
The Voice

Founded 1906

Congregation Ahavath Israel A Liberal Conservative Synagogue

Affiliated with the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

March 2008

On the web at <http://ahavathisraelkingston.org>

Adar I-Adar II 5768

Message from the Rabbi

Last week Bernie King-Smith and I were privileged to attend an extraordinary event in New York City. The American Jewish Historical Society honored the Straus family, of which our friends Helen, Hugh, Leone, Oscar and Sarah and their children are members. Rather than describe the achievements of the original four brothers who came to America in the mid-19th century and achieved so much, I will let Hugh tell the story in his own words. The following are excerpts from the speech he so beautifully presented that night. The history of the original Straus family is the history of the Jewish people coming to America, writ large by the determination to succeed and then to help others. Here are Hugh's words about Nathan Straus, from whom he is descended:

Hi my name is Tertius – Hugh Grant Straus III. I am the great grandson of Nathan Straus. I'd like to tell you about my branch of the family. The Nathan Strauses were known for many things. I'll tell you about a few things that stand out in my mind.

Nathan was born in Otterberg Germany on January 31, 1848. He was the third child, the second son of Lazarus and Sara Straus. He came to the United States with his mother, brothers, sister and a nursemaid on the SS St Louis, arriving in New York September 13, 1854. From there the family moved to Talbotton and later to Columbus GA. The house he found in Talbotton was unlike any he had seen before but he was delighted with it nonetheless. He later wrote, "We found a very comfortable home and our family was received with kindness and hospitality."

From the start Nathan was enterprising. Although Lazarus philosophically opposed slavery, he did buy slaves. He would teach them to read and write and prepared them for a trade. Then he freed them. Nathan was once sent to the slave market to buy his mother a maid. He returned with his "bargain," a pregnant woman, thinking they were getting two for the price of one. He hadn't considered the trouble this condition would bring to the household. The woman couldn't do much work because of her advanced pregnancy. And

there would be an additional mouth to feed during a time when there was little extra food to go around.

Continued on page 3

Message from the President

As I am now a quarter of the way through my two year sentence... oops, I mean term of office, I thought I'd update you on how matters are progressing. When I took office, I promised major changes in the way we operate. It's taken a while, but we are getting there. The most obvious change is the way most of you are reading the Voice. This is our first "paperless" issue. While it might be a bit inconvenient and take some getting used to, I hope you will bear with us. The change was necessary. As a result of going "on-line" we are saving approximately \$4,000 per year. Considering that our projected deficit for the 2007-2008 fiscal year was more than \$40,000, that is a reduction of nearly 10% of the deficit.

While we are on the subject of the budget, I must commend our Treasurer, Susan Hirsch and our Budget and Finance Chair, Joel Weisbrod. Over the past few months, they have put in countless hours to lay the groundwork so that we can get a handle on our finances and attack the deficit. In the short time they have been working together, they have accomplished far more than anyone could have wished for. As a result of their efforts, our Budget and Finance Committee has been able to formulate an austerity budget for the balance of the fiscal year that reduces our deficit by more than 60%. There is still much work to do, and hopefully next year will bring a further reduction (or elimination) of our deficit.

Our Talmud Torah will also be undergoing major changes over the next few years. Our Education and Youth Co-chairs Patricia Sokolski and Susan Raffkind have been working closely with the Rabbi to plan for the future. They are looking to make the educational experience more meaningful and interesting for our students. In Patricia and Susan we have two enthusiastic educators with the knowledge and experience to take our Hebrew School to the next level.

Continued on page 3

Congregation Ahavath Israel
Rabbi Tamar Crystal

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<http://ahavathisraelkingston.org>

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SPONSOR A SHABBAT LUNCHEON

Have a birthday, anniversary or other special occasion?
 Why not sponsor a Shabbat luncheon? Starting in
 October, we hope to have a monthly Shabbat luncheon.
 Please consider sponsoring one. Call the office or Candy
 Belles for information.

Sign up for Goodsearch.
 Go to: <http://www.goodsearch.com>
 Sign up for the charity Congregation Ahavath Israel and
 every time you use Goodsearch as your search engine
 you help make money for the synagogue.

Schedule of Weekly Services

Shabbat Services

Friday 6:30 pm
 Saturday 9:30 am
 Sunday Minyan 9:00 am



Office Hours

Tuesday - Friday
 10:00-3:00

TO CONTACT RABBI CRYSTAL

Study and voice mail: (845) 339-3956
 Emergency cellphone: (845) 901-0190
 email: rabbi.crystal@gmail.com

Rabbi Crystal is usually available during our regular office
 hours except for Tuesdays and welcomes all to drop in.
 But please be advised that community meetings and visits
 to those who are ill, in trouble or mourning may take her
 out of the office during those times. In addition she
 welcomes all who wish to make appointments after office
 hours including afternoons, evenings and Sundays.
 Please call or e-mail her to set up an appointment.

Kitchen News and Views
By Candace Belles

Please note that the dairy Lasagna Dinner has been
 postponed and will be held on the 1st Friday in April.



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Purim, a Day of Thanksgiving

The holiday of Purim, this year on Thursday, March 20 at with the Megillah reading at 6:15 pm, is marked by joyous feasting, masquerading, play acting, exchanging of gifts, and the giving of charity. On Purim, it is a special mitzvah to give monetary gifts. Historically, gifts for the poor were provided by the contribution of a half shekel from each Jew for the support of the Temple. This gift was made during the month of Adar. The Sabbath coinciding with or preceding the new moon (Rosh Hodesh) of Adar (or Second Adar in a leap year) is called Shabbat Sh'Kalim: The Sabbath when the maftir ordains the giving of the half shekel gift.

Purim is essentially a "day of thanksgiving" and remembrance. Yet the Jew has always felt that no spirit of gratitude and no sense of joy is complete while others are in need. Hence, the social aspect of this holiday in the form of gifts to the poor, has always been strongly emphasized. The Shalach Manot is also a token of friendship, such tokens being a traditional exchange on Purim.

Hamantashen, the triangular-shaped cookies filled with fruit or poppy seeds represent the three-cornered hats worn by Haman-like nobility of the time; the "mon" or poppyseed filling represents the Jewish nation which Haman attempted to blot out, but who increased and prospered in number, "countless like poppy seeds."

FROM THE NEW YORK BOARD OF JEWISH EDUCATION TEACHER'S CENTER

When I read the Purim Story, I felt like.....

Vashti when I _____

Queen Esther when I _____

Mordecai when I _____

King Ahasheurus when I _____

Haman when I _____

KASHRUT CLASSES

Kashrut classes will start in late November or early December. Anyone interested should call Candy Belles at 331-8711 or Chris Kowalenko at 338-8612.

Shabbat Services

Please come for Shabbat services, but please, when you do, remember that at shul we are shomer shabbas and therefore the use of cell phones is prohibited during Shabbat and should be turned off during services, and that calls should not be made to the Synagogue from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday night. (Check the conveniently located calendar in each issue for candle-lighting and end times).

No synagogue business may be conducted on Shabbat (ie: shopping for synagogue functions, phone calls or emails to synagogue members regarding synagogue business, etc.)

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

President's message continued from page 1

Our Membership chair, Cindy Binnie, has also hit the ground running. A few months ago, Bernie King-Smith chided me about the volume of e-mails I had been sending him. Well, Cindy has me beat hands down. She is constantly e-mailing me with great ideas for attracting new members and getting our current members more involved. The committee is nearing completion of our new membership brochure that will be distributed to real estate offices throughout the region, as well as to the Chamber of Commerce. Under Cindy's chairmanship, we shall truly be a warm and welcoming congregation.

As for Fundraising, our Chair, Gladys Spiegler, has a number of projects in the works, including a brick memorial project, a midnight ride on the Catskill Mountain Railroad, a golf tournament and a Mishloach Manot project. Additionally, we are just a few weeks away from ChaiFest 2008, a classical musical concert followed by an audience participation Klezmer jam, funded by the newly established Miriam G. Freed Arts & Entertainment Fund. (more about this elsewhere in this issue). Gladys and her committee have a lot on their plate, and could use all the help they can get. Please volunteer to help on any or all of these wonderful projects.

Two months ago, my column was titled "Moving Forward." As you can see, we are definitely moving in the right direction. With your help and patience, we will continue to grow and to once again make our shul the center of Jewish life in the Hudson Valley.

Rabbi's message continued from page 1

After the burning of Columbus by General Wilson in 1865 Lazarus moved his family to Philadelphia and then to New York. An incident on this trip is said to have made a great impression on Nathan. It changed the course of his life. He happened to be wearing grey clothing during the trip north.

As the family was boarding an express train in Nashville, Nathan was jerked from the platform by a Union soldier. The train departed with the Strauses but without Nathan. He had only 50 cents in his pocket. After convincing the soldier that he was no threat, Nathan was released. He soon realized that he was hungry. He found a restaurant that served something he'd never seen before, ice cream. He tasted one serving and decided to have another. Unfortunately, this consumed all of his money. The proprietor of the restaurant learned that Nathan was now penniless and alone. He offered to return the money. But Nathan refused to take it. The next day he was able to join his family but for 24 hours Nathan had nothing to eat. He learned what it meant to be among strangers, penniless and hungry. He never forgot it. It is said that, then and there he determined that if he ever became able, he would do something to relieve hunger in the world. He once wrote, "Even as a small boy I thought if I could save one human life, it would be wonderful. Little did I dream that I was destined to save them by the thousands."

After the war, when Nathan completed his studies in New York, he joined his father and brother in business. He was full of ideas, some of them good and some of them bad. Isidor sorted them out and made the good ones work. Nathan became the outside salesman, opening new markets and going to Europe on buying trips. It was on one of these trips that he met Lina Guthertz. After a courtship of five weeks, most of it with Nathan away buying goods, they were married on April 28, 1875. From the start Nathan and Lina were a devoted couple. Whenever possible Lina accompanied her husband on his buying trips abroad.

In New York Nathan became friendly with Rowland Hussey Macy, the founder of R. H. Macys. In 1873 he convinced Macy to allow the Strauses to rent a 25' X 100' concession in the basement of his store to sell their porcelain, china and crockery. It was the first time dry goods and home furnishings were under one roof and on this distinction Macy's claimed to be the first department store. From the beginning the Strauses concession was the most successful department in the store. Nathan was on a buying trip with Macy when the latter died suddenly in Paris in 1877. Several combinations of partners took over Macy's. In 1888 the Strauses bought a 40% share in the store. They became sole owners in 1896. Nathan's boundless energy no doubt contributed greatly to the success of its operation.

Shortly before his marriage Nathan bought a horse and carriage. He found he couldn't afford a wife and the horse. He sold a half share in the horse but Lina bought it back when she learned what he'd done. He was an avid horseman, personally driving his racehorses on The Speedway in Upper Manhattan, today's Harlem River Drive. It is said that he would rather lose a race than apply the whip. He shared stables with Mayor Hugh Grant. One of Nathan's sons, my grandfather was named after the mayor – as was my father and me – I am Hugh Grant Straus III.

Nathan believed that charity was demeaning to the recipient. He tried to find ways to help people without giving them outright charity. During his days at Macy's it came to

Nathan's attention that two girls in their employ were virtually starving themselves in order to save enough to provide the care necessary for their sick mother. Nathan took action. His social compromise was to open a dining hall in the store in which a full meal could be bought for five cents. He and Isidor were the first men in America to inaugurate Mutual Aid Societies for their employees. During an extremely hard winter an advertisement appeared in a local newspaper offering free turkeys to anyone who couldn't afford to buy one for Thanksgiving. The ad was unsigned. Thousands of turkeys were given away.

We take Pasteurized milk for granted today. In the late 19th and early 20th century germs in unprocessed milk were killing infants by the thousands. Nathan and Lina Straus lost two babies to diseases attributed to germs in milk. This may have motivated him. He saw that a cow on his farm died of tuberculosis and reasoned that if the cow was sick, the milk must be tainted. He investigated and learned that a new process to cook the milk would kill the germs. He built a laboratory and started offering milk for a penny to the citizens of New York. The milk bottles had rounded bottoms so they couldn't be put down once opened. This protected the cleanliness of the milk. His efforts to make pasteurization routine were met with opposition from the dairy industry on the grounds that pasteurization was too expensive. But he continued to write and speak out about the unsanitary conditions of the dairies. He offered to build a laboratory with his own money anywhere in the world if the municipality would send men to learn the process. The first milk depot opened in 1893 on the East 3rd Street Pier. As a direct result of his efforts almost half a million lives were saved in the first 25 years that pasteurization was used.

Nathan was denied access to hotels in Saratoga Springs, NY and in Lakewood, NJ because he was Jewish. He built a hotel in Lakewood that was open to all. President and Mrs. Grover Cleveland stayed in one of his cottages. He also built a "Preventorium," in Lakewood, coining that word. It was a hospital/hotel for tubercular children where they could get fresh air and healthy food

Nathan and Lina were touring the Mediterranean in 1904. They had expected to make Palestine one of many stops. Here's what he wrote, "On reaching Jerusalem, we changed our plans. All that we saw in the holy land made such a deep impression on us that we gave up the idea of going to other places. ... From that time on we felt a strange and intense desire to return to the land."

Nathan and Lina became Zionists. He set up soup kitchens and work rooms for unskilled laborers in Palestine. He provided \$250,000 for the Jerusalem Health Center and worked on behalf of Hebrew University. Because he gave so much to Palestine, the city of Netanya was named in his honor, hoping he would give still more. They were not happy to learn that, by that time he had already given away ¾ of his fortune and had no more to give. In 1918 Lina gave her jewelry to Hadassah in Palestine. It was valued at more than \$18,000, a lot of money in those days.

Nathan wrote, "It is my ambition to die a poor man, for then I shall enrich in happiness and in good works."

Mi SHABERACH LIST

We are updating our Mi Shaberach List. As of 7-01-07, names will remain on the Mi Shaberach List for one month; unless the office has been notified to keep the person on longer. You must call the office (338-4409) each month that you want the person left on the list. We would like their Hebrew name and their English name along with the name of the person submitting this information. Thank you for your co-operation.

Chris Kowalenko

Congregation Ahavath Israel Burial Benefits

Are you aware that synagogue membership allows you to purchase burial rights in Congregation Ahavath Israel's section of Montrepose Cemetery in Kingston? The burial benefit plan includes the cemetery plot plus payment toward some of the internment costs. Plan fee is based on age at the time of enrollment. If you would like more detailed information on the burial benefit, call the synagogue office for a Plan description or contact David Goodlife.

Congregation Ahavath Israel can now accept credit cards in payment for dues and other fees from members. Currently we accept payments from Mastercard, Visa, and Diners Club. For dues payments, we can credit your account annually, quarterly, or monthly. If you wish to pay by credit card, we need to know your card number, the expiration date, the amount of the credit, and the expense which you are paying. Please make sure the numbers are legible. After completing each transaction, we will mail a record of the transaction to the member. Please mail the information to the synagogue.

David Goodlife, Financial Secretary

Talmud Torah

Comprehensive Jewish education is being offered from kindergarten through high school. Our enhanced curriculums include Hebrew, Torah, music, prayer, Jewish and Biblical history and cooking, as well as complete Bar and Bat Mitzvah preparation.

We offer small classes with individualized attention specific to your child's needs!

****NEW!**** Comprehensive two-year Bar/Bat Mitzvah course for children 10 and up who have not previously attended Talmud Torah (or have limited Hebrew education).

Call the synagogue secretary at 338-4409 or Rabbi Crystal at 339-3956 for more information.

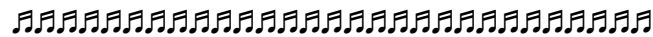
**** Free 2 week trial for new students****

KOSHER NEWS

Glatt Kosher meat is now available
at Shoprite

ChaiFest 2008

ChaiFest is coming! March 16th at 3.
ChaiFest is coming! Bring your whole family.
Celebrate music, celebrate Spring!
The snow will be over, now let's sing.
You're welcome to play, you can listen as well,
Join in our jam if you think Klezmer is swell.
What's an octet? It's eight playing like one
Bloch and a Csardas and also Mendelssohn.
Want to conduct like a pro, or sing like a maven?
Come to ChaiFest if its music you're cravin'.



The hall is fillin', so don't be chillin'! Tix with advance reservations are \$18.00 / adults and \$12 for those 13 and under. At the door, adults will be \$20. and those 13 and under will be \$15. Sponsorships can be purchased at three levels: Silver for \$36., Gold for \$54., and Platinum for \$72. If you would like or participate in our silent auction to conduct the orchestra in the Gypsy Csardas, be sure to place your bid by March 7. To identify the music excerpt below or to get more information about our concert, please call the office at (845) 338 - 4409 or email chaifest@ahavathisraelkingston.org.



Name this musical excerpt and enter for a chance to win a wonderful Klezmer CD. Call the synagogue office at (845)338-4409 or email chaifest@ahavathisraelkingston.org. Be sure to leave your name and number.

MARCH YAHRZEITS

“The Lord will guard your going out
and your coming home, now and forever”

יהוה ישמר צאתך
ובואך מעתה ועד עולם - Psalm 121

24 Adar I March 1	Lilian Rosenthal	8 Adar II March 15	Sheila Stark
25 Adar I March 2	Sophie Halpern-Bronner Evelyn Levy Louis Propp Gertrude Netburn Arlene Sultar	9 Adar II March 16	Joseph Kirschner Rose Blas
26 Adar I March 3	Louis Siller Sarah Stein	10 Adar II March 17	Rebecca Feldman Lena Toffel Louis Vogel
27 Adar I March 4	Rachel Litsky Cople Alpert Benjamin Kinberg	11 Adar II March 18	Dora Cohen
28 Adar I March 5	Madeline Propp Saul Kaplan Ida Werbalowsky Charles Levy	12 Adar II March 19	Max Abrams
29 Adar I March 6	Edith Kinberg Blair Louis Weinstein Ruth Lees	15 Adar II March 22	Shirley Rafalowsky
30 Adar I March 7	Stella Jacobson Gilda Schlesinger	17 Adar II March 23	Jennie Halperin
1 Adar II March 8	Regina Friedman	19 Adar II March 26	Florence Rosenthal
3 Adar II March 10	Samuel Replansky	20 Adar II March 27	Neal S. Hirsch
4 Adar II March 11	Pauline Fischer	21 Adar II March 28	Nettie Davis
5 Adar II March 12	Rose Nadan Albert Woolfson	22 Adar II March 29	Herschel Harold Zeplin Seymour Blas
6 Adar II March 13	Beatrice Gerstenzang	23 Adar II March 30	Esther Porcelain
7 Adar II March 14	Ida Rabinowitz		