hara*. The trick is to cultivate the former and curb the latter. But, said the rabbis, the *yetzer hara* is stronger, always ready to attack, always ready to return, ever tempting to sin, never tiring or slowing down; it can even make the bad seem good!

Against this view stands the equally Jewish insistence on what Akiva describes as God's gift — free will. On this, note Steinberg: "This is the arena of moral decision. It may be cramped and narrow. . . But it is large enough for man's size and broad enough for him to show his mettle. The direction he takes, how far he goes along it, how hard he tries to move . . . suffice to establish his quality and worth. This is the point of the bold, penetrating aphorism struck off by the third-century Palestinian rabbi, Hanina ben Pappa, who held that before a human being is conceived in his mother's womb God has already ordained concerning him 'whether he shall be strong or weak, intelligent or dull, rich or poor.' But whether he shall be wicked or virtuous is not pronounced. Nor can even God pre-determine this, since . . . 'all things are in Heaven's hands except man's reverence for Heaven'."

Thus, being Jewish demands ethical behavior in the private and public spheres because ethical monotheism requires it and because you are assured the capacity to make right

## Welcome to our Newest Members

David & Jacqueline Blinderman  
Adam Conn  
Marie-France Falk  
Stephen and Susan Goodman  
Nancy Pyatt  
Andrew and Susan Szende  
Jackie Rund  
Mrs. Keith Jacobson  
Steven and Linda Shevick  
Jenifer Betson  
Scott and Shelly Lohmann  
Joel and Maggie Eisemann  
Philip and Jacqueline Raeburn  
Herb Moskowitz  
Wayne and Yvonne Margolin  
Claude Charles  
Bill Schoenfeld  
Janine Stein  
Brian and Rebecca Dlugash  
Seth and Rebecca Maerowitz  
Marshall Getz  
Saul Lockhart  
Marc Straussberg  
Daniel Shure  
Mark Friedman  
Maynard Wolfe  
Terry Bloom  
Irving Averbach  
Robert Mendelow

*And all those whose applications we have not had time to process yet. Their names will be noted in the next issue of The Shofar.*

choices; but it's not so easy to know what is right or to do the right thing always. Fortunately, we can look to the Jewish tradition for guidelines. We have Judaism's vast experience-base. Divinely-inspired literature starting, but hardly ending with Torah. The metaphors and the symbols, as we shall see, require understanding and interpretation, but the blueprint is there. You need only to be open to it and willing to make the effort to follow it. That is also a moral decision!

