

Shabbat Notes 1/5 (Shemot) – Message

I will be out of town this coming week, January 7-12, for a mission trip to Israel with the Rabbinical Council of America and Mizrahi Olami to learn firsthand about Israel's war effort and to show support to our fellow Jews in Israel during this difficult time. Some of the things that we will be doing include: meeting with and hearing from soldiers on the frontlines, wounded soldiers, bereaved families, families of the hostages.

I am proud that I will be able to join in this mission and represent our synagogue and the wider Albany Jewish community in expressing our steadfast solidarity with Israel. Next Shabbat, January 13, when I will be back in Albany, I will speak about this trip and what I will have seen. I hope that this can help provide us all with a greater window into the challenges Israelis continue to face and how we in the diaspora can continue to provide our support.

While I will have access to phone and email, I will have limited availability. Any *halachic* concerns that will require a quick response may be directed to Rabbi Bomzer, our rabbi emeritus, at rmbomzer@gmail.com or (518) 727-5566. Any questions about daily minyan can be directed to Barry Siegel at (518) 596-6656. Any other matters should be addressed to Seanan at office@cbaj.org.

As you may have heard, the Albany Common Council voted to approve a resolution calling for a ceasefire between Israel and Gaza. In light of this, my rabbinic colleagues and I would like to share with you some of the work that was done surrounding this resolution.

A couple of weeks ago, the rabbis and cantors of five of Albany's synagogues reached out to all the members of the Albany Common Council imploring them to reconsider passage of a draft of a resolution about the war. This happened alongside outreach by the Federation and grassroots opposition championed by devoted, everyday volunteer activists. The language of that initial draft was incendiary, divisive, deeply biased and poorly informed about the history and nature of the conflict. We were informed by Council member Deborah Zamer (14th ward) that the outreach to the members of the Common Council significantly shifted the tone and tenor of the resolution. We thank Deborah, who is also a member of Congregation Beth Emeth, for her tireless efforts to support our Jewish community and to help all Albany residents to be safe and secure.

While I am disappointed by the passing of this resolution, even in its improved form, I am pleased by the impacts of our outreach, and I remain hopeful that this will pave the way for increased communication between us, the Albany city leadership, and other community leaders in the future.

Aside from cooperation surrounding this resolution, the local rabbis and cantors have been in frequent communication in the last several months. This includes standing together at community rallies, and ongoing discussions of security measures being taken, particularly in the aftermath of the shooting outside Temple Israel.

Additionally, Rabbi Dan and I, the Albany rabbis on the HACD faculty, have been working continuously with the school administration, staff, and Jewish Family Services clinical staff to help our kids process their deep sadness and fears due to the October 7 attacks. Through our community's partnership with the Eshkol region in Israel, many of the middle school students at the Hebrew Academy have formed friendships over the past year with students from Eshkol. The *kibbutzim* hardest hit by Hamas terrorism on October 7 are in Eshkol, and our students' new friends have been displaced and deeply traumatized. Recently, Kibbutz Nir Oz formally announced that Judih Weinstein Haggai, a kibbutz member and beloved teacher our students knew well, had been murdered on October 7, further impacting the students of HACD.

We Albany area rabbis and cantors share this information with you as a reminder to all of us of a foundational principle of our Torah and ethical tradition: *kol Yisrael areivin zeh ba-zeh*. All members of the Jewish community are interdependent with one another. We rely upon and support each other, regardless of synagogue affiliation, religious perspective or individual practice.

I pray that our Jewish community will remain strong and resilient, able to protect itself and willing to do the hard work of reaching out to those beyond our community in a spirit of peace and trust.