

# The Menorah

**Tifereth Israel  
Congregation**  
7701 16th St NW  
Washington DC  
20012-1495

(202) 882-1605  
FAX (202) 829-0635  
Email: [info@tifereth-israel.org](mailto:info@tifereth-israel.org)

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# המנורה

February 2010 Sh'vat/Adar 5770

*Tifereth Israel is a traditional egalitarian congregation affiliated with the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism*

## Notes from the Rabbi — Two Congregational Initiatives



I am announcing two Congregational initiatives and soliciting your help.

1) The Youth Torah Reading

Corps. (First thing I need help with is a catchier name.) I am inviting all young people still in school (including college) to join by committing to read at least one aliyah (or do one haftarah) during the coming year. You could read something you already read at your bar or bat mitzvah or, even better, learn something new. I will be the scheduler, since many parents – including me – have found that getting someone *else* to nudge encourage their child to participate is more effective. And I would also like to add a little competitive piece to the mix: I will give a special prize to the two corps members that read the most verses over the year.

All youthful participants in this program will get to join me in the kitchen for a communal baking afternoon. Among the things we might make together: Cheese Danish, Sufganiyot, Babke, Rugelach, Challah, Pita, Cinnamon buns, etc. (Ideally, we'd make enough that those attending the next Shabbat services would also benefit from this initiative!) And the reward for being one of the top two readers: the

chance to select the items we bake. Young people – let me know if you are interested and Parents – let me know if you would like me to encourage your child in this endeavor?

2) Conversion Mentors. I have noted (as have some others in the conversion business) that there is a definite uptick in serious students interested in conversion to Judaism these days. In years past, I typically had only one to three students at any given time. Nowadays, I seem to always have six to eight. I have come to realize that I don't have the time I'd like to devote to each of these students, and that my students would benefit from spending more time with TI'ers. I've also come to realize that my style of teaching is not always the best fit for every student.

So I have gradually been pairing up students with mentors in the congregation. Some of you have been quite generous with your time, and open-hearted about this project. In fact, the response I've had to those of you I've already approached has been more even than I needed. Some of you have volunteered, and I haven't quite found the right match for you yet – but don't despair. I am hereby now making known to the whole congregation that I may be calling on you for help at some point in the future.

*(Rabbi continued on page 2)*

## Tifereth Israel Congregation

Synagogue Telephone: (202) 882-1605

Rabbi: Ethan Seidel, ext. 102

Rabbi Emeritus: A. Nathan Abramowitz, ext. 106

President: Susan Catler

Executive Director: David Zinner, ext. 103

Administrator: Sheri Blonder, ext. 101

Lifelong Learning Director: Lynn Golub-Rofrano, ext. 105

Bookkeeper: David Mackoff, ext. 110

Kitchen Manager: Roz Kram, ext 101

Facilities Manager: Steve Ross, ext. 114

### המנורה של תפארת ישראל

Menorah Editors: Morton Simon, David (Judy) Cohen  
Robert Rovinsky, Lionel Cherry  
Jeff Peterman

**Menorah submissions: [menorah@tifereth-israel.org](mailto:menorah@tifereth-israel.org)**  
**Submission deadline: the 15th of the month**

## T I Funeral Practices Committee

*Always On-Call*

Chaverim of the Funeral Practices Committee are on call to provide counsel and services to synagogue members and their dependents. Prior to contacting the funeral home, please contact one of the following *chaverim*, Rabbi Seidel, Rabbi Abramowitz, or the synagogue office.

**Shelly Heller h: 301-942-1836, w: 202-242-6698**

**Jeff Davidson h: 301-593-1335**

**David (Judy) Cohen h: 301-652-2872**

**Marcia Goldberg h: 301-589-0352**

Rabbi (Continued from page 1)

The exact nature of the relationship between mentor and student will vary. I would assume that Shabbat dinner invitations would be part of the relationship; I would also hope that these relationships help instill in the students a sense of support, and even a sense of beginning to fit in to our community. I also don't want to be too directive in this matter – after all, part of the idea of these pairings is that you would be filling gaps in my instruction.

I appreciate your willingness to be involved in these projects! Thanks in advance!

Rabbi Seidel



<http://www.faqs.org/>



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<http://www.biblelandpictures.com/>



## **Hadashot Shelanu חדשות שלנו — Our News**

By Julie Steinberg

**Michael and Lisa Kraft** are the proud grandparents of Lev Julius, born to daughter Dina and son-in-law Gilad Rosensweig in Tel Aviv. Lev weighed 6 pounds 8 ounces and joins sister Mia (2 and a half years old). Dina works as a journalist, and Gilad is an architect.

Mike and Lisa Kraft spent most of December in Tel Aviv. They visited Lisa's relatives and friends from New Zealand Habonim and former Tiers Byron and Rachel Gold. Mike also gave a lecture on U.S. counter-terrorism policies and programs at the Institute for Counter-Terrorism in Herzliya and met with TI member Howard Sumka at the U.S. AID mission.

We welcome daughter **Meirav Sarat**, born January 9, to **Sheila Jelen, Seth Himelhoch, Malka, Nava, and Akiva**.

In December **Ophir Lifshitz** was inducted into both the National Honor Society and the Science Honor Society at Walter Johnson High School in Bethesda, where he is a junior.

**John and Lynn List** joined three daughters, two sons-in-law and 5 grandchildren in a rented house on Capitva Island, Florida, for an end of year vacation. They also visited the Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island

**Janet Nesse wrote:** "I am personally looking forward to Christmas in Jerusalem this year. On Christmas Eve we will be going to Midnight Mass at the Church of Notre Dame with an assortment of Jewish and non Jewish friends. We will certainly try not to admire the crèche or the decorations or in any other way disturb anyone's post-Hanukkah bliss."

**Lianna Levine Reisner** sang Henry Purcell's music in a performance in Mitchellville, Maryland, on January 14.

**Mark Novak & Renée Brachfeld** created a great Chanukah rap. Listen to their music by visiting [http://www.oysongs.com/search\\_results.cfm?view=All&criteria=novak](http://www.oysongs.com/search_results.cfm?view=All&criteria=novak)

**Howard Gleckman**, Senior Research Associate at the Urban Institute, wrote an article titled "Why \$75-A-Day Matters to Caregivers", published in *Kaiser Health News* on December 14, 2009. He says that a majority of caregivers, who are helping a family member at home, would benefit greatly from even a small amount of money to pay for a few hours of respite home health care.

**Michael Malbin** is quoted in the New York Times article "Energy, Transportation, and Agriculture Groups Build "Access" to Fence-Sitting Senators," published November 30. He points out that energy interests contributed more money to U.S. senators from states with coal extracting or intensive industry. This could influence their voting on the climate change bill.

**Claudine Schweber and Ed Koren** wrote that their daughter Marisa Schweber-Koren, who hosts a monthly radio program about books called "From the Back of the Stacks," can be heard at <http://tclib.org/radio> and choosing topics such as "books in which you hated the main characters."

**Andrea Kline** announces that she is retiring on February 1 from the National Science Foundation after 34.5 years with the Federal Government (the last 24 at NSF). Future plans include working at Shepherd's Table and the Washington Humane Society.

**Jerry Anker** had surgery on January 8 for pancreatic cancer at John Hopkins Hospital. All indications are that the operation was successful and the cancer has been removed. Recovery has gone well and without complications so far, and Jerry came home from the hospital January 15.

Jeff Davidson had surgery on January 8 at Washington Hospital Center for a separated sternum. He is recovering and should be home January 15.

( Hadashot Shelanu חדשות שלנו continued on page 4)



The Kol Nashim Board believes that the organization's contributions to TI need to be more widely known so this column will highlight the many ways that Kol Nashim (KN)



supports the TI community. As part of the Bima renovation, KN contributed a new Torah mantle; KN also contributed funds to the kitchen renovation, the benefits of which we are all enjoying today. In addition, the KN Board voted to donate funds to the Social Action Committee and to TI members in need of Gemilut Chesed.

Kol Nashim has presented a wide variety of programs on its own and with other groups within TI including Lifelong Learning and the Men's Club. For example, in conjunction with the Men's Club, Rabbi Abramowitz spoke on Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel. Recently we showed the movie, "The Ritchie Boys". Kol Nashim members led services at this weekend's Social Action Shabbaton and TI retreat. Kol Nashim members started the early reader's program at Shephard Elementary School where TI members read to children three mornings a week. Kol Nashim has sponsored at least 5 programs over each of the last 5-6 years.

The sources of Kol Nashim's treasury are members' annual dues (part of which go to the Seaboard Region), sales of Entertainment Books, the Chanukah Sale, and subscriptions to the Jewish Week. Kol Nashim has refrained from direct solicitation of money to support its activities.

The Kol Nashim Board wants to hear your feedback on our activities and ideas for future activities. You can share your thoughts with any board member. Current board members are Paula Flicker, Margie Odle, Debbie Pomerance, Shirley Rosenberg, Esther Herman, Carolivia Herron and Helen Hovis.

By the way, we have a few Entertainment Books available through the TI office. Discount movie tickets alone pay for the book (\$30).

## Hadashot Shelanu חדשות שלנו

(Continued from page 3)

Hadashot is sad to report the following deaths:

Andrea Barr, widow of Jerome Barr, December 9;

**Micah Naftalin**, husband of **Beth Naftalin**, December 23; and.

**Mildred Pearlman**, former secretary of Rabbi Abramowitz, December 24.

If you traveled to Israel this winter, please tell me about your trip. I look forward to hearing from you about your accomplishments, travel, news, publications, special events, and stories. Send information to me at [jsteinberg2@zzapp.org](mailto:jsteinberg2@zzapp.org) with Hadashot as the subject or give me a call.



**Michael and Lisa Kraft are the proud grandparents of Lev Julius**

See *Hadashot Shelanu*, page 3





## Social Action at Tifereth Israel — TI Receives Thanks

By Martin Kessel

About one hundred volunteers from TI cooked, delivered and served over 250 meals on Christmas. Pictures of luncheons, taken by Jeff Peterman and other volunteers, are at <http://www.pbases.com/ticwdc/christmas2009>

The following letter, given to Louise Wiener by a woman from the John T. Young Center Women's Shelter, demonstrates how an act of kindness can help in a difficult personal situation.

*Dear Tifereth Israel Congregation,*

*Thank you for giving up your day to help others, I will never forget you on this Christmas of 2009. Christmas would not have been the same without you.*

*Due to me being in drug and alcohol programs there is no time to work. After that I need to relearn job skills to*

*support my nine children.*

*They have been victims of a life I had not foreseen. Depression and Bipolar plagued me for years but finally I've seen a ray of hope after almost 6 months in therapy. I am less depressed and see*



*hope for my future.*

*G-d has blessed me by lifting my depression slowly. Without support from the community it is impossible.*

*There are those to take things for granted as I used to do. I know now no one owes me anything. When the burden is lifted of every day needs I can move on my path a lot smoother. I find myself less bitter.*

*Today I had to call the sheriff's dept. just to give my son some Christmas gifts. His father also has mental issues. But when I came back and you all were here everything seemed OK again.*

*G-d is working!!!*

*Merry Christmas to all please show this letter to your pastor or whoever and thank all the volunteers*

*I am sure I speak for all or most of the clients as well and their stories.*

*Thank you,*

*L. Q.*

## Social Action at Tifereth Israel — Health Care is a Civil Right

By Claudine Schweber

This year's remarkable Shabaton brought together health care veterans of the civil rights movement who were also members of the Medical Committee for Human Rights (MCHR) and current advocates of community health care. They participated in an afternoon panel discussion that over 100 people attended, and also a book talk in a very crowded library on Sunday morning. Professor John Dittmer, author of "The Good Doctors: The Medical Committee for Human

Rights and the Struggle for Social Justice in Health Care."(2008) gave the Drash at the morning

**"Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane"**

**Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. 1966**

service. [An electronic copy of the drash will be found on the TI Website] Dr Dittmer recounted

the role of the medical profession in providing health care in the "Deep South" in the mid 1960s. According to Professor Dittmer, "...The typical volunteer was a physician, Jewish, male, in his 30s or early 40s, the child of Eastern European or Russian emigrants." Two of these men, **Dr. Fredric Solomon**, a member of Tifereth Israel, and **Dr. Alfred Molodovan** (MCHR's founder and treasurer) were part of the Saturday afternoon panel that dis-

*(Civil Rights continued on page 6)*



## New Members By Jared Garelick

Is it a Youth Movement? One of TI's strengths is that it is a multi-generational community, where you can sit at a random table at Kiddush on Shabbat with members of three or four different generations. This month we profile new members in our "under 30" category, as well as one under six months.

**Jessica Badt** – Jessica is originally from Kalamazoo, Michigan. Six years ago, following her graduation from the University of Michigan, she moved to the Washington area, where she now is a career counselor for undergraduate business students at the University of Maryland. This job has become more challenging in the past two years! She is applying to law schools. Jessica is interested in women's rights, cooking, and baking, particularly bread. She enjoys

the community feeling at TI that reminds her of the first congregation in Kalamazoo.

**Justin Bank** – Justin grew up on Long Island, and moved to Washington to obtain a combined Bachelors and Masters degrees in political science and public communication at American University. Since graduation, Justin has worked at factcheck.org, a new style journalism entity that rates the accuracy of political statements. If someone stands up during a drash and shouts "you lie," that might be him. Justin enjoys running and participating in roller hockey, and has become an avid Washington Capitals fan.

**Genevieve Sapir and Gregory Stackel** – Genevieve and Greg were married in 2005 and soon took off

on a long honeymoon/sabbatical to learn Spanish, spending six months in Buenos Aires and a year in Barcelona. They arrived in Washington about a year and a half ago. Greg, a California native, is an architect who designs hospitals. He has current projects in Canada and Chile, which keeps him traveling. Genevieve, originally from Cleveland, is an attorney for the Department of Transportation, although she is currently on maternity leave. They had a baby girl in September who was named [give her name] at TI in January before a large crowd at the in-town retreat Shabbat. That makes [the girl's name] a member of TI's youngest generation, although not the very youngest, as there have been several TI members born since September.

*(Civil Rights continued from page 5)*

cussed health issues in the last four decades as well as the current battles in Congress. Other panel members were **Ms. Phyllis Cunningham**, MCHR nurse who spent several years in Mississippi and Alabama and is still active in Health Care; **Dr. Sidney Wolfe**, leader of the Washington DC chapter of MCHR, director of the Health Research Group of Public Citizen; **Dr. Robert Murray**, pediatrician, who later moved to Howard University Medical School; and **Ms. Bonnie Lefkowitz**, author and expert on community health centers; **Dr. George Cohen**, co-founder of Mobile Medicine, a Montgomery County, Md. organization that provides clinics and traveling vans for those without insurance or other support. This was also a reunion for many of the panelists, many of whom hadn't seen each other in decades.

On Sunday morning, the Mollie Berch library was packed for an in-depth discussion with Prof Dittmer and Ms. Cunningham about the experiences detailed in the book. During this weekend we learned that: MCHR workers often feared for their lives in the South and developed measures such as taking out the dome light in the cars to

prevent being shot as they opened a door, as had happened to Medgar Evers; MCHR helped convince President Johnson to force Southern hospitals to desegregate if they wanted federal money; MCHR helped disseminate information about Medicare in the South since the state officials wouldn't pass this information on to African-Americans; MCHR provided security and care during the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> marches in Selma, including providing Dr. Molodovan to be personal physician to Dr. King; MCHR members provided care to demonstrators in the 1960s and 1970s; and MCHR members fought and picketed the American Medical Association because it allowed Southern medical societies to discriminate. MCHR was the model for community health centers which are now part of the American landscape. In all, 40 years ago MCHR argued that health care was a right, not a privilege, and advocated for single payer universal health care.

Thanks to committee members who agreed to focus on this event, the speakers, the publicity and more: David Levy (who started it all); Gene Herman, Esther Herman, and Jessica Weissman. And thanks to the Retreat folks who enabled us to have the varied audience and wonderful food; to Mark Verschell for his ability to go hi-tech within hours.



# Social Action — December 25, 2009



<http://www.pbase.com/ticwdc/christmas2009>





# Retreat at TI — January 15-17, 2010



<http://www.pbase.com/ticwdc/christmas2009>





# Letters




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Subject: [TI-Office] TI Retreat Survey - feedback requested

We'd love to have your feedback on [the] retreat. Click on this link to take a quick survey (or go to <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/XTYBBST>.)

Thank you,

David Zinner

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Subject: [TI] TI Retreat observations

As a Social Action Shabbaton, this weekend's program was a resounding success. One of the most memorable things TI has done in years. As a Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday observance, it was right on target. As a TI Retreat, not so much.

There were several problems in this regard. The biggest was audience inconsistency. At the normal TI retreat, most of the adults attend most of the program items (except for mincha and Sunday AM minyan). So unless there are split sessions, you get similar audiences for each thing, and most adults know what happened at most sessions. Not so this weekend. For example, on Friday, there was a big turnout for the Friday nite service. Then some left, and a larger number joined those at the service for dinner. The meal had significantly more Tiers than normally attend a retreat. Not so for the program piece. The majority of Tiers left, and we had fewer people than normally attend the Friday nite program. A similar story occurred on Saturday. Many people attended services but not the panel discussion and vice versa. There was significant drop off of Tiers from the panel-discussion to the other two programs.

Another thing that was a problem in terms of being a TI retreat was the lack of a unifying theme (again, this isn't a problem for a Social Action Shabbaton or MLK Holiday observance). Officially, the theme was "Health Care as a Civil Right". The opening session, while educational in terms of learning about Pastor Benjamin's views on biblical inerrancy, about speaking in tongues and their burial practices, etc, had relatively little on

"Health Care" and almost nothing on health care as a civil right. The second and third Saturday afternoon sessions had nothing at all to do with health care.

And there were other things which affected the tone. There is the fact of course that we were not "away", which makes it seem less like a retreat. And here was a large number of non-Tiers. Now, of course, getting non-Tiers into the building, especially Jews on Shabbos, is a significant plus in general, but the large number of non-Tiers made it less like a community retreat.

Also, for me at least, there is the issue of the lower level (amount) of Jewish content. The Sunday AM program with John Dittmer and Phyllis Cunningham was extremely informative, but it had zero Jewish content. Much of the panel discussion, which was (IMHO) of a really high caliber as these things go, had no Jewish content. I am used to having Rabbi Seidel directly and substantially address the retreat's topic from a solid Jewish perspective, which didn't happen. Of course, I recognize that for some TI retreat goers, just having a limited amount of Jewish stuff is perfectly OK.

And finally, I personally don't like that we didn't do it ourselves. We have had guest content providers in the past. One year we had an expert on Jewish humor (she wasn't much good) and we did have Max Tictin one year, who of course is a real treat. Of course, for a SA Shabbaton, this is fine, and indeed is normative.

The result of all these things combined was this, for me, didn't have the tenor or feel of a TI Retreat.

Mark L. Berch

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Subject: Re TI Retreat observations

I find myself somewhat at odds that I completely agree with Mark (as does Elizabeth - although she is a little torn because John Dittmer and the other guests were so good).

The program was spectacular, and there are so many pats on the back to go around to the people that



# Letters

worked so hard to make this weekend. In addition to being such a treat for us, I don't believe that TI could have presented a much better picture of itself to the outside community as it did this weekend.

All that being said, I agree that it didn't feel like a retreat. Too much of the outside world intruded on the weekend.

Mark Verschell

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Subject: Re TI Retreat observations

I signed up for all the events at the Sunday retreat but didn't go when I realized there was no indication, explicit or implicit, of what Mark aptly calls "a unifying theme," and little Jewishness in the agenda. Of course it could not be a retreat unless we actually retreated, but that didn't bother me. I'll never go back to Pearlstone.

Shirley S Rosenberg

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Subject: Re TI Retreat observations

Both the minister on Friday night and Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, who spoke about Martin Luther King before a huge crowd at Ohr Kodesh this evening, referred to the Biblical Book of Daniel. Steinsaltz noted that most of us haven't read it. "We are not the People of the Book, but the People of the Book We Bought." This would have been a great teaching/study opportunity for the retreat. I hope the Rabbi Seidel will lead us in such a session(s) in the near future. There are real issues of standing up for justice.

Dr. Dittmar and the panel members were great. Yes, this was not like the out of town retreat. People with young children couldn't stay Friday night or Saturday after kiddish. The topic could have been tied into Jewish text and context. We did have in-town retreats in the past at the old Marjorie Webster campus on Kalmia. The topics were akin to the out of town retreats, yet allowed people to attend who couldn't afford the far off location. We even had a room filled with port-



a-cribs for little ones to nap or go to sleep at night during the program. I first met Jack and Diane Zeller's girls when they would actually fall asleep on the floor in the midst of the adult programming. One thing that might have helped is if we did this in warmer weather when people could kibbitz with one another outside and the kids could have used the Shepherd playground (after soccer games). We could even have a nature walk in Rock Creek Park.

We are now past the extremely B/M season and shouldn't have another one for the foreseeable future. It takes a lot of work, but let's try to continue the out of town retreats, but try to do an in-town alternative for those who can't afford the latter. We could even designate crash pads for folks who need to put their feet up and head down.

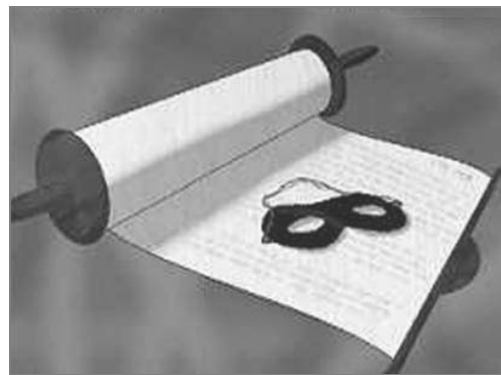
Marcia Goldberg

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Subject: Re TI Retreat observations

Rather than future in town full retreats, which I believe leave something to be desired, I would favor an all day Shabbaton, including 3rd meal, Havdallah, and early Sat. evening program (in that order during the short day months). If I recall correctly, we tried this once, except for the early Sat. evening program, many years ago when I was working on programming.

Sheridan Neimark



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(Donations — continued on page 16)





## DONATIONS – (Continued from page 11)

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