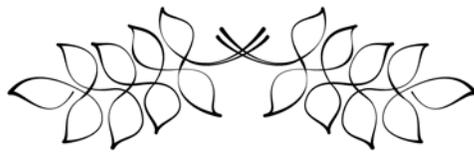


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CONGREGATION
SUKKAT SHALOM
Bulletin

Rabbi's Message

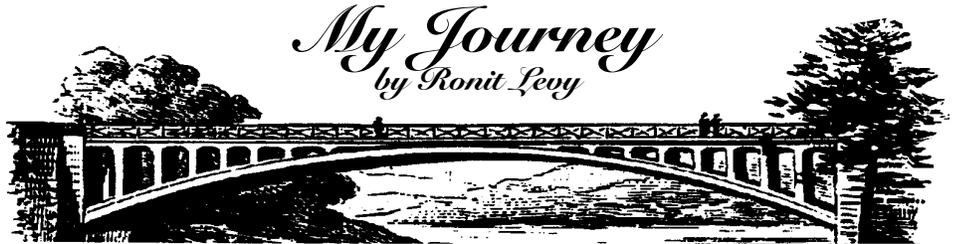
by Rabbi Sam Gordon

I continue to think about my recent mission to Israel in the midst of the Gaza Operation. I have written my political analysis, but there was another aspect to my trip. We rabbis went in order to see for ourselves the critical events of those days, but we also traveled there on a "solidarity" mission. We were trying to show the people of Israel that they were not alone or isolated. This was an opportunity for 12 American rabbis to connect with the people.

We had our numerous official meetings, and they were significant. We met with Knesset members, military leaders, local politicians, and government spokespeople. We talked with our Israeli Reform rabbinic colleagues, social justice activists, journalists, and writers. But our most significant conversations most often occurred in informal, unplanned, spontaneous moments. In only five days I tried to see as many of my friends as possible. I wanted to know their thoughts, feelings, and concerns. I sat and talked with Americans, Israelis, and Palestinians I know well. I spent time in conversations with cab drivers, waiters and waitresses, and shopkeepers. I grabbed lunch with soldiers taking short breaks from the Gaza battles.

"A few of us walked into a camping store and encountered five soldiers just back from Gaza."

Perhaps my favorite encounter occurred completely by accident. We went to a mall outside Ashkelon, near the border with Gaza. We wanted to find a clothing or sporting goods store where we could buy socks, t-shirts, energy bars,
please turn to page 2



Although my mother was born in Germany and spoke German to me most of the time, I never wanted to visit that country. I lost my maternal and paternal grandparents, aunts and uncles to the Holocaust, which makes that horrific period very personal for me. But after the Jewish Museum in Berlin opened in 1999, and more and more Israeli and American friends began visiting, I started thinking about making the trip. This year I was finally ready -- or so I thought.

My husband Mike and I were there on a Friday night in June and attended a Shabbat service at the Rykestrasse Synagogue -- the largest in Germany, built in 1904. The building is magnificent. It's in the Neo-Romanesque style, and was restored to full glory in 2007. Upon entering, we were greeted by a smiling old man with a Russian accent. He welcomed us and wanted to know where we live. Since there were only 48 people attending this huge place (Mike counted), I guess we stuck out. I mentioned to him that I was born in Israel.

"I came down the Bima stairs and shook hands with people in the aisles while tears streamed down my cheeks."

A few minutes before the service started, he came over to me and asked if I would do the congregation the honor of lighting the Shabbat candles and chanting the prayers. I could not believe it. (Did Judy tell him that I do this every Erev Rosh Hashana at Sukkat Shalom?) I went on the Bima, shook hands with the Rabbi and Cantor and faced the congregation. With a trembling voice and unsteady hand, I recited the blessings and lit the candles. I came down the Bima stairs and shook hands with people in the aisles while tears streamed down my cheeks.

Here I was, 110 years after this ritual was first performed in this building, lighting the candles at a synagogue that survived, thinking of my grandparents and other relatives I never met who were part of the Six Million who perished. But here I am -- a native of Israel. We survived! *Am Yisrael Chai!*

I was born in Israel a few months before the birth of the State. My parents, Mitya and Rosi Kalai, met in Palestine. They were lucky enough to escape the Shoah that wiped out almost their entire families. Typical of their generation, they hardly ever talked about the past. They lived in the present and looked forward to a future in a new country, raising my younger sister and me as proud Israelis. We celebrated Jewish holidays at home, with family and friends, and never went to a synagogue because we were "secular" Jews.

please turn to page 2

Journey, cont'd

In 1967, after serving in the Israeli Defense Forces for two years, I ended my military service after the Six Day War. Before starting my studies at Tel Aviv University, I traveled to Chicago to visit my closest friends who were attending Northwestern University. Little did I know that, four years later, I would return there and make a life.

I met Mike in 1971 in Tel Aviv. He came for a wedding and called me to give regards from my friends in Evanston. We have been married for over 42 years and have a daughter, Sharone, and a son, Gil. Mike came from a Reform background and I was a secular Israeli. (Mike maintains that we have a mixed marriage.) How were we going to raise our children?

“At that time in Israel you were either Orthodox or secular; there were no other choices.”

At that time in Israel you were either Orthodox or secular; there were no other choices. I was not familiar with Reform and was more comfortable with Conservative services because they were mostly in Hebrew. We never felt comfortable in that congregation and, after our kids celebrated their Bat/Bar Mitzvah, we quit. I thought it was only fair to Mike to try a Reform congregation, but never felt at home in the one we chose.

Our kids were now in college, and we were still searching for a congregation that would be a good fit. I learned from my experience that, in order to be a Jew outside of Israel, you needed to be part of a Jewish community. We wanted to find a place that shared our commitment to Jewish values, social justice, and family education. It would have to be open to diversity and new ideas.

Enter Judy Buckman. Her family and ours had been close for a long time. Sharone and Ali were best friends, and Judy had just started her position as Executive Director of Sukkat Shalom. She was very excited about the congregation and invited us for dinner to meet Rabbi Gordon. We spent the evening talking about his ideas and the culture and goals of the congregation. It didn't take long for us to realize that we had finally found a spiritual leader who was everything we were looking for. We started to attend services, met people and connected very quickly.

“I share my love for Israel, Jewish holidays, customs, traditions and Jewish ethics.”

Shortly after Cantor Jill Abramson joined the congregation, she asked me to help her with preparing students for Bar/Bat Mitzvah. I was delighted to be able to connect with the kids. The Hebrew program was still forming and, before long, I was asked to come aboard and help create a one-on-one tutoring program that became a meaningful way of learning for many students. I am proud of the program and the special relationships I have formed with the students and their families, which have lasted for years.

I love what I do. I share my love for Israel, Jewish holidays, customs, traditions and Jewish ethics. I want our students to be proud of who they are; to be able to bring their own interpretations to prayers; to be kind and thoughtful and always welcoming the other. I want them to feel that they are part of a loving and supportive community where we celebrate our individuality and diversity.

From the Rabbi, cont'd

and other items for the Lone Soldier Center in Jerusalem. A few of us walked into a camping store and encountered five soldiers just back from Gaza. I asked them what they needed, and they said they were looking for camping headlamps.



Rabbi Gordon with Israeli soldiers in Ashkelon.

It turned out that they were part of a unit of 25 soldiers attached to a tank division. Their

job was to repair the tanks at night after whatever battle took place during the day. It didn't take long for our small group of Reform rabbis to purchase enough headlamps for all the members of the unit. In the process, we made friends and spent the afternoon talking with them over coffee at Cafe Aroma. One worked at Google. Another owned a pub. One was an engineer. We shared pictures of children and grandchildren and told our various stories. I

“The Israelis I know truly want to live in peace with their Palestinian neighbors.”

am not sure I will remember the military briefings or talks from Members of Knesset, but I will remember the conversations with those IDF reservists at the mall in Ashkelon.

For me, that is what matters in Israel. The politics can be infuriating. The leadership is often deeply disappointing. There are troubling forces at play in Israeli society. I have no patience for the Ultra-Orthodox control of family law or the messianic fanaticism of the Settlers. But the ordinary Israeli people are remarkable, and every conversation seems intense and passionate. The Israelis I know truly want to live in peace with their Palestinian neighbors. They want to live a good life with meaning and values in a beautiful Mediterranean setting rich with history and significance.

I always return to Israel because I feel an intense connection with the people who live there. Let us pray that they will find peace in this next year.



Expanding Our Efforts to Repair the World

by Ken Kraus, Chairman of the Social Justice Committee

Tikkun Olam (repairing the world) is a central tenet of our congregation. So how can we make our social justice activities more relevant and accessible to members of Sukkat Shalom?

To help answer this question, a committee was formed to study ways to expand our social justice programs -- perhaps incorporating them into the curriculum at Family School. Earlier this year, we decided to investigate opportunities for volunteers from Sukkat Shalom to get more involved with one or more Jewish organizations. We agreed in general to the following principles and plans:

- Try to incorporate a social justice component in Family School, perhaps with the 6th, 7th or 8th grade curriculum.
- Choose one or two Jewish social justice organizations in which our kids and adults could get more involved.
- Try to make our involvement with these organizations more regular and predictable for our congregants.
- Consider ways to unite our "two congregations" (Family School and non-Family School) through social justice.
- Consider ways to make our social justice experience a long-term one so participants can make life-long connections.

Our ad hoc committee consists of Rabbi Gordon, Board President Fred Wilson, Board Members Ken Obel, Cary Nathenson, Ken Kraus and congregant Dan Lipson. We will continue to explore ways we can work in coalition with local, national, and international organizations. Some examples are:

Jewish Council on Urban Affairs: <http://www.jcua.org/>
American Jewish World Service: <http://ajws.org/>
Anti-Defamation League: <http://www.adl.org/>
American Jewish Committee: <http://www.ajc.org/>
Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism: <http://rac.org/>
Avodah: <http://www.avodah.net/>

If you have any thoughts about these principles and target organizations, or have principles and organizations to add to our list, please contact the temple office.

Touchpoints for the New Year 5775

"Touchpoints" is an initiative that was created to provide additional programming for our congregational families that are beyond the age of Family School. These programs explore more closely certain transitions that we face as we move forward in life. Touchpoints programs are open to all interested congregants.

Our kick-off speaker for this year will be **Rabbi Rex Perlmeter, who will visit Sukkat Shalom on Sunday, Nov. 9, from 3-5 p.m.** Rabbi Perlmeter is the spiritual leader of the Jewish Wellness Center of North Jersey, which is designed to help synagogues and individuals strive for wholeness in body, heart, mind and soul.

Rabbi Perlmeter is also a consultant and scholar-in-residence for congregations, and is co-author of a curriculum entitled "Making Prayer Real." In advance of his November presentation, we will be sharing with our congregation his article, "Love is Stronger Than Death."

We invite everyone to participate in the Touchpoints initiative and programming. As is often said, "It couldn't hurt."

Family Learning is at the Heart of Our Spiritual Education

by Alissa Zuchman, Director of Family Education

I am often asked by my colleagues in Jewish education about how our congregation makes families attend each session of Family School. The question is really about their own systems of parents dropping off their kids on Sunday morning and returning to pick them up two hours later. The truth is we don't "make" families attend Family School; it is a part of the expectation from day one. Family learning is at the heart of what makes Congregation Sukkat Shalom unique. Our congregation benefits from sharing this goal and vision.

Yet, the question remains of how to involve our families in meaningful ways. This is a challenge for educators across the country and goes to the heart of spiritual education. Families are busy. Parents may not feel comfortable with their knowledge of Judaism or Hebrew. The pull of everyday secular demands—work, school, community activities, sports—may leave families feeling that the "Jewish" part of their life is disconnected from the rest.

How can we respond to the spiritual needs of our busy families? Survey after survey shows that families have a desire for community, closeness, knowledge, involvement, interaction, and enthusiasm.

Kerry Olitzky, a leading educator, suggests that Jewish education needs to be family based to supplement what is taking place at home within the family system. InterfaithFamily.com and others seek to integrate Jewish practice into everyday life and help families prepare for and recognize lifecycle events. For educator Iris Koller, "Family learning becomes based in how Judaism helps guide our everyday lives . . . We can start by putting Jewish words and perspective to the things we are trying to teach our children."

Each year, our Family School offers interactive "family days" in which our families remain together in study throughout the morning. This year we have planned three family days: "People of the Book," in which we will learn together about the Torah; Tikkun Olam Day, during which we will give back to our community; and Israel Day, to study the people and culture of the State of Israel. These special days

provide families an opportunity to learn and engage with their children and their community.

I look forward to another year of fellowship and learning as we begin the new school year. As always, please feel free to contact me with any questions or suggestions.

Meet the Teachers

Abby Damsky Brown has taught for four years as one of the 5th grade teachers at Sukkat Shalom's Family School. She is a fourth-year doctoral student in clinical psychology at the Adler School and will be completing her pre-doctoral internship at Northwestern's counseling center this fall.

"It has been such a rewarding experience to work with such fun and bright young students as we explore the Jewish prophets together," Abby says. "As a Jewish woman in an interfaith marriage, it has also been so meaningful to see how other interfaith families commit to raising children in a home in which Judaism is very present, active and cherished."

Israel "Moe" Gross has been a teacher at Sukkat Shalom since 2009 and is looking forward to another year as a 5th grade teacher. He is an Advanced Doctoral student in Clinical Psychology at Loyola University in Chicago and will be completing his residency in Pediatric Neuropsychology/Child Psychology at the University of Chicago Medical Center during the 2014-15 academic year. Israel was raised in West Rogers Park and attended Jewish day schools for both elementary and high school.

"What I love most about teaching at Sukkat Shalom is having a chance to work with a fabulous staff, families and students," Israel says. "Each year, I feel honored to work with a new group of bright, spirited and kind students as they explore their Jewish history and values together in fun and creative ways. I've also found that my own connection to Judaism has grown since teaching at Sukkat Shalom."

Our thanks to Abby, Israel, and all of the other wonderful teachers who make Family School a centerpiece of our faith community at Sukkat Shalom.

Life After Family School

Benjamin Breit, 27, graduated from The University of Virginia in 2009 with a double major in history and government. He served two years as President of the Hoo Crew, the largest student organization on campus, which focuses on school spirit and support for all intercollegiate athletics. Following college, Benjamin lived and worked in Washington, D.C., for three years, cutting his teeth in the PR world by working primarily for Hill & Knowlton. He now lives in Wicker Park and serves as the Chief of Strategic Communications for Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart. Ben has enjoyed significant mentoring along the way from fellow Sukkat Shalom members David Prospero and John Kupper.

Hannah Breit, 25, graduated from the University of Virginia in 2011, with a degree in Neuroscience. After taking a "gap" year, during which she worked for the National Institutes of Health, she entered Wake Forest Medical School in Winston-Salem, N.C., where she is now in her third year. Her life was briefly interrupted earlier this year by thyroid cancer – a challenge that Hannah fully embraced. She has used the experience to help shape the rest of her life, making her even more empathetic and caring for her patients (and others) than she already was. Her brothers, Benjamin and Jeremy, were at her side throughout the ordeal.

Jeremy Breit, 20, is a rising third-year student at Miami University (Ohio) in the School of Engineering with a focus on Computer Science. He has spent each summer furthering his education by working in the field of software/web design. He currently leads the Miami "Up 'til Dawn" fundraising and awareness initiative for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. Jeremy held a series of leadership roles with BBYO during his high school years and traveled extensively, including in Israel. His future plans are unknown, although he has demonstrated a unique entrepreneurial bent ever since a young boy.

We've Got Two Lives: My Trip of Discovery to the Dominican Republic

by Debra Shore

Darn the American Jewish World Service!

Initially, I was happy and excited to have been chosen as one of 18 Global Justice Fellows from the Chicago region and taken on a weeklong trip to the Dominican Republic in May. What an opportunity to meet Jews of widely differing practices and to learn about the human rights work done by grassroots organizations that the American Jewish World Service (AJWS) supports. Instead, I came home from my time in the Dominican Republic profoundly unsettled -- uprooted in my thinking and from my place in the world.

First, a little bit about the organization that sponsored my travel.

Since its founding nearly 30 years ago, AJWS has sought to empower people throughout the world to achieve justice and self-sufficiency through the promotion of human rights, education, economic development, healthcare and sustainable agriculture. But rather than supporting organizations that dig a well or build a school and then leave, AJWS supports groups that work to empower marginalized people and communities to advocate for themselves.

No one yet knows if this model will be successful, but we travelers often discussed as a group the difference between *tzedakah* (charity) and *chesed* (justice). Which is better and more enduring?

Our first morning in the Dominican Republic, we were taken to a small compound with concertina wire on the perimeter walls and roof. There, we met with representatives of MUDHA -- a grassroots organization advocating for the rights of Dominicans of Haitian descent. We had learned before our trip that the Dominican Congress in 2010 passed a measure that rendered stateless more than 200,000 Dominicans of Haitian descent. This act was ratified by the country's top court in 2013.

Though the Dominican constitution granted citizenship status to children of Haitian migrants born in the DR, the court decision required the government

to audit the nation's birth records as far back as 1929. Imagine the consequences for the targeted population: no papers; an identity card indicating your racial status determined by the state; no rights; no country. MUDHA, founded by a charismatic woman named Sonia Pierre and continued by her daughters and supporters, has been advocating for the restoration of rights and improvement in treatment of these marginalized people.

Over the next few days, we visited with female and transgender sex workers and others pushing for LGBT rights and for better education. We heard story after story about discrimination in health care, education and basic human services. We visited two *bateyes*, settlements for sugar cane workers that have become permanent homes for many of the poorest people. They are living without adequate electricity, running water, garbage collection, access to public transportation or sanitation. Most have no access to public education either, though we saw some Catholic schools and some run by other aid organizations.

Our visit also affected some of the people we met. Arsy Rosmarie, one of our interpreters, had never known a Jewish person before and saw the diversity in our religious practices. I spoke with representatives from REVASA, the LGBT rights group, about the importance of having openly gay people serve in public office. I quoted gay U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.), who often says: "If we're not at the table, we're on the menu." They laughed when I shared that, but it hit home.

Upon my return to Chicago, trying to manage my re-entry from an intense, illuminating and challenging week, I hap-

pened to listen to a song by Mary Chapin Carpenter called "The Hard Way." In it, she sings:

*We've got two lives,
One we're given
And the other one we make.*

"Yes!" I thought. "That's right." That is precisely the question I have been wrestling with since my return.

What are we to make of the life we are given? How are we to fulfill our imperative to repair the world? Shouldn't we focus first on our own backyard -- for what moral authority do we have if we do not seek justice for the marginalized in our own communities? Many in our group struggled with this, aware of the colossal challenges of poverty, crime, violence against women and girls, and poor education in our own City of Chicago.

And yet, I believe our obligation is to repair the world -- finding common cause with people far beyond our political, cultural and social borders. My trip to the Dominican Republic compelled



me to consider this obligation through new eyes. Although the experience was disturbing, I am grateful -- and newly challenged.

Elders of the Congregation: Three Journeys to Sukkat Shalom

Our last newsletter focused on the younger members of our congregation. But we are fortunate to have a number of 90 year-olds among our congregants. This newsletter features three of them and their place in our faith community – in preparation for a celebration of Sukkat Shalom's "elders" in May.

Joan Andalman, 94, was born in Columbus, Ohio, and moved to Chicago with her family when she was 12 or 13. The family lived in Hyde Park and South Shore, and joined the South Shore reform congregation. Joan attended Sunday School, but girls could not become a Bat Mitzvah at that time. Instead, she danced in many of the "shows" that were put on by the temple.

After marriage and children, Joan and her family moved to the North Shore in 1961. They started off in Skokie, so her husband could commute easily to his job downtown. Later, they moved to Morton Grove and eventually joined Temple Jeremiah in Glencoe.

Joan and her late-husband Joe joined Sukkat Shalom when their daughter, Judy Buckman, became its Executive Director. Joan says she particularly enjoys the congregation's musical programs and is a member of both book groups – in Wilmette and downtown. Her favorite part of Sukkat Shalom is its Executive Director – "and I'd say that even if she wasn't my daughter!" In her spare time, Joan is an avid player of bridge, mah-jongg and rummy-cube.

Clara Zenner, 93, was born in a part of Poland that is now in Ukraine. She was raised in an orthodox Jewish family that counted rabbis in its lineage. As war approached in 1940, Clara left home to serve as a "nurse" for her best friend's brother, who was a doctor, even though she had no training. She never saw her family again. She spent the war years on the run with a small group of friends, ministering to Russian soldiers and those in work camps. She ended up in Vienna, where she married her husband, Max, in a mass wedding among displaced persons conducted by a rabbi.

After years of effort, Clara and Max arrived in Chicago in 1949 through the efforts of Max's older brother, who had immigrated before World War I to escape conscription in the Polish Army. Because of her wartime experiences, Clara says she was "mad at God" and did not join a synagogue. But after being told she could not have children due to the effects of wartime deprivation, Clara found a doctor who nursed her back to health and she and Max conceived a son. With this "miracle," Clara "made up with God."

The family, later joined by a daughter, moved to Albany Park, where Clara joined

an orthodox synagogue. Later, they moved to West Rogers Park and joined the conservative synagogue KINS, where Clara took classes and attended Shabbat services. After her son Sheldon and his wife, Ellen, helped found Sukkat Shalom, Clara accompanied them to High Holy Day services and eventually joined the congregation. She participated in the Bar Mitzvah celebrations of her two grandsons and also attends the annual service commemorating the Holocaust.

Marjorie Cohn, 94, was born at Mt. Sinai Hospital in Chicago and grew up in Highland Park, where she belonged to North Shore Temple Israel – a reform synagogue. After marriage and children, she and her family moved to Philadelphia. Eventually, she began spending summers in Michigan and winters in Scottsdale, Arizona.

A second marriage brought Marjorie back to the North Shore, where she now lives in the Glen. Her daughter Anna, a founding member of Sukkat Shalom, had told her about the congregation, and Marjorie began worshipping there with her family on the High Holy Days. Later, she participated in the Bat Mitzvah of her granddaughter, Caitlin.

Marjorie says that she liked Rabbi Gordon from the first time she met him because of his pleasant and friendly manner. She also admires Judy Buckman for the warmth she brings to the congregation, and has become friendly with Judy's mother, Joan Andalman.

Sukkat Shalom is blessed to benefit from the wisdom and participation of these and other "elders of the congregation." We look forward to honoring them during the coming year.



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Honoring Our Elders

Plans are underway to honor the most senior members of our congregation at a special Shabbat service in May of next year. In preparation for this service, and to promote intergenerational understanding, some of our young people will interview these honored congregants at a brunch on November 2nd and begin working on a booklet of wisdom culled from their discussions.

This booklet will be shared at the special service on May 8, 2015, as we celebrate our older congregants and share in their wisdom and life experience. Anyone wishing to participate or help in the planning of this Simchat Chochmah service should contact either Beth Gomberg-Hirsch at bethgh@gmail.com or Marilyn Schonthal at m-schonthal@kellogg.northwestern.edu.