

The Shofar

Published by The United Jewish Congregation of Hong Kong

September/October, 1995



Scribe brings scrolls from New York, 'completes' Torah in special ceremony UJC Dedicates Sefer Torah, Thanks Contributors, Trustees

Contributions from 115 individuals and families plus a generous donation from The Incorporated Trustees of the Jewish Community of Hong Kong enabled The UJC to purchase a Torah this summer. The scrolls were dedicated at a moving *Siyyum Hatorah* ceremony on Sunday, September 10 in the Hong Kong Country Club. The Torah, made from deerskin, was selected by Rabbi Kosovske during a special visit to New York. The scrolls are in excellent condition and very legible. Rabbi Moshe Klein, the scribe from whom the Torah was purchased, offered donors the chance to participate in the process of completing

the last few lines of the Torah. Those honoring loved ones through their contributions paraded by his desk and touched the quill as he inked in the outlines of the last few letters. Rabbi Klein also gave a talk on how Torahs are made. In his talk, Rabbi Kosovske singled out Carol Betson and her fund-raising committee for special praise.

The UJC will produce a book containing the names of all donors and place it in the ark, once one is built, with the Torah. Members may still send in contributions in honor of loved ones and get their name(s) listed in the book.

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

Robin and Michael Abrams
Paul Alexander
Pat and Bernie Alter
Lynda Aurora
Marie and Ted Axler
Patsy and Ross Bagully
Paulette and Mel Bazerman
Dayna Bender
Jennifer Betson
Jacqueline & David Blinderman
Miriam and George Bloch
Cara and Andrew Case
Tanya Cawthorne
Fiona Connell and Ben Frankel
Charmaine and Peter Corne
Limor and Shlomo Daniel
Amy and Don DaSaro
Jennifer and Sean Debow
Valerie Didier
Maggie and Joel Eisemann
John Feiger and Nancy Laben
Noel and Jason Felton
Perry Feuer
Sharon and Al Fine
Elane and Joe Fine
Maureen and Jonathan Fox
Alice Freund
Ann-Isabel Friedman
and Seth Maerowitz
Tamina Friedman
Katherine and Horst Geicke
Phyllis and Glenn Gerstell
Joanna and Matthew Ginsburg
Mitchell Gitin & Suzanne Strong
Anne and Gerald Godfrey
Janet Golden
Carol Betson & Hank Goldstein
Grace and Robert Green

Rebecca and Robert Haase
Karen and David Handmaker
Alistaire Haymen
Terri Hirschfield
Edward Hoffman
Herta and Bert Horwitz
Jane and Neal Horwitz
Sonia and Cryil Hyman
Susan Hyman
Rabbi Samuel and Dori Joseph
Martha and Joseph Josephson
Judi and Michael Katz
Lady Muriel Kadoorie
Robin and James Kaptzan
John Kaufmannn
Ira Kaye
Daniel Kirwin
Phylia and Marvin Kohl
Rabbi Howard & Barbara Kosovske
Jonathan Kriegel & Samantha Ho
Jody and John Kuzmik
Mary and Dennis Leventhal
Burton Levin
Sally and Shalom Levy
Lisa and Timothy Lindon
Joyce and David Lindorff
Saul Lockhart
Ann-Marie and Eugene Marans
Michael March
Debbi and Basil Marcus
Robert Meyer
Kate and Mark Michelson
Ruth and Bernard Miller
Susan and Michel Millodot
Stephanie Mitchell
Heather and William Mocatta
Charles Monat
Roda and Miron Mushkat
Bonnie and Robert Palitz

Sonia Park
Diane and Leonard Patsiner
Terry and Jeff Paule
Andy Pleatman & Ellen McNally
Sherry and Ross Pollack
Sarah Priwer
Clare Ray
Richard Reitknecht
Linda Rosenbluth
Joseph Ryant
Bea and Harold Sandler
Diana and Mel Satok
Steven Schechter
Susan Schoenfeld
William Schoenfeld
Jeff Schultz
Sussie and Eli Schwartz
Philip Segal
Tamar Shay
Lois and Ronald Shulman
Daniel Shure
Linda Simon
Sonjie and Perry Solomon
Michelle and Steven Sperber
Yujhong and Andrew Starger
Marc Straussberg
Matthew Temple
Ci ndy and Paul Theil
Daniel Tretiak
Barbara Wagner
Martin Weil and Patricia Theiler
Sophie and Stefane Wilmet
Helen Woltman
Wendy Zaman
Arnold Zeitlin
Roseanne Zimmerman
and Bob Fetzer
The Incorporated Trustees of the
Jewish Community of Hong Kong

From the Rabbi's Study . . .

On the High Holy Days, as on many other religious occasions for that matter, I typically revisit themes that I have visited countless times before. The challenge in dealing with those old themes, however, is in seeking a new way to approach them. If I can find one, I experience an intense joy.

I have a synagogue programmer friend who goes out of his way to sit and dream up new approaches to programs at every chance he has. *Precisely* if something is working, he says, that is the time to try something new. Then, nothing ever becomes routine, and the everyday always seems spontaneous and fresh.

I don't know if I quite go that far. There are some simple things in which the routine is comforting, that, indeed, 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it.' I don't have to redo everyday office routines every time they come up. But in the bigger things, I fully agree. Even the special, done over and over again, can become the humdrum. And the humdrum can be boring.

That's why, I am constantly seeking new ideas for Temple programming. And when they aren't forthcoming, I still seek new ways to implement the old. Then they remain fresh.

You know, for me, the mere fact of reading the words of our High Holy Day Torah reading from the new Torah — and I have known many of those words by heart since childhood — has given old words new zest. The script is different. The look is different. And somehow the words are refreshed.

I am, in this same vein, especially looking forward soon to trying out Shabbat worship in the new auditorium we shall experience in Robinson Place. The prayers of our service will be the same. The fact of our sharing Shabbat dinner following the service will be the same. But the experiences, done a little differently perhaps, will refresh and renew that which is so much a part of us.

And then, in another vein, I am about to try a totally new approach to something old within the UJC. This is to bring a high-tech, totally up-to-the-minute quality to the way we do Jewish that will allow us to enhance ourselves far into the future. What I want to experiment with is what I call cyber-Judaism, or cyber-Torah, or cyber-community (any suggestions for a good name?).

It happens that many people within the UJC are on-line, which is the term the computer world uses to say they are connected to the Internet via one or more of the many carriers that are doing business in Hong Kong. There are loads of good and exciting Jewish materials that I am finding on the Internet (There are also loads of not-so-good materials as well). Some of them are high-level thought-provoking items. Some are up-to-the minute news items. Some are totally practical technique items that will help you make your home more Jewish for yourself and those whom you love. I can bring those things to you from time to time. And at the same time and in the same way, those of us who are on-line can begin to start sharing things Jewish we are doing with those who yet aren't doing them. We can extend our already large community via yet another medium.

What does all of this mean? It means that this season really is a time of renewal, and renew ourselves we will. Then this will truly be a New Year, and we, one year older, will also become one year newer, and the old will forever become refreshed.

L'shanah tovah tikateivu

Howard A. Kosovske

[Ed. note: If you are 'on-line' and would like to be part of this project, just email the Rabbi at hak@hk.super.net and on the subject line write **UJC Cyber-Synagogue Project**; in the message part, write **Subscribe: /your full name/**. For more information call office.]

Welcome New Members

ALAN NATHAN JACOBSON (USA)

Managing Director, Calvin Klein

JEFFREY & ANDREA CHAITMAN (USA)
& **JESSICA, 12; ZACHARY, 15**

Formerly affiliated with Temple Emanuel, GR, MI

PETER CORNE (BRITISH/AUSTRALIAN)

lawyer with Simmons & Simmons; interests:
Chinese language, law

JONATHAN KRIEGLER & SAMANTHA HO (USA)

JACK MAYER & SELMA LINZER (USA)

General Manager, Cheung Kong (Selma)

TANYA CAWTHORNE (AUSTRALIA)

Interests: play readings, theatre, Jewish choir

WILHELMINA WALDMAN (USA)

Teacher, Chinese International School
Formerly affiliated with Hillel, Washington D.C

AMY LEE (CANADA)

Videotape Editor with CNBC; formerly member of Temple Emanuel in Westfield, NJ

TED & RHONDA STURTZ (USA)

& **EVA, 4; SACHEL, 2**
Finance, Lehman Brothers

MITCHELL PRESNICK (USA)

consultant, Warren Williams

LEONARD & CRISTAL LANE (USA)

Consulting Director, LLA Pacific

JILL & DAVID SAMELSON (USA)

& **ELIZABETH AARON, 1**
Manufacturer, Excell Home Fashions

SOPHIE & ALEXANDRE TUNIK

JAMES & JAMIE DRUTCHAS (USA)

& **J. MORGAN, 12; ALEXIS, 11; & JAKE, 4**
formerly affiliated with Temple Beth El, Bloomfield, Michigan

KATHLEEN BRENNAN (USA)

& **MICHAEL STEINBERGER (USA)**
journalist (Michael); chef (Kathleen)

JAMES HEXTER (USA)

consultant with McKinsey & Co.

ALICE FREUND (CANADA)

PHILIPPE & AMY HEILBERG (USA)

Financial, AIG Intl.; formerly affiliated with Sutton Place Synagogue, NYC & Forest Hills Jewish Center

PENDING EXCO ACTION:

JOSEPH & BARBARA BEN-DAVID (USA)

ROSS & PATSY BAGULLY (USA)

JONATHAN BAREK (USA)

Project Finance, Bank of America
Interests: Chinese language (Mandarin speaker)

VALIERE DIDIER (FRANCE)

PATRICK DIPPERY & WENDY BRAUNER (USA)

Business Development, The Economist Group
Marketing, computers (Wendy)
Formerly affiliated with Temple Beth-El, Closter, NJ

The neighbors may be surprised as UJC introduces low-cost housing in the prime-rent district UJC Offers *Sukkot* Surprises at Luxury Site in Central

There's a luxurious office in Central that has probably been featured in more designer magazines than any other office in Hong Kong. And adjoining that office is perhaps one of the most unusual terraces in town. Both will see some rather strange goings-on in early October.

The office and terrace belong to UJC Executive Committee member Robert Meyer. If any of his neighbors in the surrounding high-rises happen to look down, they'll see a bunch of people trying to put together a three-sided enclosure with bamboo poles and palm fronds. Since some of these builders and decorators lack the skills to graduate from Playskool, the results are likely to be pretty surprising. Fortunately, however, they will have their children to help them. Following this, there will be some singing, drinking (mostly juice), and some shaking and dancing around with branches and something that looks like a lemon. No, this is not a sign that the high office rents are driving tenants to new extremities. You'd call this a harvest ritual of sorts, a few thousand years old, not a new form of worship invented by the shakers and movers of Central.

Before, when The UJC was too poor and could not afford one of these primitive huts (called a *sukkah*), we prepared for this holiday (called *Sukkot*) by helping our children make a mini-*sukkah* out of chairs or an empty appliance box. But this year, thanks to Robert Meyer who is also sponsoring the construction costs of the *sukkah*, we will celebrate in style.

Sukkot (literally, 'huts' or 'booths') is a celebration of the harvest, of the fulfillment of labor, and of life itself — the pleasures, senses and joy of being human. The primary symbol of *Sukkot* is the *sukkah*. This flimsy, temporary hut is supposed to remind us of the structures that the ancient Israelites constructed near their crops during harvest time and the shelters used during the years of wandering in the wilderness after the exodus from Egypt. It's also a symbol of the fragility of life itself.

Preparation can take the form of buying and making special *Sukkot* decorations for the house and table. A *sukkah*-like canopy can even be raised over the dining table for a week. Another way to get into the spirit of the harvest festival is to buy gourds, corn stalks, and other decorations for home and The UJC *sukkah*.

The other symbols of *Sukkot* are the *etrog*, a citron, and the *lulav*, a green bouquet consisting of a palm frond and myrtle and willow branches; these are used in an ancient ritual performed at services and inside the *sukkah*. Through the use of the *lulav* and *etrog* we acknowledge our dependence upon God for the food we eat.

Sunday, October 8

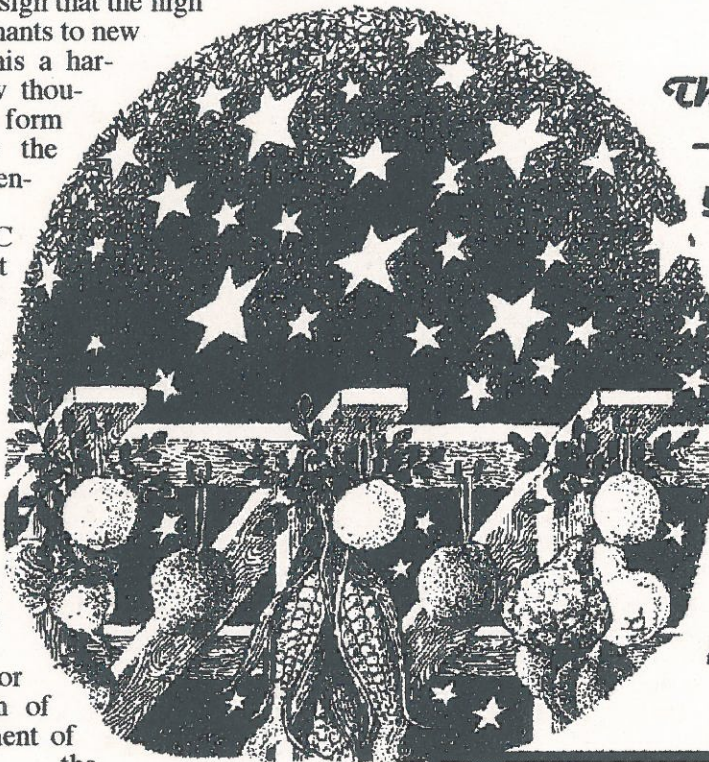
Sukkah Building Party, 3:30 P.M.

followed by

Sukkot Service, 5:30 P.M.

Please RSVP with Sarah at 2523-2985

***Great fun for the kids!
Refreshments will be served.***



***This is for everyone
— families, teens,
young pros, a.k.s,
etc. Come one,
come all. Enjoy
yourself for a
change! What's
wrong with
you? Why are
you always sit-
ting in the
house?***

Friday, October 13

Children's Shabbat Service

5:45 P.M.

followed by

Shabbat Service, 6:45 P.M.

UJC Shabbat Supper will be held as usual at The American Club in Exchange Square, following the Service

***Our Sukkah is at:
Special Assets, Limited
6f, Diamond Exchange Building,
8 Duddell Street, Central
(office of Robert Meyer)***

Ecumenical Exchange to Promote Understanding

The Christian – Jewish dialogue between The UJC and Union Church will be expanded in October with an exchange of visits. On Friday, October 27, a number of Union Church members will attend The UJC Shabbat service and buffet supper; on Sunday, October 29, UJC members will visit Union Church for services at 11:00 A.M. and the fellowship opportunity that follows.

To promote understanding between Christians and Jews, the two Congregations have held joint Thanksgiving services for the past two years and engaged in a series of discussions.

How's Your Yiddish?

'The fabric of Jewish proverbial wisdom woven over the centuries now has become a magnificent tapestry of maxims, aphorisms, and pithy sayings reflecting the devious course of Jewish history.' So says Fred Kogos, author of *1001 Jewish Proverbs* (Citadel Press, New York), a book obtained by The UJC this summer. The following selection reveals "the warmth of a people and, above all, their indomitable humor, well expressed in the proverb, 'Suffering makes you laugh too.'"

1. *Besser a yid mitun a bord, vi bord mitun a yid.* Better a Jew without a beard than a beard without a Jew.

2. *Besser di t'no'im tsereissen aider ke ketubeh.* Better to break off an engagement than a marriage.

3. *Besser fun a gratsh a aptsh aider fun a nar a kush.* Better a blow from a wise man than a kiss from a fool.

4. *Allen finger tuen gleich vai (alleh kinder zeinen gleich tei'er.* All fingers hurt alike (all children are equally dear to parents).

5. *A hund on tsain varft zich oich oif a bain.* A dog without teeth also attacks a bone!

6. *A kluger gait tsu fus un a nar fort in a kareteh.* A wise man walks on foot and a fool rides in a coach.

7. *Az me est chazzer, zol men essen fetrtten.* If you're going to eat pork, let it be good and fat.

8. *Ven hungert a nogid? Ven der doctor haist im!* When does a wealthy man go hungry? When the doctor orders him.

9. *Verter muz men vegen un nit tsailen.* Words must be weighed and not counted.

10. *An opgeshailteh ai falt oich nit alain in moil arein.* A peeled egg doesn't leap into the mouth by itself.

11. *Mit honik ken men chapen mer fligen vi mit essik.* With honey you can catch more flies than with vinegar.

UJC's security chief looks at an essential but often thankless task Wanted: A Few Good Men and Women

by Alistaire Hayman

If I were to leave Hong Kong tomorrow I would take away with me many memories. It is just a year now since I arrived from England and in many ways it seems only yesterday. Prominent amongst my memories must be our Friday night Shabbat services and who could recall this without a thought for our dinner that follows as sure as night follows day.

I love the conversations, at the time delivered with such earnest and yet so soon out of mind. I love the way I feel drawn to make a remark that I regret long after everyone has forgotten. But amongst all this *chevrah* I do enjoy our Italian buffet. It has to be said that, for me, you can keep your starters and middlers; I can be happy with just deserts.

It's said that man is given one mouth and two ears and to be used in that ratio. I however take this to mean that people have two ears to listen to my one mouth and anyone who has had the misfortune to sit near me at dinner will know that I have an opinion on most things but touch on my real passion and that's a danger for all around as Bob Green will know too well.

Touch on Community Security and I am there, or don't and I will lead you. Either way, this is an area that turns my normal shy self into a passionate bull fighter wielding a cape of facts and stories that leave the listener half-interested and half-confused. At least I mean well although you may not follow my drift at all times.

In the U.K. as in the rest of the Jewish world, *Yom Tovim* requires an additional kind of preparation other than the religious sort. From Jews who profess to be orthodox to Jews who have no religious experience comes a passion that could be dated back to the early Maccabians. The Jews have a need to protect themselves and to that end Community Security organizations will be going over the complicated plans drawn up for the High Holidays. The world of Jewish security goes often unnoticed and even more often without thanks. Drawn from amongst the community which it serves it attracts both male and female, young and the not so young, all united with the determination that no one through threat should cause us to alter our normal way of life.

The people who get no pay and ask for no reward dedicate hours of their time to training and looking after the community — sometime standing guard at synagogues and sometimes mounting mobile patrols of Jewish areas. More recently in London following two bomb blasts that shook the Israeli Embassy and a community building, they stood in bullet proof vests alongside police on a round-the-clock watch, seven days a week, for a number of weeks. It's not really the bricks and mortar that was shaken; it was the community as well. But the men and women were there to ensure morale was not destroyed.

Thank God that in Hong Kong we are not faced with the problems from both the far left and the far right that Europe and other places like Argentina have to contend with. It is, however, no reason to assume that problems don't and won't exist. This is why members of our community have given up some of their leisure hours to learn the basic training skills required to make sure we have a response to any future threat. The reward is satisfaction, and the payment through thanks sometimes never comes. It may be this article comes too late for the *Yom Tovim* but I would hope that upon leaving the service or gathering you would find time to say 'thank you' or 'Good Yom Tov' to those who through their endeavors had little time to attend the service themselves.

I will tell you of a Yom Kippur in London when the crew of a patrolling car was unfortunately spotted by a rabbi from an ultra-orthodox sect in Golders Green. This crew who probably started working long before the *shules* had opened and would work until long after they closed were told that as a result of their being 'spotted,' the rabbi had phoned the head of security and said that 'should there be an attack on the community it would be God's punishment for driving on Yom Kippur.' This is just one example I have faced of being served up with unjust deserts.

Adopting a Child in China

by Paul L. Scham

On the afternoon of June 6, my wife Sandra and I and three other American couples waited nervously in a hotel room in Nanching, in Jianxi province. As we chatted in a corridor, three women with babies approached. 'Fu Long?' one of them asked. The girl she was holding is now our daughter, Anat.

This was the culmination of a ten-month process of interviews, soul-searching and multiple document authentications. After Sandra and I, who live in Washington, D.C., decided to adopt, we eventually concluded that China offered the best opportunity of a healthy girl (no boys are available), with no chance of the legal problems that sometimes plague an American adoption.

In early May, we were notified that our new daughter (whose name, we were told, meant 'Beautiful Dragon' in Mandarin) was in foster care and ready for us to pick up. While Sandra dashed around Washington picking up things for our daughter, I started reading books about China and Chinese Jewry.

I also looked up the number of my college roommate of many years ago, Bob Meyer, who I knew was living in Hong Kong. Bob graciously invited us to stay with him on our way over and back, which offer we were very happy to accept.

After a few days in Hong Kong, where we had the opportunity to meet some members of the Jewish Community here, we left for a bit of sight-seeing before picking up our baby. Before leaving the States, we had been lucky enough to have been given the name of a young Chinese woman in Nanchang, who spoke excellent English. She came by several times during our three-day stay in Nanchang, and through her we learned from Anat's foster mother that she liked eggs and noodles, hated baths, and that she had six 'American sisters', girls who this foster mother had raised until they were adopted by Americans like us.

When the foster mother left – and we promised to send pictures – Anat made it clear that she was not happy. For two days she wailed, stopping only to eat and sleep. She also seemed to perk up when some of the Chinese women in the hotel picked her up. We were just too strange, and Anat was not about to submit to being cuddled by us. We feared that our little baby, at the age of 12 months, was a racist.

As we should have realized, and were later told, this process is totally normal and necessary. Anat was leaving the one parent she had ever known (her foster mother claimed she was abandoned when only a few hours old), and she had certainly never met anyone like us. After two days, she perked up a little, her crying started to taper off, and she turned out to have a beautiful smile. Sandra swears that by her fourth day with us she was already saying 'Abba'.

During the couple of days while we started getting used to each other, a parade of Chinese officials came through, from the orphanage, the Civil Affairs Bureau, and the notarial office. We explained why we chose China for our adoption, and expressed our admiration for its culture. Our coordinator, who had made the arrangements beforehand, had us out of Nanchang in two days.

All that was left was a brief medical checkup and a visit to the U.S. Consulate, both in Guangzhou. We sailed through both, in the company of several dozen other Americans who had adopted babies in various cities in China, and were on their way home. Our only delays were when almost every Chinese woman we met wanted to pick Anat up and hold her. She loved it.

Back at Bob's apartment in Hong Kong, we realized how trouble-free the adoption had gone. Anat is healthy, has a great appetite, is impossibly cute, and is already smiling at everyone she sees. We feel incredibly lucky.

Judging by the number of similar stories we've heard, I suspect that the Jewish community of the next 20 years will be enriched by a lot of Chinese babies.

*Paul L. Scham is a lawyer and the Assistant Director of the District of Columbia Jewish Community Center.

New heritage tour destination?

Who are the Thadou-Kukis? UJC Looks for Mystery Congregation

The search began less than a month ago with a rather unusual request that came to The UJC's attention. A group claiming to have some Jewish connections in Manipur, India was looking for materials in the Thadou-Kuki language. What's Thadou-Kuki? Where's Manipur? Even more intriguing was the name of the group's publication — *Quol ha-Shofar*.

The request came with a rather indistinct map, rendered by a fax machine into some almost unreadable pixels. Circled somewhere around the upper reaches of the Irrawaddy River was the area supposedly inhabited by the Thadou-Kukis.

There was no better person to hand this over to, we thought, than the intrepid editor of Hong Kong's most famous Reform Jewish newsletter, *The Shofar*. April Fool's Day had long passed, he reasoned, so it's unlikely that this was some kind of prank. And one more dirt road should be no obstacle for the man who has covered so much of Asia in the search for treasures. Therefore, with characteristic resolve, he began the research that he hoped would someday bring him face-to-face with the Thadou-Kukis.

'South of Nagaland and north of Mizoram' was what he learned for starters about Manipur, a state that also borders on Burma. 'It's inhabited by over two dozen different tribes, many of them Christians, and is famous for its Manipuri dances and handloomed textiles.' Unfortunately, the guide book stated, 'the region is remote and 'hard to get permission to visit even at the best of times.' This is not a trip for the kosher traveler, he thought.

As sketchy as this information is, The UJC has a name and an address of someone in Manipur's Sodar Hills. As you read this, a letter is on its way to a Mr. Hangshing. What will we learn? Is this the mystery link that Chinese-Judaic scholars have been searching for? What light will this shed on the question of how Jews came to Kaifeng and other parts of China centuries ago?

Stay tuned for more on the Thadou-Kukis in subsequent issues of *The Shofar*. Another benefit of membership in The UJC. Join today.

■ Bob Green



Robyn Helzner, talented guitarist, folksinger, returns as UJC Cantor for High Holiday services

Hard to believe, but this will be Robyn Helzner's fourth visit to Hong Kong as Cantor for The UJC's High Holiday services. The old-timers (that means four or five years in our Congregation) will recall the day UJC member Ann-Marie Marans, a singer of some stature herself, sang the praises of this young lady and insisted we invite her. Fortunately, Ms Helzner was able to slot us in to her busy concert and performance schedule. The popular musician and recording artist won more than a few hearts and minds on that occasion and has continued to do so each year since.

Among her strengths is the way she relates to children. That's probably why her cassette recordings of Shabbat and playtime songs for Jewish children have been so popular and widely acclaimed. Fortunately, we will have some available for sale again this year as well.

She is still remembered in Moscow (Leningrad and Tbilisi as well) for the tour she joined in 1989 with three other Jewish singers and an Israeli poet. It would be difficult for her to forget as well: some 5,000 Russians jammed into Tchaikovsky Hall to hear her spirited and moving renditions of Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino (a Sephardic dialect) and Russian songs.

It wasn't the first time she drew crowds of people into concert halls, people particularly like Russian Jews who had been living on a starvation diet of Jewish music and culture for many years before she arrived. 'I've never seen people respond to music the way they did,' she said, speaking of an 1988 visit to the then-Soviet Union sponsored by the Washington Jewish Community Council. 'The people who knew the songs sang with such gusto and fervor. Those who didn't just sat there with their eyes gleaming.'

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

Ms Helzner grew up listening to her father's records of folk singer

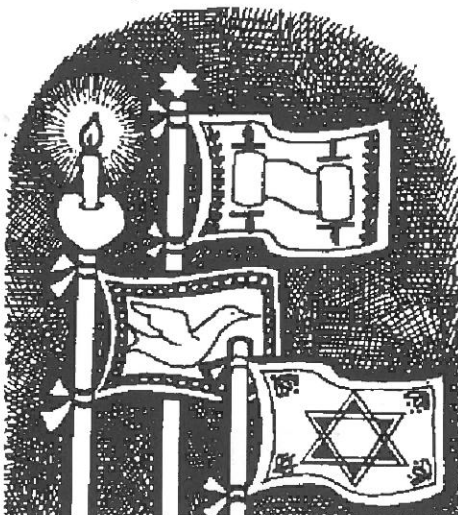


Robyn Helzner: charged with Jewish music power

Theodore Bikel, Israeli singer Geula Gil, Yiddish singer Martha Schlamme and Yiddish instrumental music. 'I have a visceral connection with things in a minor or modal key that comes from listening to a lot of this folk music. I was listening to Israeli music throughout the '60's when Israel was still a very young country and there was still that pioneer spirit.'

'Many organizations still do not recognize the power of Jewish music to inspire people. People get so charged and get such a wonderful sense of who they are and where they come from, yet many Jewish organizations think of music as fluff and that it has no value.'

Members who would like to meet assist Ms Helzner or have her as a guest for lunch or dinner should get in touch with the UJC's Executive Administrator, Ms Sarah Millard.



More than meets the eye JCC Program Director comes with high praise, top qualifications

After screening applications from nearly 50 candidates, the working group of the Jewish Community Center has selected Joseph L. ('Jody') Hirsh to be the JCC's first Program Director. He will take up the post near the end of the year but spend some time here in October as well.

Now working as Jewish Education Specialist at the JCC in Houston, Texas, Mr. Hirsh has a wide range of experience as a teacher, author, and administrator.

Informing his philosophy about the role of a JCC is his strong belief in what can be achieved through the arts. As he wrote in a recent article, 'Jewish Community Centers are ideal venues for reinforcing Jewish identity and knowledge through the arts. The Jewish arts attract Jews, even the marginally affiliated. The Jewish arts are immediately accessible in a variety of ways, even for those Jews who have little background in Judaism or exposure to the arts. The Jewish arts reinforce Jewish identity. The Jewish arts transmit culture. The Jewish arts carry with them an entire matrix of Jewish associations and meaning.'

His university studies centered on Hebrew and Hebrew literature as an undergraduate at University of Wisconsin and later as a PhD candidate at University of California.

He is the author of *The Great King Herod Murder Mystery* currently playing at the Citadel Museum in Jerusalem, and the Obie award-winning play *Seeing Double* performed by the San Francisco Mime Troupe in 1988-9.

The 45-year old playwright and educator has taught Jewish studies and Hebrew at all levels — beginning, intermediate, and advance — at both UCLA and University of San Francisco. He is also guest curator at Magnes Museum in Berkeley, and has also lectured at the University of Judaism and Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles.

As an administrator, he has served as Director of Outreach in Berkeley from 1988 to present and director of a Jewish day school, among a number of other posts.

The new program director was a Jerusalem Fellow in Jerusalem from 1990-92 and has spend so much time in Israel that he describes it as 'his second home.'

Origins of Bar Mitzvah

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

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

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

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



Benjamin Abraham Meyer

son of Robert L. Meyer

*will be called to the Torah
as a Bar Mitzvah*

Saturday, November 11, 1995, 10:30 a.m.

followed by

Kiddush at the conclusion of the service

&

Buffet Lunch at 1:00 p.m.

The Aberdeen Marina Club

8 Shum Wan Road, Aberdeen

Hong Kong

*All members of the Congregation are warmly invited
for the Bar Mitzvah, Kiddush, & Lunch*

Please RSVP for the Kiddush & Lunch

with Ida Yue 2593-0590, fax 2845-5517

Special Assets Limited



In celebration of

*the Bar Mitzvah of Benjamin Abraham Meyer
Robert Meyer & family also invite the Congregation
to join them for*

Shabbat Service & Kiddush

Friday, November 10, 6:30 p.m.

American Club, 49th floor, Exchange Square

Jewish Arts Festival Hong Kong

Volunteers Needed

*to escort performing artists
from abroad appearing in the*

Jewish Arts Festival

Celebrating the Opening of the JCC

October 30 - December 10

Please contact Barbara Kosovske at 2517-7967

'The smoothly curved ram's horn has an aura of the primitive about it; for people saturated with sophisticated technology, the shofar appears to be a throwback to hoary antiquity. And perhaps this is precisely why the shofar is so exciting and stirring — it brings us back to places inside ourselves that are very basic and primitive, very near the root of our being. Since the shofar is used mainly around the time of the year when it is most important to be in touch with ourselves, finding those places is crucial.'



The Short Course for Shofar Aspirants

There are only four notes to learn but practice will make you a real *baal tekiah* (master blaster).

1. *Tekiah* (and the one most often sounded) means 'blast' — one long blast with as clear a tone as possible;
2. *Shevarim*, 'broken' sound, is three short calls, together being as long as one *tekiah*;
3. *Teruah*, 'alarm,' is a rapid series of very short notes, at least nine of them, that also should together equal one *tekiah*;

4. *Tekiah gedolah* — the 'great tekiah' — is just what its name says it is: a single unbroken *tekiah* blast that is stretched out and held for as long as your breath holds out.

The basic technique is to place the shofar against your lips in the right corner of your mouth and emit into it a compressed high-pitched Bronx cheer. What you are doing is forcing air through your pursed lips. For further elucidation, ask a friend who plays the tuba or bugle.

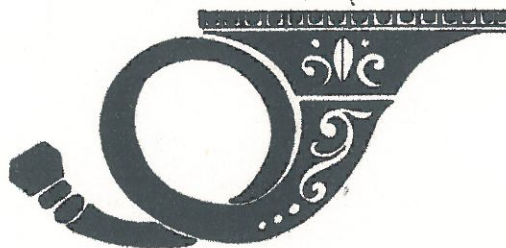
The command to blow the shofar is given in the Torah without explanation. Even so, according to Maimonides, there is a message implicit within the practice:



'Sleepers, awake from your sleep! Slumberers, rouse yourselves from your slumber! Search your deeds and return to teshuvah [repentance, literally, returning] and remember your Creator. Those forgetters of the truth in the vanities of time and those who stray all their year in vanity and emptiness which can neither help nor save — look to your souls, better your ways and deeds. Let each one of you abandon your evil way and your thoughts which are not good.'

— Hilkhos Teshuvah, chapter 3

Master Blasters practice for Rosh Hashanah shofar chorus



The Blinderman and Leventhal *shofaroot* (plural for shofar) may be sounded again in this year's Rosh Hashanah service.

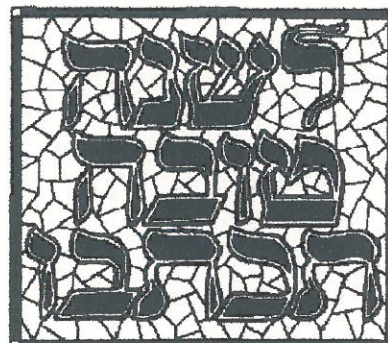
UJC member and music instructor Ms Linda Simon could be making her second appearance as a *baal tekiah* (master blaster) on the shofar donated two years ago by the Blinderman family. Some members will be interested to know that the *Shulhan Arukh* (*Orah Hay*, 589:6) specifically allows women to blow a shofar.

Mr. Dennis Leventhal, a UJC member with considerable experience on his own shofar, is also expected to participate again in the annual ritual.

Last year, both Ms Simon and Mr. Leventhal blew the *shofaroot* in chorus in what turned out to be a very impressive Rosh Hashanah ceremony.

It is a *mitzvah* to hear the sound of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah. As the Torah teaches, 'You shall observe it as a day when the horn is sounded' (Numbers 29:1). There's an obligation on the part of the blower to make sure everyone hears and an obligation on the part of the hearer to not only listen but think to himself that he is listening for the purpose of fulfilling the precept. Minimally, this is done by answering 'Amen' to the *baal tekiah's berarakhot*.

Material for this page came largely from *The First Jewish Catalog*, Richard Siegel, Michael Strassfeld, and Sharon Strassfeld, The Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia.



Rabbi & Barbara Howard Kosovske

*cordially invite you
to come to their new home for an*

OPEN HOUSE

on the Shabbat of Sukkot

Saturday, October 14th

4:00 — 6:00 P.M.

One Robinson Place, Apartment 3D

70 Robinson Road

Mid-Levels, Hong Kong

*To help the Kosovskes with their planning,
please RSVP with Sarah Millard at the office*

Simchat Torah Come and be Glad!

The Holy Day season ends with Simchat Torah. What is more moving than to compete and then begin again the reading of the Torah? Especially when the Torah we will begin is our new, recently dedicated Torah!

Be with us Monday evening, October 16, 6:30 P.M. at the Ladies Recreation Club, 10 Old Peak Road, Mid-Levels, for the 'wildest' Simchat Torah ever! A buffet (\$100 adults, \$50 children) will follow. Don't miss it. It is a program for people of all ages!

■ Submitted by Rabbi Howard Kosovske

Please note change of venue

Shabbat Evening during Sukkot

A New Family Experience

Our Rabbi has announced a positively new monthly Shabbat family experience for our children and their families. Once each month, before our regular Shabbat fellowship gathering and service, Rabbi Kosovske will conduct a special abbreviated family Shabbat 'happening' for our children (age 11 and younger) and their parents. Some months the 'happening' will be age specific, and others it will be age general.

Friday, October 13, is the date of our first 'happening.' We will celebrate Sukkot during this 'happening,' and since it is our first gathering, we hope that all of our youngsters and their parents will come. The program will be age appropriate for children from age 3 through age 11.

The starting time (and we *will* start on time) is 5:45 P.M. The location is the office of Robert Meyer, 6/f, Diamond Exchange Building, Duddell Street, Central (see page 3). **Please note this is a change in venue from The American Club as originally published**

■ Submitted by Rabbi Howard Kosovske

Opening for (Paid!) part-time librarian JHS seeks help for Library, Cemetery, JCC projects

The JCC Executive Committee has approved the library development budget submitted by the Jewish Historical Society of Hong Kong (JHS), and the latter is now actively seeking a (paid) part-time librarian. The new facilities will be computerized for both library management and research purposes. Book lovers interested in any aspect of library work should contact JHS Special Project Director, Ms Tamar Shay, at 2964-1302.

Rabbi Howard Kosovske has offered his experience with Jewish cemetery research projects to head up a survey project for the HK Jewish Cemetery in Happy Valley. Those interested in working on this should contact Rabbi Kosovske directly. Fresh air work; no experience necessary. This should not only be an enjoyable community project, but also is expected to result in a published work of value to historical and genealogical researchers.

JHS Chairman Dennis Leventhal is still struggling with editing the manuscript for the JHS's fourth volume in its Monograph Series. It will be a history of the Jewish Community of Harbin, covering the 1898-1931 period. Publication is targeted before end-95.

A volunteer Executive Director is needed for the JHS to develop membership, coordinate programs and promote library usage and growth. Those interested should contact Mr. Leventhal at 2334-1186.

■ Dennis Leventhal

PART-TIME LIBRARIAN

wanted for the JCC Judaica Library. Approximately 30 hours per week, flexitime, but must be available Sundays. Library Science certification and good English skills. Comfortable with computers and Internet. Knowledge of automated library management systems, data conversion, and project management a plus. Salary: \$10,000 — \$14,000 per month depending upon qualifications. Contact Ms Tamar Shay, Director, Special Projects, Jewish Historical Society of Hong Kong. Tel. 2964-1302 (office), 2803-2959 (home).

Correspondence

Dear Howard and Barbara [Kosovske],

We have just spent four months in Vancouver, are back in New York now, and will shortly be off to London (99% probability at least). Our lives have been tumultuous (the Yiddish 'tummel' is a more expressive way to put it), and we'll be in touch once we get a new address (towards the end of the year). Knowing you both and being part of UJC has been a wonderful part of our lives. Our best to all.

With kindest wishes,
Neil & Barbara Holbert

Dlugash family — in honor of Rachel's Bat Mitzvah

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.

Hadassah Looks East: Beijing, Singapore, Manila, Hong Kong Hadassah International on the Move

Hadassah International has undertaken an effort to expand its activities in Asia with the intention of making Hong Kong its regional hub.

Eva Silverman, a prominent member of Hadassah International, met with several members of The UJC's Executive Committee September 13 in the hope of identifying leadership candidates for a Hong Kong branch. Before arriving, Ms Silverman was in Beijing where she appointed a representative to head up a branch there. She left Hong Kong for Singapore with the same objective. There is already an Hadassah International in Manila.

Unlike the national organization in the U.S., Hadassah International is open to both men and women. The organization will be conducting a three-day leadership and training course in early November in New York City. Hadassah will subsidize the airfare for an appropriate candidate for the Hong Kong position.

Those interested in setting up a branch here are urged to contact UJC chairman Bob Green.

The Hadassah Medical Organization (HMO) in Jerusalem is the flagship Israel project of Hadassah. The largest Zionist organization in the world, Hadassah was founded in 1912 when a small study circle of American women headed by Henrietta Szold decided to expand into a national organization committed to bringing modern health care to the Holy Land.

Hadassah now has two major medical facilities located on hills overlooking Jerusalem serving Jerusalem's and Israel's Jewish and Arab populations. In addition to the hospitals, HMO runs a community health center, clinics and a hospice for the terminally ill.

The organization is also committed to outreach to developing countries and sponsors a number of medical and public health projects in Asia and Africa. HMO also offers medical training to students from development countries. To date, 28,000 trainees from 112 countries have participated in this important and valuable program. Every year, HMO doctors spend a month or more in developing countries.



Israeli Folk Dancing Anyone?

Stephanie Mitchell (that's me) is looking for like-minded individuals to put together a short Israeli folk dance performance for the Discovery Bay Multicultural Festival in November. We don't have details of deadlines, etc., yet so it is important that if you think you might be interested, give me a preliminary indication of interest as soon as possible and she will do the rest if there are enough of us to justify it.

You don't need to be a pro or even a semi-pro, just an enthusiastic amateur who can remember the steps with a bit of practice. Probably we will need six or eight people to put together a sequence of about three dances, most likely 'golden oldies' from the 60s and 70s of Israeli folk dance choreography. Of course if you have your own record, tape or CD collection of more or different music and choreography, suggestions would be extremely welcome! There will be a minimum of new choreography, suggestions would be extremely welcome! There will be a minimum of new choreography, so if you have ever danced to 'Dayagim' or 'Haroa Haktana' and lived to tell the tale, you're qualified. Ages: teenage and up, as long as you think you can dance for about 10 minutes straight without dropping out (and I have some doubts about myself in this respect, but am willing to press on for the greater glory of The UJC!)

Please let me know if you are interested by leaving a voice mail message at 2987-8419 (let it ring a long time) or send a fax to 2824-3228 — or e-mail to stephanie.mitchell@autodesk.com. Now you have no excuse not to sign up!

■ Stephanie Mitchell

The United Jewish Congregation
of Hong Kong

High Holidays and Shabbat Shuvah

Schedule of Services

5756/1995

conducted by

Rabbi Howard A. Kosovske
Cantor Robyn Helzner



ROSH HASHANAH

Erev Rosh Hashanah

Sunday, September 24, 6:30 P.M.

Rosh Hashanah Day

Monday, September 25

Children's Service, 9:30 A.M.

Morning Service, 10:30 A.M.

Rosh Hashanah Lunch follows Service

Tuesday, September 25

* Morning Service, 10:30 A.M.

* please note special venue below



Shabbat Shuvah

Friday, September 29

American Club, 6:15 P.M.

Exchange Square II, Central



YOM KIPPUR

Kol Nidre

Wednesday, October 3, 7:30 P.M.

Yom Kippur Day

Thursday, October 4

Children's Service, 9:30 A.M.

Morning Service, 10:30 A.M.

Recess

Discussion, 2:30 P.M.

Yizkor (Memorial Service), 3:30 P.M.

Afternoon Service, 4:00 P.M.

Neila (concluding) Service, 5:45 P.M.

Light break-the-fast refreshments
will be served following the service



except where noted, all services at:

Hong Kong Arts Centre

Shouson Theatre, 1/F

2 Harbour Road

Wanchai, Hong Kong

* Venue for September 25 service only is:

Ladies Recreation Club

10 Old Peak Road, Hong Kong

COMING EVENTS

SEE PAGE 11 FOR HIGH HOLIDAY SERVICES

Shabbat services followed by a buffet supper are held every Friday night at The American Club, 49th floor (Kam Shan Room), Exchange Square II, Central District except for October 13 when the service will be at 6/f, Diamond Exchange Building, 6:15 P.M. (office of Robert Meyer)

Saturday, Sept. 30, 10:00A.M.

Shabbat Service
Royal HK Yacht Club

Sunday, October 5, 3:30 P.M.

Suskkah Building Party & Service (see p. 3)
Diamond Exchange Building, Central

Wednesday, Oct. 11, 12:40 P.M.

Brown Bag with the Rabbi
Dina House

Wednesday, Oct. 11, 8:00 P.M.

Introduction to Jewish Literature
Venue to be announced

Friday, October 13, 5:45 P.M.

Tot Shabbat (see p. 9)
Diamond Exchange Building

Saturday, Oct. 14, 4:00 P.M.

Rabbi's Open House (see page 9)

Monday, Oct. 16, 6:30 P.M.

Simchat Torah (see page 9)
Ladies Recreation Club

Wednesday, Oct. 18, 12:40 P.M.

Brown Bag with the Rabbi
Dina House

Wednesday, Oct. 18, 8:00 P.M.

Introduction to Jewish Literature
Venue to be announced

Monday, October 23, evening

JCC Gala Opening
JCC, 1 Robinson Place, Robinson Rd.

Wednesday, Oct. 25, 12:40 P.M.

Brown Bag with the Rabbi
Dina House

Wednesday, Oct. 25, 8:00 P.M.

Introduction to Jewish Literature
Venue to be announced

Friday, Oct. 27, 6:15 P.M.

Union Church visits UJC services (see p. 4)

Saturday, Sept. 30, 10:00A.M.

Shabbat Service
Royal HK Yacht Club

Sunday, Oct. 27, 11:00 A.M.

UJC visits Union Church (see p. 4)



It's Back!

The JWA Annual Charity Bazaar

Sunday, December 3

PUT THIS DATE ON YOUR CALENDAR NOW!

JCC — ONE ROBINSON PLACE

70 ROBINSON ROAD

10:30 A.M. — 4:00 P.M.

All proceeds for charity

All items factory donated

CLOTHING ☆ ELECTRONICS ☆ TOYS ☆ HANDBAGS,
BOOKS ☆ COSMETIC ☆ RAFFLES ☆ GIFTS ☆ AND
☆ A KID'S CORNER WITH LOTS OF FUN

LIMITED PARKING

TAKE THE #45 MINIBUS FROM STAR FERRY
OR #56 MINIBUS FROM ADMIRALTY

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

SPONSORED BY

The Jewish Women's Association of Hong Kong

VENUES FOR SERVICES, EVENTS

Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong

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

6/F, Diamond Exchange Bldg.
8 Duddell St., Central District
(office of Robert Meyer)

Ladies Recreation Club
10 Old Peak Road, Mid-Levels

