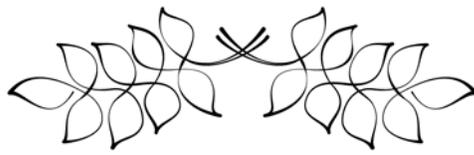


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CONGREGATION
SUKKAT SHALOM
Bulletin

Rabbi's Message

by Rabbi Sam Gordon

For many centuries Passover and Easter were frightening times for Jews. Attacks on Jewish communities were a frequent response to Good Friday sermons accusing the Jews of being responsible for the killing of Jesus.

Times have changed.

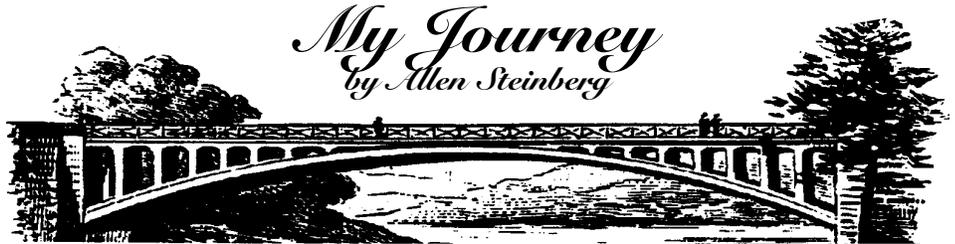
In 1959, Pope John XXIII removed the "perfidious Jews" language from the Good Friday liturgy of the Catholic Church and convened the Second Vatican Council, which, in *Nostra Aetate* (In Our Time), repudiated the deicide charge and declared anti-Semitism to be a sin. Good Friday, Easter, and Passover were no longer to be a time of fear for Jews.

And yet... this year, on the day before Passover, a terrible tragedy occurred in Overland Park, Kansas. In a violent act of anti-Semitism, a white supremacist, Frazier Glenn Miller, shot and killed three innocent people at a Jewish Community Center and a Jewish assisted living home.

"We must continue to build our nation based on the values of tolerance, justice, and equality."

I offer two lessons from this crime. First, Miller was an equal opportunity bigot with a long history of hatred and violence directed at Blacks, Jews, immigrants, and others. He had a particular obsession about an international Jewish conspiracy.

But he also had a violent history as a Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan
please turn to page 2



It is 1989 and I am in the Polish town of Kodyn. I am there with my mother. We have visited her childhood home and walked through town asking older residents if they had any recollection of what happened in Kodyn when the Germans came. Nobody remembers. My mom left Kodyn in 1939, when she and her brother were deported to a Siberian labor camp by the Russian authorities. They never saw their family again.

In the cattle car to Siberia, my mom meets my father and he takes her under his wing. My father is slight of build, but he has a knack. In the labor camp, he manages to get my mom excused from working in the mines. After their release, he becomes an "entrepreneur" in the black market. After the war, he manages to smuggle the two of them out of the Soviet Union until they eventually make their way to the U.S.

I grew up in Brooklyn. My parents were raised as Orthodox Jews in Poland, but their observance faded long before I was born. We were, in effect, non-observant Orthodox Jews. We still observed the High Holy Days, Hanukkah and Passover—but that was about it. We were Jewish, but we really didn't give it any thought. In a way, our Judaism was like that part of the nervous system that controls your respiratory or circulatory system; it operates below the level of consciousness.

"My growing connection with Israel makes me think more about my Judaism."

Although my family was not observant, I attended an Orthodox yeshiva through high school. My classmates were mostly first-generation children of Holocaust survivors. Some of my classmates were observant, but many were like me. For the next 20 years, I drifted further away from my Judaism.

It is 1995 and we are in Jerusalem. Yitzchak Rabin has just been assassinated and my wife Susan and I will spend the next week watching memorial services and funeral processions. We will also spend the week meeting my extended family—the family I barely knew existed. My father had a sister who immigrated to Palestine in the 1930s and these are my first cousins. We start making up for lost time.

My growing connection with Israel makes me think more about my Judaism. My younger cousins are going through their military service. They also are non-observant Orthodox and their relationship to Judaism is not really grounded in religion. But it still is very profound. They live in a land where their very survival is linked to their identity as Jews.

please turn to page 2

From the Rabbi, cont'd

-- starting in 1979 when he participated in a KKK rally in Greensboro, North Carolina, that resulted in the death of five people. Later, he served three years in federal prison for plotting robberies and the assassination of Morris Dees, founder of the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Miller is like other members of the white racist movement who do not separate their anti-Semitism from racism, sexism, homophobia, and xenophobia. They lump Jews together with the other supposed outcasts of society. These white racists make little distinction between Jews or the other groups they hate in American society.

We should take this lesson seriously. Jews, no matter how successful and accepted into privileged American society we may be, continue to be tied to those on the margins in our society. This is one of the key reasons why we must recognize that fighting for equality for all is key to a just society.

Second, this hate-filled Klansman, intent on murdering Jews, ended up killing two Methodists and a Catholic. This additionally teaches us something very important:

The Jewish community in America is fully integrated into our society. The Jewish Community Center in Kansas was a place for tryouts for a community theater. A Jewish assisted living residence, Shalom Village, was the residence of a Catholic woman. Jews are not separate from other Americans, and our institutions are open and welcoming to all.

This vicious crime took place right before Passover, but hatred is the opposite of the message taught at our Seder. The Passover *hagadah* reminds us that we were slaves and outcasts in the Land of Egypt thousands of years ago. Thus, we are commanded to remember the plight of the stranger, the outcast, and the poor and to continue to fight for freedom and dignity for all people.

We must continue to build our nation based on the values of tolerance, justice, and equality. Hatreds based on religion, race, culture, gender or sexuality bring violence to us all.

“... we must recognize that fighting for equality for all is key to a just society.”

Journey, cont'd

It is 2009 and we are in Jerusalem to celebrate the Bar Mitzvah of our oldest son. We have the extraordinary joy of sharing this event with a small contingent of friends and family from the U.S. and my extended Israeli family. We have the pleasure of calling up some of my female Israeli cousins to read from the Torah. They have never been given this opportunity before and there are some tears of joy.

We met Rabbi Gordon many years ago through some mutual friends and were charmed by his personality. Several years later, after our children were born and were old enough, we started looking to join a congregation and Sukkat Shalom just felt like home.

Our attraction to Sukkat Shalom was not because of any similarity to the congregations we grew up in. I had always attended Orthodox services and my wife Susan attended a Conservative congregation on the North Shore. Rather, the attraction was the energy around understanding the traditions and the history—and using that understanding to navigate who we are as individuals, as a family, and as Jews.

It is 2012 and we are in Jerusalem to celebrate our middle son's Bar Mitzvah at a small Reform synagogue in the heart of the city. We are looking at pictures of my wife's cousins on the wall. Her family helped the congregation finance the purchase of their building more than 50 years ago. It was the first Reform synagogue in Jerusalem. The widow of the founding rabbi has come to the service to meet us. My Israeli cousins are getting used to our Reform affiliation—and they are struck by how meaningful the service is to them.

“Our attraction to Sukkat Shalom was not because of any similarity to the congregations we grew up in.”

We joined Sukkat Shalom “for our children,” so they would have a more tangible connection to their Judaism. But I have received so much more than that. Sukkat Shalom has helped me to develop my relationship to Judaism and how my Jewish experience – from Kodyn to Brooklyn to Jerusalem -- affects who I am.



Our Youth on Their Spiritual Journeys

Two Young Congregants Share North Shore Leadership Award

The annual North Shore Interfaith Leadership Award is sponsored by the Wilmette Interfaith Religious Leaders. The award is presented to high school students active in their local faith community. This year, Cole Freedman and Natalie Goldman of Sukkat Shalom, both seniors at New Trier High School, received the award. We are proud of their achievement -- and of their service to our congregation.

Following are excerpts from their remarks at the award ceremony on May 3rd.

Cole Freedman: A Sense of Belonging

My family joined Congregation Sukkat Shalom when I was three and, throughout my time here, much has changed: we've gained new members, moved into a new home, and learned from new teachers. But one thing that hasn't changed over all these years is the sense of belonging I get whenever I go to temple.

Eight years of Family School provided me with many new friends. We were from different schools and different towns, but we all shared the common struggle of sitting through school on Sunday morning and Hebrew class on week-day afternoons. It's ironic, but this struggle is what gave us a bond and created the sense of belonging during our classes, as we all looked forward to sharing experiences and laughing at the funny-sounding words in the new language we were learning. The unexpected parts of the whole routine were what made it enjoyable.

Our annual Family Retreats in Wisconsin also created a strong sense of belonging. I took part in the retreats as a participant with my family, as well as acting as a *Madrichim* for a few years.

The usual "Gaga" tournaments that fired up even the quietest of congregants, sledding and games in the pool during free time, and laughing while the adults made fools of themselves at the Talent Show, are my priceless memories as a member of the Sukkat Shalom community

Throughout my time at Sukkat Shalom, I have learned about Judaism; I have learned how to read and understand Hebrew; I have learned important Torah stories and how being Jewish impacts my life and the lives of others. But the most important thing I have learned from Sukkat Shalom is the value of having this sense of belonging, and the importance of helping others feel connected and accepted, too.

Natalie Goldman: I Can Make a Difference

Sukkat Shalom has been a valuable part of my life and I am grateful to be involved in a congregation that has allowed me so many opportunities to grow as a member of the Jewish community. As a *Madrichah*, I have been able to take a leadership role in the classroom and, not only teach others about Judaism, but learn from them, too. Every weekend I look forward to seeing the students at family school. They are so excited to learn and sing songs and have fun, and spending time with them is always such a rewarding experience for me.

A few years ago, two other *Madrichim* and I went to Washington, D.C. with Rabbi Gordon and Alissa Zuchman. There, we participated in the Religious Action Center's *LTaken* - Social Justice Seminar and heard



Cole Freedman and Natalie Goldman

continued on page 5

How My Form of Judaism Encourages Critical Thinking and Debate

by Daniel Backman

Growing up in the tradition of Reform Judaism, my faith instilled in me values of generosity, open-mindedness, and a watchful eye toward oppression. My synagogue [Congregation Sukkat Shalom] puts a huge emphasis on social justice. Some of my earliest religious memories involve delivering Passover food to lower-middle class elderly Jews. Indeed, most of the volunteering I did growing up was organized by various Jewish organizations in the Chicago area.



Daniel Backman

My religion taught me that we are all created in God's image, and that we all deserve to be treated with respect. I also learned that the value of giving lay not in some emotional or heavenly reward for oneself, but in the happiness it provided for someone else. These lessons have translated into an urgent desire to make the world a better place, even at the expense of narrow self-interest.

I also attended a Jewish summer camp for six years. My last summer, I was part of a bi-weekly seminar with the director of the camp. He was a Reform rabbi who grew up Orthodox, the strictest sect of Judaism, and one day he explained to us the reason for his conversion to the Reform movement. He said that, as a Reform Jew, he could observe all the same traditions as when he was Orthodox, but that he now had to decide why he was observing them and choose whether they made sense to him.

“These lessons have translated into an urgent desire to make the world a better place.”

My upbringing in the Reform tradition, in contrast to the popular caricature of religion as inherently opposed to critical thinking, in fact welcomed challenge and debate, and I became a more open-minded person for it.

Those familiar with the Passover Seder will recognize a phrase that goes something like: “Remember that you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” The story of the Jews’ escape from slavery, at least in my household, always came with a command that we remember the stranger in our midst and inveigh against op-

pression, wherever it may be. And the key saying, “Never forget,” contains a call to vigilant protection of others that we abandon at our, and humanity’s, peril.

Daniel Backman, the son of Andrea Pauls Backman, is a student at Harvard University. This article was excerpted from the Harvard Political Review, of which Daniel was elected president for 2014.



Life After Family School: The Prosperis

Alex, Zach and Claire Prosperis were young children when their parents helped to found Sukkat Shalom. They are among the initial students who formed our congregation’s unique Family School.

Today, Alex, 26, and his fiancée, Lauren, are living in St. Louis but soon will be moving to Michigan where Lauren will start her medical residency in Royal Oak. Alex is working for a public relations firm, doing mostly sports-oriented marketing and communications.

Zachary, 23, graduated from the University of Arizona last summer with a B.A. in Geography and a Minor in Sports Management. He also has been working in public relations and will begin a Chicago marketing internship this summer while coaching a 13U baseball team in Highland Park.

Claire, almost 22, will graduate in May with a B.S. in Neuroscience from Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. She spent an eye-opening semester in South Africa, which included working in a neonatal ward. A four-year softball player with a high batting average, Claire will coach a 12U travel softball team this summer.

Mazel tov to the Prosperis and best wishes for continued success!



Alex, Claire and Zachary Prosperis

SUSHY Youth Group Creating Bonds of Friendship

by Kelli Max, Youth Advisor

Participating in the **SUKkat SHalom** Youth group (SUSHY) is a wonderful way for kids to get to know each other. By creating shared experiences, SUSHY helps children feel more connected to the temple. This year, we wanted to make sure that Sukkat Shalom brought together our 5th, 6th and 7th grade students to experience fun activities outside of class.

I am thrilled that SUSHY has had many successful activities. We started at the temple with the game "Gaga" and then continued with bowling at Pinstripes and jumping at Sky High. Following those fall activities, we had a Social Justice Day during which we made blankets and then escaped the winter weather at Key Lime Cove water park. Our most recent event was painting at Color Me Mine.

SUSHY has given our children a chance to interact with each other and form authentic bonds. It has allowed them to come to Family School and be comfortable with their classes and their peers. What I have found most exciting is that students from all grade-levels are connecting and getting to know each other, strengthening the already strong sense of community at Sukkat Shalom. I hope that, in the months ahead, even more children will be able to experience all that SUSHY has to offer.



SUSHY participants take to the lanes.

Helping Our College Students to Celebrate the Holidays



Sukkat Shalom sent Purim Boxes to 41 college students from the congregation this year. It marked the second Purim that congregant Marlene Carl baked all of the hamantaschen for the boxes.

Under the direction of Eileen Levy, the congregation sends boxes celebrating different Jewish holidays to our college students. The program has grown from an initial shipment of five boxes.

Sukkat Shalom – By the Numbers

| | |
|--|------------|
| Tzedakah collected at Family School (through May 4): | \$4,633.71 |
| Number of charities receiving contributions: | 21 |
| Average contribution to each charity: | \$220.65 |

Natalie Goldman: I Can Make a Difference, cont'd

speakers discussing various issues of social justice and how they relate to the Jewish community. I was so interested to hear debates about poverty, stem cell research, and the conflict in Israel.

The D.C. trip opened my eyes to the fact that I *can* make a difference as an individual. I *do* have a voice. I was so inspired by the things I learned there that, when I came home, I wrote a research paper for my social studies class regarding the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. I have continued to learn about issues relevant to the Jewish faith and how I can make a difference.

One of the most rewarding things from my time at Sukkat Shalom has been the relationships created there. One of my best friends, Annie Shapiro, goes to a different high school than I do, and we would have rarely seen each other if not for Sukkat Shalom. Each Sunday, we shared our *Madrichim* duties and taught the students about Jewish life and traditions through various activities like art projects, songs, and stories. We bonded over these shared experiences and became closer because of this. I am so grateful to be a part of such a warm, welcoming community at Sukkat Shalom.



Tikkun Olam

Repair the World

Sukkat Shalom to Host Homeless Family July 20-27th Through Family Promise

Her name was "Buggy," she was about five years old and she wanted me to get her some root beer.

I was happy to oblige and we both went to the kitchen to get some ice for her cup. When we got to the refrigerator, the only ice available was in two, traditional-style trays that have to be twisted. While I tried to convince her that letting me get the ice out of the tray would be easier, she insisted on doing it herself. After a few minutes of trying to twist the tray, she reluctantly let me twist it to loosen the cubes.

I offered to grab a few cubes to put in her cup. But she was having none of that and insisted on getting the cubes out of the tray herself. Before I could warn her about the risks of turning the tray upside down, every cube in the tray was on the floor. The same scenario played out for the second tray and we ended up rinsing off a couple of cubes for her cup. She took one sip and then went off to play a game.

I don't think she ever came back for the rest of the root beer.

Still, I felt a sense of accomplishment and companionship with this guest of the Family Promise program that helps homeless families stay together by letting them spend the night in a temple or church. Each family spends a week at a congregation's building. Four volunteers prepare dinner at home and bring it to the building's kitchen and heat it up or just serve it.

The program averages roughly 10 to 15 guests each week who spend the day at work, at school or at the day center in Evanston. Each night about 6 p.m. they return to the temple or church for dinner and overnight accommodations in rooms temporarily converted to bedrooms. They leave about 7 a.m. each morning.

Since 2010, Family Promise Chicago North Shore and its 29 volunteer congregations have provided shelter to approximately 35 families and helped them find affordable housing, secure employment, learn budgeting skills, and understand and utilize community resources.

As one of 180 affiliates of the national Family Promise organization established in 1988, Family Promise Chicago North Shore operates independently, receiving training and guidance but no funding from the national group. Members of Sukkat Shalom have been volunteering for more than three years at our partner congregation, First Presbyterian Church of Wilmette. We hosted a week in our building for the first time last year and we are getting ready to host again this summer, from July 20-27.

"Before I could warn her about the risks of turning the tray upside down, every cube in the tray was on the floor."

This is a great opportunity to get involved in social justice at Sukkat Shalom. One family member must have training

but you can sign up now and get training later. If you or members of your family are interested in helping to make and serve dinner (kids are welcome), stay overnight (adults only) or help move beds in or out, please sign up online at <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E0D4CADA72BA31-volunteer2>.

I encourage you to get involved. Maybe you can figure out a better way to help a five year old put ice cubes in her root beer.

Creating a SHARE List for Times of Need

Often, as we are going through a crisis, we feel alone and frustrated and in need of a helping hand. As an outgrowth of the annual Hineinu Committee meeting, we are creating a list of resources that congregants have found helpful in times of need. These resources will be considered as recommendations rather than endorsements. Congregants may have used them or been involved with the organizations and individuals included in the list.

We are now in the process of putting together this list of resources. If you would like to contribute to the list, or suggest areas of need and service that should be considered, please contact Beth Gomberg-Hirsch at sukkatshalom@sukkatshalom.org.

The Sukkat Shalom Welcome Team Needs You!

Remember when you were a new member of Congregation Sukkat Shalom? Did you have questions about your new spiritual home? Were you anxious to meet other congregants? Were you looking for engaging and meaningful activities? Those may be the very same questions on the minds of new members of our congregation.

Bruchim Haba-im, the Welcome Team of Sukkat Shalom, can provide the chance to volunteer a few minutes of your time to welcome and engage new members of our community during their first year.

Here is all you need to do to be part of the team:

- Make an initial call to welcome a new member or member family.
- Check in with them two or three times during the year.
- Be a resource they can call or email to find answers to their questions.

If you have more time, consider participating in one (or more) of these activities:

- Invite the new family over for a meal, to a Family School event, or for a children's play date.
- Set up a time for coffee or tea to answer questions about Sukkat Shalom.
- Invite a new member to join you at a Shabbat service.
- Find out if the new member plans to attend an event like Women's Spirituality, Shabbat at the Park, or Saturday Torah Study. If so, suggest you meet them there and introduce them to other congregants.
- Invite a new member to join you at a Dinner-with-Friends event and share a table with other members.

The Bruchim Haba-im Team needs your help to fully engage new members in our wonderful faith community. We welcome your additional ideas on how to make connections that support new members in their spiritual journeys at Sukkat Shalom.

For more information or to join the Bruchim Haba-im Team, contact Kathy Stein or Cheryl Marty at sukkatshalom@sukkatshalom.org.

Yahrzeit Wall: Creating a Permanent Memorial to Our Loved Ones

by Lynn Denton

If you have been in the sanctuary recently, you may have noticed the beautiful and artistic display on the back wall. This is our new Yahrzeit Wall, which provides an opportunity to create a permanent memorial to a loved one.

Yahrzeit -- the anniversary of one's death -- typically is recognized by lighting a candle for 24 hours and saying Kaddish. There is also a longstanding Jewish custom of placing a stone on a grave as a "calling card" to show that we have been to visit. The stone adds a personal note of having been present with your loved one. It is this custom of putting a pebble or stone on a grave that inspired the design and creation of our Yahrzeit Wall.

"When we designed our Yahrzeit Wall, we wanted to be creative and artistic but also to make it very personal," said Rabbi Gordon. "Often, one sees Yahrzeit plaques with little light-bulbs to mark the anniversary date. We thought a stone would resonate with the custom of visiting a grave and also be more individual, natural and tactile."

Architects and Sukkat Shalom members Fred Wilson and Elissa Morgante took on the task of designing the wall. They set out to create something for the synagogue in keeping with the tasteful and understated style of our building while incorporating the custom of leaving a stone on a grave.

The final result is a textural wall of twisted bronze pieces that allow for a name to be engraved on a plate, along with a place to leave a pebble to commemorate the Yahrzeit.



Bronze memorial plaques make up our Yahrzeit Wall.

The pebbles, which are placed on the bronze plates, signify the date of the death of a loved one in a very organic expression."

The next time you visit the sanctuary, look for this lovely display of artistry combined with tradition. If you are interested in making a contribution for a plaque to honor the memory of a loved one, please contact Judy Buckman at the congregation office.

"It is this custom of putting a pebble or stone on a grave that inspired the design and creation of our Yahrzeit Wall."

"We designed the wall to maintain the mellow vibe and spirit of the building," said Fred Wilson, who currently serves as board President. "The wall was intended to feel like leaves blowing in the wind, which is a calming reference and also echoes the leaves in our Sukkat Shalom logo. The pebbles, which are

Musical Notes: The Journey of Learning Never Ends

by Adam Davis, Cantorial Soloist

It has been a year since I joined Sukkat Shalom as Cantorial Soloist. I've enjoyed getting to know everyone, assisting Rabbi Gordon at Shabbat and High Holy Day services, and tutoring our bright and motivated B'nai Mitzvah students.

As they sit across from me at my desk, these young people inspire and surprise me -- and sometimes themselves -- with their insights and abilities. They

might be parsing the pronunciation of a particularly tricky Hebrew word, teasing out their own thoughts about their *Parsha* (Torah portion) or applying the musical phrasing of newly learned tropes to their text.

I remember when I was on the other side of the desk during Bar Mitzvah training

sessions with my childhood Rabbi. As I chanted in Hebrew, he would bury his head in an Israeli newspaper. My occasional error would elicit a correction from behind the newsprint. He knew the

Torah so well that he did this without looking at the text. When I got stuck, he would put down the paper and guide me through the Torah text with his finger, chanting the trope and reading the text from across the desk.

“I marveled at how one could ever obtain such deep knowledge as to chant and read Hebrew upside down.”

I marveled at how one could ever obtain such deep knowledge as to chant and read Hebrew upside down. Not long ago, I realized that I was doing the same thing whenever a student got stuck on a passage. We are all constantly learning, even when we don't realize.

Whether the subject is academic, professional or the pursuit of personal passion, one should never stop learning. It is said that some of Judaism's most beloved sages did not begin studying Torah until they were 40 years of age or older. Sukkat Shalom prizes learning for every age group, whether through our Family School, authors' series, Torah study or the Rabbi's class. I am looking forward to adding into the mix my own Adult Education class and our Next Mitzvah program for teens this coming year.

At a time when the mysteries of Alzheimer's are as yet unsolved, there is evidence that ongoing intellectual stimulation can be helpful in staving off the effects of such brain diseases. Among my current B'nai Mitzvah students is a woman in her seventh decade. It is never too late to stretch your brain. If you have always wanted to learn to chant from the Torah, Haftarah, or just learn the words of the prayers, I am here. If you never had a Bar or Bat Mitzvah ceremony, I am happy to help you realize that goal.

Know that I, too, am constantly pursuing additional learning in my Cantorial role. I always hoped to round out my Cantorial skills with additional training at an institution of higher learning. It is with great joy that I share some exciting news. Following a rigorous audition and interview process, I have been accepted into the Hebrew Union College (HUC) Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music's Cantorial Certification Program.

Though it is administered and taught through HUC in New York, this is a distance-learning program designed for Cantorial soloists already ensconced in a congregation. I will be one of just five participants in this selective program. It will enable me to further enhance my skills while continuing to serve Congregation Sukkat Shalom. Upon completion, I will be certified and granted the full title of Cantor -- to serve as clergy and join the American Conference of Cantors.

The program starts this summer with a six-week set of courses in Jerusalem! I am excited to learn in the classroom and from the culture surrounding me at every turn. I'm also thrilled to have the opportunity to spend extended time in the land of Israel. Following my return and the High Holy Days, the program will consist of bi-weekly classes taught over the Internet and three weeklong intensive study courses at HUC's New York campus.

“I'm looking forward to coming back and sharing with all of you what I see, hear and learn this year in Jerusalem.”

I want to thank Rabbi Gordon, Judy Buckman and the Sukkat Shalom Board for their support throughout my first year and for encouraging me to continue my

own journey of Jewish learning. I'm also grateful to all the families of Sukkat Shalom for their warmth and greeting this year. I'm looking forward to coming back and sharing with all of you what I see, hear and learn this year in Jerusalem.



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